



**We're
still here.**

A woman active in a community farming committee in Niger @ Torleif Svensson, LM International.

HOPE IN CRISIS

**– three short reflections for churches,
small groups or individuals**

These reflections about living with hope in times of crisis are written by three different Members of the Integral Alliance. They encourage us to respond to a broken world by drawing close to our powerful God, standing together in community and actively working for justice, restoration and peace.

Each of these reflections is based on a passage of scripture. They share encouragement and perspectives from work in hard places and include questions that can be used by individuals, small groups or churches.

Integral is a global alliance of 22 Christian relief and development agencies that come together to respond in times of disaster. In a world that is often cynical, fragmented and hostile, we are Christians who believe that disaster and suffering are not the end of the story.

THANK YOU FOR
PRAYING WITH US

Integral:

HOPE IN CRISIS – HOPE FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

Tearfund New Zealand

Romans 8:18-21 (The Message)

That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reigns it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead.

There is a challenge to the times we're living in. We see glimpses of God's Kingdom, but not yet its full expression. In the meantime, we're confronted with such a large scale of need and suffering. Across the world, inequality appears to be on the rise and politics and conflict divide us. God's beautiful creation, on which we all depend, is under threat from pollution and species loss. People long for hope for the future but many struggle to find it.

What is our hope?

For many Christians, hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised: that one day God's Kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. It's in the Lord's Prayer taught by Jesus and repeated by thousands of Christians across the world each week.

The Message translation of Romans 8:18-21 paints a beautiful picture of this Kingdom hope talking of good and glorious times ahead.

And what could these promised times look like?

One day there will be peace, so for now we work in war zones. One day there will be equality, so for now we work against poverty. One day there will be freedom for those in captivity, so for now we work against slavery. One day all creation will be renewed, so for now we work against the destruction of our earth.

In the face of darkness and despair, how can we hold onto hope?

We believe the life of Jesus provides some rich answers.

Firstly, by drawing close to our powerful God. There are frequent examples of Jesus drawing away to spend time alone with God. Through prayer and nurturing our relationship with God, we're reminded of his sovereignty and the invitation to be fully dependent on him. Prayer reminds us that we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is ever present, offering us fresh vision, wisdom and guidance.

Secondly, we can build hope by doing life together. Jesus modelled this through the way he lived alongside his disciples. Through close and deep relationships, we can share our grief and hopes and keep going. This is especially poignant in the times where we face fatigue and despair, as it's then that we can lean on the faith and energy of others. Thirdly, we can build our hope through taking action. Jesus' ministry was full of small actions of radical love. Our hope can grow through taking small actions of faith too, as we realise the difference our actions make and the fact that others are doing them too.

What is our role as Christians?

As Christians we are not merely called to hold onto God's hope, but we are called to be agents of hope. The gospel invites us to join in God's transformational work. God invites us to partner with him in seeing his kingdom come and bringing the light to the darkness.

We seek to join in the work of God as he brings hope and his kingdom. We invite you to join too. Let's begin by praying together the words Jesus taught us. Please pray the Lord's Prayer in your own language.



One day there will be complete equality, so for now we work against poverty © Tearfund New Zealand

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Questions for reflection

- 1, What is your experience of this tension between our future eternal hope and the suffering that we see in the world now?
- 2, Which of the three suggestions for holding on to hope resonate with you most?
- 3, Where are you struggling to hope now? How can someone pray for you or how can you bring this to God?

HOPE IN CRISIS – MAKING ALL THINGS NEW

Lihanda Jairus, World Relief

Revelation 21:4-5 (NIV)

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

In the swampy villages of South Sudan or in overcrowded health and nutrition centres filled with the cries of sick infants, hope can fade — even for the most experienced humanitarian worker. The sound of a surveillance drone or rumours of an imminent air bombardment demand split-second decisions: either dash for safety or stay to save the life of a cholera-stricken child.

Yet, for the Christ-centred humanitarian worker, these realities are not merely social projects or acts of philanthropy. They are tangible expressions of the Good News: that Jesus Christ is risen, and because He lives, the "old order of things" is already beginning to pass away.

A Theology of "Making All Things New"

The empty tomb offers both encouragement and a call to deep reflection. It reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as the cornerstone of our hope — the moment when God declared that death, poverty and injustice do not have the final word.

When we engage in development work, we participate as "first fruits" of this new creation. We live in the promise that God is already at work renewing the world.

Scripture reminds us that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17 NIV). If we proclaim a risen Savior while ignoring the suffering of the "least of these," our message loses its credibility. Resurrection is not only a promise for life after death; it is a power meant for life before death. It is a theology of change — one that compels us to enter broken spaces, labour for restoration, give generously and serve compassionately.

Development as an Act of Resurrection

How, then, does digging a well or providing a microloan connect to the empty tomb?

1. Restoring Human Dignity.

Every person is created in the image of God. Poverty erodes dignity, leaving people feeling unseen and forgotten. By investing in long-term flourishing, we reflect the heart of a God who sees the marginalised and calls them into "abundant life" (John 10:10).

2. Defeating the Power of Decay.

The resurrection was God's ultimate victory over the decay of sin and death. Development work — whether reforestation, healthcare or access to clean water — pushes back against the physical and social decay that plagues our world.

3. Demonstrating Future Hope.

When communities move from dependency to sustainability, they offer a small but powerful preview of the coming Kingdom of God where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4 NIV).

Living as People of the Resurrection

The word compassion literally means "to suffer with." Our work is not a distant charity. It is embodied solidarity. It follows in the footsteps of a Saviour who entered fully into human suffering in order to redeem it.

At World Relief, we care for the body because God created the body — and in the resurrection, He affirmed and redeemed it.

As we serve, we remember that we are not the heroes of this story — Jesus is. Our work is a response to grace already received. We labour with urgency because the world is wounded, but we labour with peace because the outcome of the battle has already been decided at the empty tomb.

Each time we help a family break the cycle of poverty, we echo the message spoken by the angels: "He is not here; He has risen." We invite the world to look beyond the rubble of present suffering and glimpse the light of a new day breaking through.



Faith, accompanied by action, brings life © World Relief

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Questions for reflection

- 1, Where in your day to day life do you see God 'already at work renewing the world'?
- 2, How does the Good News of Jesus change the way you respond to global challenges – practically, financially, emotionally?
- 3, Think of a situation of suffering and pray that God will be 'making all things new' in that situation, both for life now and in eternity.

HOPE IN CRISIS – HOPE AND PEACE

Baptist World Aid Australia

Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

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

As we live in a time of persistent violence, what does it mean to follow in Jesus' footsteps and be a peacemaker?

Violence on a global scale seems to hold the media headlines daily. Jesus also lived amidst extreme brutality—consider the manner of his own death. But rather than cast his lot with one side of many warring factions of his own day, Jesus acknowledged the fear that causes cycles of harm and called his followers to live differently within it.

Jesus' perspective is echoed in his most famous teaching regarding conflict: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' (Matthew 5:9) Sadly, this is not a perspective we hear as often as we should, even among Christians, even in many churches. There are challenging, but reasonable questions that should be asked amongst faith communities in the current context: What are we hearing of peace in our own churches? Where is the voice for peace being amplified, among those who follow the Prince of Peace?

Jesus did not say peacekeepers; the explicit words are peacemakers. Those who, even in places of horrific, polarising conflict, actively create possibilities for reconciliation, healing and justice. Jesus' peacemaking is not sentimental; it is costly, deliberate and grounded in love for neighbour. This is especially true when that neighbour is distant or unfamiliar, and we may not be able to fully understand their perspective.

In Lebanon, where Baptist World Aid Australia has been working with brothers and sisters for many years, renewed violence and economic crisis have combined to displace hundreds of thousands of families. It is difficult to imagine the anxiety of people who have once again been forced from their homes, not knowing if they will be able to return. For Christians, as we look at crisis situations, perhaps the most important questions are not actually about history or politics, but about what a faithful response to this reality looks like.

One of the basic tenets of Christian faith is the doctrine of the Imago Dei: that every human being bears the image of God. Every life caught up in conflict, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation, possesses inherent dignity and worth. Peacemaking begins when we refuse narratives that reduce people to sides, statistics or stereotypes.

The late theologian Walter Brueggemann described biblical peace as a vision of wholeness, right relationship and shared human flourishing. He insisted the task of God's people is to

tell the truth about suffering and to embody hope through alternative ways of living, resisting the despair that accepts that violence is always inevitable.

Similarly, Wendell Berry reminds us that peace is forged through the slow, patient work of care for others. His 'peaceable' communities parallel Jesus' exhortation to act in ways that reject domination and instead cultivate responsibility for one another. In this sense, peace is practiced before it is proclaimed. It asks deeper questions like:

- What does love of neighbour require in a wounded world?
- How do we remain attentive without becoming hardened?
- What does faithfulness look like when solutions are complex and outcomes uncertain?

Jesus who suffered does not turn away from the suffering of the world and neither should we. We lament honestly, pray persistently and act concretely. Our work with Baptist Partners in Lebanon affirms dignity and witnesses to a different way of being human, one that is shaped by mercy rather than fear.

Amid wars and crises, peacemaking remains a faithful, hopeful and necessary pursuit. As followers of Jesus, we have a sure hope and demonstrate God's peace in the way we live and how we love others. Blessed are the peacemakers.



Jesus' peacemaking is not sentimental; it is costly, deliberate and grounded in love for neighbour © Hunter Williamson, MERATH

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Questions for reflection

- 1, Have you ever thought of yourself as a peacemaker? Reflect on this and ask God how he could use you in this way.
- 2, What are we hearing of peace in our own churches? Are we praying for peace?
- 3, Reflect on Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and ask him to help us lament honestly, pray persistently and act concretely as we pursue peace.