

THE CRY

for Humility



INTERNATIONAL

An Advocacy Journal
SPRING 2020 | VOL. 25 NO. 1



We celebrate *Humility*
before God and humanity.

To learn more about our
work or to donate, visit
wordmadeflesh.org

THE CRY is an **advocacy publication** of Word Made
Flesh International that invites readers to **learn and
share** in the **stories of our friends** who suffer under
poverty and injustice.

Every issue of *The Cry* explores one of our **Lifestyle
Celebrations**, a set of core values that inform and

help guide our work and faith-walks around the
world. For the full list of these Lifestyle Celebrations,
see the back cover.
To request a quarterly subscription, contact us at
1.859.388.4646 or visit **wordmadeflesh.org/the-cry**

Digital Issues of *The Cry* are available at:
wordmadeflesh.org/the-cry

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Editor.....2	Humility when Tensions Are High 9	My Deepest Humility15
A Letter from the Executive Director.....3	Learn More: On Humility 11	Humility in the “Shark Tank” 17
Humility and Harmony.....5	Celebrating Humility 12	
What are You?7	Emptying Ourselves 13	

Follow Word Made Flesh International



THE CRY STAFF :
Editor Jorge Castorena
Assistant Editors
Leah Abraham
Editorial Committee Clint Baldwin,
Annie Keith, Megan McFarland,
Corrie Catlett Merricks,
Laura Zahniser Pierson,
Elizabeth Smith, Howard Snyder,

Cover/Back Photos:
Sierra Leone, Word Made Flesh Archives
Inside Cover Photos:
WMF Archives

Copyright © 2020
by **Word Made Flesh International**
All rights reserved.
To obtain reprint permission,
e-mail your request to:
info@**wordmadeflesh.org**

From the Editor

Half a year is now fading away, and many around the world are slowly emerging from quarantines and stay-at-home orders to find societies in upheaval, both because of the pandemic and now because of protests against injustice. 2020, if no other year before it has done it for us, has taught us what could boil down to: the world is full of grief and the human experience is a painful one — especially for those in the margins and whose cries for justice and salvation go unheard.

But God hears them. And we tune our ears to listen, too — and then join their cry.

As has been the case with every issue of *The Cry* I've been a part of, the lifestyle celebration at hand couldn't be more timely — and I am assured Divine Providence plays a role. I am moved by Word Made Flesh's celebration of Humility. At Word Made Flesh, our folks around the world have the privilege of doing work in contexts and among people that bear the term 'humble.' In our modern, western context, humility is often equated with weakness or fragility, and such labels are far from what the world tells us to pursue. We are to be strong, self-sufficient, and ever capable.

Yet, as we seek to serve Jesus in various contexts, understanding the character of Jesus as one who humbly poured Himself out and thought of us as more important than Himself and His own Deity, we are reminded that humility is a mark that accompanies those who bear the image of Christ. He who came to earth through lowly means, among lowly people, on a manger, spent His time with fishermen, advocated for women, and rode as King into town on a donkey. He who touched the untouchable and spoke resurrection to dying hearts. Though humility marked His life on earth, He displayed humility's ultimate act in His death, willingly

suffering injustice out of a great love for us and in order to atone for all injustice, setting humanity free from oppression. Jesus took His last breath so that we could have live freely and receive the promise of eternal life.

Indeed, humility is not weak, helpless, or precarious; humility is strong and victorious. It was humility that made true life possible for us, and it is the same humility that continues to make true life possible for those around us. It's a life force. It's recognizing that we need Jesus, and that receiving Him also means we join Him in pouring out and raising up others above ourselves. As our WMF staff serve alongside people in many contexts throughout many nations, we thank God for this gift, this posture of humility, and we pray that we would continue to grow in His likeness. We celebrate our need for Christ and our need for one another.

I leave you with this exhortation:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

May we continue to walk with Him humbly wherever He goes, and may you see and be touched by His humility reflected in these pages of *The Cry*.

JORGE CASTORENA
Editor, *The Cry*



CONNECT WITH JORGE:
jorge.castorena@wordmadeflesh.org



(Left) A young girl carries supplies through the aftermath of a flood in Kroo Bay, near WMF Sierra Leone.
(Right) WMF Peru staff gather for a Bible study with the community.



From the International Executive Director

Dear friends,
I know that you will be so blessed reading all of the reflections and stories in this issue of *The Cry*.

As one of our WMF Lifestyle Celebrations, WMF notes that we “celebrate humility before God and humanity?” What does this mean?

Are we somehow equating experiencing difficulty with *goodness* of character? Though the experience of difficulty does indeed sometimes serve as an aid in the refinement of character, we are not simply celebrating experiencing difficulty. Rather, we are celebrating goodness that transpires when a characteristic like humility is interwoven into our being.

Humility, through promoting right relation and right understanding to all that surrounds, seeks to undergird and uplift. (Js. 4:10; Mat. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; Pr. 11:2, 3:34; 1 Pt. 5:5; Phil. 2:14-15) Humiliation, through promoting a false sense of self in relation to all that surrounds, seeks to depress and destroy. Pride, in its unhealthy sense [e.g., arrogance, conceit, superiority], resides at the opposite end of the spectrum from humiliation, but is also likewise a manifestation of a false sense of self in relation to all that surrounds. Though accomplished by different means, both humiliation and pride debase the human heart. They sever instead of promote healthy relationality. (Pr. 11:2, 18:12, 21:4, 21:24; Lk. 14:11, Mt. 23:12; 1 Pt. 5:5; Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3:1-2; 2 Cor. 2:5-11) Considering humiliation and pride can help us better recognize God’s ways for us, but here we focus on the healthy middle way of humility.

Humility is a way to freedom; it is a way of right relations; it is a way of healthy understanding and wholistic peace (shalom); it is a way of affirmation of the dignity of each and every human, including you and me.

All humans are bearers of the image of God (*imago Dei; tzelem Elohim*). There is inherent dignity in this, but it is a derived dignity gained via a gift. Our goodness ultimately does not inhere within us because of our own doing; instead, goodness resides within us due to a gift. Humility simultaneously recognizes capacity and limitation and respects it all.

Humility is often connected with temperance. Humility allows for contentedness. Humility allows us to do something great for God without thinking that we somehow therefore are great.

As C.S. Lewis offered in *Mere Christianity*, “Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call “humble” nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all...

If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realise that one is proud. And a bigish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.”¹

Because humility healthily recognizes limitation, humility also fosters a sense of participation with community. Humility emphasizes “we” over “I.” Philippians 2:3-5 is a great reminder of this Biblical emphasis: “Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for [their] own interests, but also the interests of others. Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus.” We are reminded here that, as Christians, we

follow the example of Christ in seeking to practice humility, in seeking to be humble.

Humility is a healthy and appropriate recognition of being created as part of a greater interconnected whole. John Donne’s insight continues to echo down to us through the ages – we each play a part; none of us are an island unto ourselves.² One body, many parts; the Lord is the Vine while we are the branches. (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Jn. 15:1-17)

Considering 17th century literature like Donne’s in relation to humility, our family recently watched an updated animated 2019 film of *Pilgrim’s Progress* that we found both enjoyable and meaningful.

I am thinking here of Christian’s experience in the Valley of Humiliation as he encounters and battles Apollyon, from the City of Destruction, on his way to the Celestial City. Christian has just rested and fellowshiped with friends Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence. He has been provided sustenance for the journey and fully outfitted with armor (Eph. 6:10-18). Now, he must navigate the Valley of Humiliation on his own and seek God’s help while in the midst of trial. The battle is fierce. Apollyon accuses him of all kinds of artifice, lack, and that he is not worthy of God. Christian must remember that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom 8), but that he cannot overcome Apollyon on his own. God does not condemn nor accuse him. Instead God is our “very present help in time of trouble.” (Ps. 46) When we call on God, God turns what the devil means for humiliation and debasement into humility and uplift! (Gen. 50:19-21; Jas. 4:7; Rom. 8:28) Though he suffers grievously and is almost killed, Christian perseveres by the blood of the Lamb, the Word of God, and his testimony of acceptance by God! As soon as the battle is over he receives healing. I encourage you to read the whole passage; it is very sobering and encouraging.³

One of Bunyan’s key messages with the Valley of Humiliation is that everyone slips and encounters difficulty going into it, but it is the prideful that encounter the worst trials as they make their way through. The already humble navigate the valley with comparatively little turmoil as the hardships in this valley are something that they have already given over to God. One way or another, as we continue on the path of our Lord, we learn the ways of our Lord. May the Lord grace us with learning the ways of humility sooner than later so that we can better gift others with His grace and love.

Friends, hear the Good News, the Lord turns what is meant for humiliation into dignifying humility!

¹Lewis, C.S.. *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1952).
² Donne, John. *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, Meditation XVII* (Originally published in 1624). Find the whole meditation here: luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/meditation17.php
³ Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. (Originally published 1678) Part I, Stage 4.

Christ is the great equalizer. Not an equality of the lowest common denominator, but rather, an equality of the highest possible capacity. Christ takes degrading humiliation and degrading pride and transforms them both into dignifying humility. Humility trades bondage for freedom. None are above and none are below God’s law of Love. All stand equally freed before it. Recognition of limitation coupled with an understanding of the inherent worth of all that is created promotes healthy engagement of interconnected community. As the “Prophets of a Future Not Our Own” prayer offers, “We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.”

Word Made Flesh, in the humility of understanding that we are ministers and not messiahs, is everyday doing the work of loving people well in the name of Jesus all around the world. Join us! Support the ministry in prayer and financial partnership. We need your partnership to continue faithfully walking with and caring for “the least of these,” our brethren.

The Lord bless and keep you.

CLINT BALDWIN

International Executive Director, Word Made Flesh International

CONNECT WITH CLINT:
clint.baldwin@wordmadeflesh.org



Humility and Harmony

By Annie Jones

*Short-term Programs Coordinator,
WMF Rwanda*

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.”—Romans 12:16

“Only humility will lead us to unity, and unity to peace.” —Mother Teresa

Motherhood in a way forces you into a posture of humility. You have to put this little human above yourself and try not to lose patience with them, even when you haven’t slept in weeks! I’ve also learned that being humble means you have to set aside your pride and admit that you need help. There is a saying here in Rwanda, “Turi Kumwe”, which means, “We Are One”, and here at WMF Rwanda we love to say that we are better together. Those are lovely sayings and I believe them to be true, but sometimes I fall into the trap of thinking that other people need help, not me.

When I have to ask for help my pride tells me that I’ve failed, I’m not good enough. But when I lean into the humility of Christ, I remember that it takes a village to raise a child. I can do all the research in the world and listen to all the motherhood podcasts, and I have learned so many good things I want to apply in parenthood. But I cannot forget those who God has given me to be in community with, those who have gone before me and from whom I can learn valuable lessons.

This is my first baby, I’m in no way experienced, but I am grateful to have so many women from different backgrounds with whom I am able to share the experiences of motherhood and learn a thing or two along the way. This season I have had to learn to let go of my pride and ask for help. Sometimes it is just a matter of asking a simple request such as holding my daughter so that I can go to the bathroom, or even just to breathe for a minute.

I am thankful that I am able to bring my daughter, Chloe, to work with me, but some days it is a struggle to focus. One

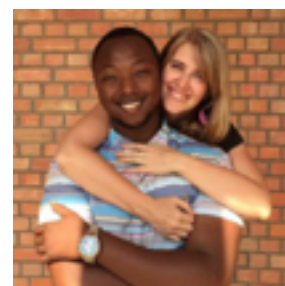
Thursday afternoon I was at work and Chloe wouldn’t stop crying, I also had gotten barely any sleep that week. I was trying everything to calm her down, nothing was working, I couldn’t handle it anymore. I stopped what I was doing and stood up to rock Chloe to sleep. No one was around me at the time so I started to silently cry. Then my coworker, Immaculee, saw that I was crying and came over and gently rubbed my back asking me what was wrong. I proceeded to tell her that Chloe hadn’t been sleeping and now she won’t stop crying, and I can’t get my work done, and I’m just so tired! Immaculee, who has a two year old, looked at me knowingly, then she took Chloe from me and tied her on her back in the way Rwandan mothers do, where she remained for the next couple of hours.

The days and weeks following that day I have noticed how often the women I serve alongside do the same thing, or something similar, for each other. We are a village, a community, who helps our sisters when we are in need, no matter how great or small that need is.

When I am proud I believe that I can do it all by myself, that I don’t need help from others. But God gives us community as a gift — it opens the door into humility, which allows us to see our need for each other. We are broken pieces of the body of Christ, when we come together we are whole. And when we have humbled ourselves, when we have been made whole, we can then walk in peace with each other and say to one another, I am part of you and you are part of me.



Annie and her infant daughter Chloe (also below) with the women and families of WMF Rwanda.



ABOUT ANNIE

Annie Jones was the Short Term Programs Coordinator for Word Made Flesh Rwanda. As of the beginning of 2020, she and her husband Claudien Niyigena along with their first child, Chloe, relocated to the United States where they continue to support advocacy work.

CONNECT WITH ANNIE

info@wordmade flesh.org

What are you?

By Mary Grimm
*Translation and Literary Consultant,
WMF Papua New Guinea*

“**W**hat are you?” a friend and mentor asked. My mind instantly began racing through a list of potential answers: a Christian, a missionary, a wife, a mother, a linguist, an adventurer...

He interrupted my thoughts with his next sentence, “The answer to that is, you’re human.”

That’s not what I wanted to hear! Human carries with it a connotation of weakness, fallibility, and insufficiency that raised an instant aversion in my mind. Ridiculous as it may be, I didn’t want the term to apply to me. Thus began the awareness of my addiction.

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart-mind, soul, and ‘strength’. The Hebrew word translated as “strength,” *meod*, is translated elsewhere as “much” or “very.” I like to consider the concept of “much-ness” or “very-ness” as it pertains to our composition and what we bring before God. In that conversation about being human, I realized that I was addicted to my own much-ness. All my life, I have given and retracted this offering to God: my inner strength that I have used to drive me towards my goals; my inner vision that has sustained me through distraction and turmoil; my muchness in which I have exulted and upon which I have relied for a sense of worth and purpose.

At various times, God has revealed to me, the upside-down



Mary and her youngest daughter.

truths of His Kingdom: the peace in surrender; the safety in confession; the power in reliance on His strength; His footprints in the chasms of grief. He has shown me, and I have understood and grown and loved and forgotten.

I escape from the vulnerability and weakness that frightens and repels me. I try to manage my failures and insufficiency by submersing myself in a sense of my own power. But like all addictions, the effects only last for so long and harm follows in their wake.

By estranging myself from the knowledge of my humanity, I was unwittingly working to sever my connection to the Savior. In the fumes of my aversion to weakness, my compassion shrivels to condescension.

The same friend and mentor told me, “You cannot minister the Gospel if you do not believe it for yourself!” It has been

Children enjoying playtime at the WMF Papua New Guinea community.



a long time since I have cried out, “Lord save me too!” In all my convictions and my drive to ‘serve’ God, I forgot that first I am human.

I am weak, needy, and insufficient to fix myself. I need a Savior. I have a Savior! He loves me, human me, with a love that is independent of my perceived worth or strength. He cares for me in my need. His power is made perfect in my weakness. It is in my weakness that He displays the truth of

His Good News – His love is enough.

This, I believe is the meaning of humility: to know what you are and not turn away. How we can bear to do so? By walking with the One who speaks love over us and ever so slowly letting that love rewrite what we know.

“Humble yourself before the mighty God...because He cares for you.”



ABOUT MARY

Mary Grimm is passionate about encountering God in His Word, His created world, and the people He loves. She felt God’s call to missions at the age of 14. Beyond education or training, the best preparation was and is learning to love the person in front of her. She and her family now live in a remote village in Papua New Guinea where they are learning how to love their community well.

CONNECT WITH MARY

mary.grimm
@wordmadeflesh.org



A community member with Mary’s two daughters.



Humility When Tensions Are High

By Andrea Baker
Field Director, WMF Bolivia

Last fall, Bolivia experienced significant political instability throughout the country and in areas where our WMF staff reside.

Some community members evacuated as we experienced weeks of national protests, blockades and riots regarding socialist president Evo Morales and his continuance of power for an unconstitutional 4th term. Chaos and division grew as protests became increasingly polarized and violent. Shortages of food, water and gasoline most deeply affected the poor: single mothers couldn't work to provide for their children, children couldn't study and food prices rose. In the end, Bolivia registered around 35 deaths and over 800 wounded.

The following is a reflection and moments I recorded in the midst of some of our tensest days:

I burned a whole sheet of chocolate chip cookies in a futile attempt towards normalcy.

Soon after President Evo Morales and many others of his cabinet resigned after weeks of national pressure, a short-lived celebration quickly dispersed as angry mobs violently ransacked cities, destroying government property, businesses and homes. Suddenly all around us panic ensued.

“They’re looting and destroying everything!!!”
“Turn off all the lights so they can’t find us!”
“Can we come and stay with you at your house?”

From our home, we have a panoramic view of the capital city of La Paz and her sister-city El Alto, a combined population of over 2 million people. I stood paralyzed at the edge of our overlook watched the outbreak from afar. I could hear dynamite boom and pops of firecrackers on all sides. I saw huge smoke stacks rising in the distance from ongoing fighting and vandalism. And the nervous words of loved ones bombarded my thoughts:

— *“We can’t get home and so we’re just gonna have to walk down through the valley. We’ll probably be home by dark.”* - My Husband Andy, escorting two single female missionaries out of the city.

— *“Mama, I dreamt people surrounded our house with gasoline.”* - My 10-year old son.

— *“We have boiling water ready if anyone gets too close.”* - Friends and neighbors preparing to face oncoming attackers

— They’re yelling, *‘Civil war! Now we want civil war!’*” - **Frightened WMFB co-workers**

The next days were a blur, hosting friends, neighbors and staff members, coordinating ministry logistics, and trying to show solidarity with townspeople nearby.

“Today I’m so tired. We stayed up all night keeping watch.” “I can’t even remember what day it is.” - WMF staff member

“I had a panic attack. We need to get out of here.” - Fellow missionary

“Do we have school today? Do we have more homework?” “What can we do now??” - Bored children after weeks of cancelled classes

Beyond the day-to-day survival, lingered a heavy awareness of the issues at hand: deep resentments and fear, pain and frustration on all sides. One friend wrote, **“The wounds of hate and racism are not yet healed.”** We desired to be a voice of peace, hope and unity, but felt completely paralyzed to do so.

They’re yelling, ‘Civil war! Now we want civil war!’” - Frightened WMFB co-workers

“I’m just so sad.” “Who will fight for us now?” “We can’t trust them. We’re fighting for our dignity!”
- **indigenous friends lamented**



Protesters gathered across Bolivia to demand fair elections and a new government.

I finally broke from the stress of it all. Sobbing at times, other times intermittent tears arising without warning. Exhaustion enveloping it all.

Temporary resolution has since come with an interim government, while we await the upcoming Presidential elections (now postponed due to the pandemic) that could once again prove conflictive.

With a long history of exploitation, these recent uprisings proved that century old wounds have not yet healed. Racism and corruption have held this country captive for generations: Indian v.s. White; Left v.s. Right; Socialist v.s. Capitalist. Diverse, but not unified.

As privileged Americans seeking service and solidarity on behalf of the poor, our family has felt torn between these realities. We have 4 beautiful blond hair, blue-eyed children with big, brown, Bolivian hearts.

In the midst of the tension, we to hold to the Call of the Church:

To be a unique voice of peace, truth and love, in the midst of hatred, confusion and fear.
To be the Body of Christ that seeks unity, understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation.
To offer hope for the desperate and peace among the restless.

To respond with compassion and righteousness.
To oppose all injustice, fight oppression, and seek justice for all, particularly the least of these.

In these times of division and crisis, we remember Jesus on the cross, who embodies forgiveness that heals and frees the soul, closes the wounds, and fully reconciles.



ABOUT ANDREA

In 1994, Andrea traveled to Bolivia on her first overseas mission trip. There she discovered a passion for missions. Following this, she and her husband, Andy, traveled on various short-term trips to China and throughout Latin America. In 2001, they moved to El Alto, Bolivia with Word Made Flesh to begin their service among the poor, focusing on women in prostitution. Andrea is the Field Director of WMF-Bolivia where she lives with her husband and four sons.



CONNECT
WITH ANDREA
andrea.baker
@wordmadeflesh.org

On Humility

As we reflect on this lifestyle celebration, we invite you to explore some of our top picks from media and resources that deal with the topic of humility.



Read

VINCE L. BANTU takes us on a journey of humility as he crates a paradigm shift for the Western Christian's understanding of the Gospel and missiology. In *A Multitude of All Peoples*, Bantu reveals an alternate narrative to that of Christianity as a product of the Western white world. Bantu focuses on the development of diverse expressions of Christianity across Africa,

the Middle East, and Asia. He sheds light on the importance of contextualization and need for indigenous leadership in effective Christian mission and he outlines lessons for intercultural communication of the Gospel. The healing of wounds of racism and imperialism that continue to plague much of society worldwide will be possible only with renewed attention to the marginalized voices of the historic and current global church.



We recommend Johnny Cash's live performance in 1962 and Marion Williams' gospel rendition of the hymn; both can be found via a YouTube search.

Listen

WERE YOU THERE This American spiritual originally published in 1899 went on to become the first spiritual to be included in a major hymnal in 1940 (Episcopal Church). According to Civil Rights leader Howard Thurman in his autobiography, "Were you There (When They Crucified My Lord)" was one of Ghandi's favorites. The lyrics depict the events of Jesus' crucifixion, and the repeated line "O sometimes it causes me to tremble!" carries the sense of a humble posture of witness to what Christ chose to undergo for our sake.

Observe

What Our Lord Saw from the Cross (Ce que voyait Notre-Seigneur sur la Croix)

By: Jacques (James) Joseph Tissot

Reflection by Clint Baldwin, WMF International Executive Director

It is in humility that the God of the universe allowed Himself to be made a public spectacle of humiliation. Through the intimate solidarity that was accomplished through this ultimate sacrifice, willfully choosing in vulnerability and weakness to bear the burden of the suffering of humanity at its worst, Jesus turned humiliation into triumph. However, in this picture Tissot does not let us move to triumph. Here, in this portrayal, we sit with humiliation and perhaps find our way to humility.

Here, we as Christ, see all looking on with pity, or scorn, or grief...but none gaze in admiration at the preeminent pinnacle moment, the crescendo, the climactic culmination of God's plan of redemption with admiration and honor and celebration.

In the deepest humility, the God of everything offers redemption for all without anyone even noticing...except perhaps, at some embryonic level, a co-crucified thief and a Roman centurion.

As you reflect on this painting, how might you take encouragement in your hardships as you seek to faithfully walk in the crucified footsteps of our Lord? How might this painting better prepare you for a time when out of service to God you find yourself in a situation that is meant to be one of degradation and all gaze upon you with what appears to be anything but admiring recognition of good deeds done? How might you in humility, in faith believing that the Lord will eventually turn humiliation into triumph, also say, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." For accompaniment, read: Phillippians 2 & Luke 23:26-49

Celebrating Humility

By Gil Liu, *WMF Board Member*

I have worked as a primary care provider since finishing a pediatric residency in 1999. Having a job in healthcare gives me numerous opportunities to be humbled in very good ways. I am encouraged that during my career, there has been a clear evolution away from the traditional hierarchical deference to doctors, and a more effective movement to the importance of teamwork, and the need for equal footing to eliminate errors or other threats to patient safety. All of this is a move toward healthily-oriented, cooperative humility.

There's a reason it was talked about in Philippians. People living in the period when the New Testament was written were greatly influenced by Greek and Roman philosophy, in turn not significantly different in their attitudes about humility compared to American culture today. New Testament Greeks had as high a view of individual freedom as we do now. In non-biblical writings from that time in history, humility was disdained. Status was important. Humility was associated with low status and little worth; it was not something to be desired. With this understanding we come to scripture, which is packed with commands to be humble, with Jesus' call to become the least and a servant of all.

"...lowering oneself down and then being lifted up is the movement of Scripture."

According to Philippians 2:1-11, humility, for Paul, began with having the mindset of Christ. In this passage he tells the Philippians: if you know Christ, then you have to think like Christ. Paul gives a poem of sorts to explain what he means. He says: let the thinking be in you that was in Christ. It was at Jesus' disposal to be the same nature as God, but he decided that equality with God wasn't something he was going to grasp after or hold onto. Instead, he chose to make himself of no consequence, to take the nature of a slave, to obediently die in a humiliating way. It was because of this humility that God exalted him. Jesus chose the lowest status possible; consequently, God gave him the highest status possible.

This movement — lowering one's self down and then being lifted up — is the movement of scripture. It is at the very core of Christianity. "Become the least," Jesus said, and one day you will be the greatest. It was the opposite of the prevailing sentiment in the world that Jesus lived in and it is the opposite of today's world that never willingly moves down.

What does it mean to be Humble? It means to move down.

According to the example of Jesus, it is giving up what we could have, what is "rightfully" ours for the sake of others. Paul spells out a little more practically what that downward movement looks like in the four commands he gives in Philippians 2:3-4, and again in verse 14. He says, first -- do nothing out of selfish ambition or for your own self-interest; second -- do nothing out of vain conceit or to look good or for appearance sake; third -- consider others better than yourselves, not focusing on your own interests, but focusing on the interests of others. Lastly, do everything without complaining or arguing.

Based on these commands and the example Paul gives in Christ, here are three conclusions about humility that we can take away with us:

Humility never asks "What's in it for me?"

It never acts on its own self-interest. It never seeks the best for itself. It doesn't come to church because the church meets its needs.

Humility never asks, "How will I look?"

It does nothing out of a desire to look good, or religious, or holy or important or smart.

Humility never says "I deserve better than this."

It does not complain or argue when things don't go its way. It never grasps after what it could have, or what it "deserves."

Friends, they wouldn't say this about themselves, but this is how the staff of Word Made Flesh operates. This is who they are. In humility, they do their work out of love for Jesus and for others. I'm thankful to be part of the board of directors.

Finally, now that I am seeing the routine use of the abbreviation "WFH" (Work From Home), I am struggling to adjust to not thinking someone is writing about "WMF" (Word Made Flesh). I suppose this is an opportunity for me to be prompted to pray more often for our brothers and sisters serving as compassionate "Word Made Flesh" ministers of God's grace across the globe. Would you in humility and compassion pray with me for these folks all over the world?



To learn more about Gil and the Board of Directors, visit wordmadeflesh.org/board

Emptying Ourselves to Come Alongside

By David Niyonzima, *Field Director, WMF Burundi*



Children gather near the fountain for access to clean water (WMF Burundi).

Jesus Emptied Himself of Glory

During one of the prayer times with my colleagues, I shared on John 3:16. It was a few days before Christmas, the time we remember that God graciously sent Jesus Christ to humanity out of His great love. I wanted to call the attention of my audience on how Jesus humbled Himself and accepted to “be sent” on earth. As Philippians 2:7 depicts what Jesus did by “emptying Himself”, so the passage in John 17:5 shares about Jesus emptying His glory, and John 5:30 tells us concerning how He emptied himself of independent authority — these verses still fill me with wonder.

I wonder how we translate these passages into our daily lives as we “follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21 NIV). Ken Shigematsu emboldens us by saying that “Scriptures tell us that the invisible infinite God parted the curtain between heaven and earth and stepped into our neighborhood as the flesh-and-blood human being we know as Jesus Christ.”

As we minister to our neighborhood, there is need to empty ourselves (John 17:5). Some of us have titles, positions or social status that, if not put aside in humility, might counteract the impact we want to make. We should look to come alongside our communities, rather than pretend we have all the answers or seek to lead only because we may have more knowledge of the Word of God than others might. We must be mindful to our contexts and meet people where they are.

In Burundi, where the UNESCO (2014) published the literacy rate to be 61.57% and in literacy ranks 126 in comparison to other countries. Those who had the opportunity to receive education might need to empty themselves of the pride of being among the few who are educated when it comes to serving those in need as Jesus would. Dictionaries define humility as the quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people; a synonym for it is down-to-earth, and of course its antonym is “pride”.

(Top and bottom) Twa people near their homes and community. Burundi's Twa face some of the most significant poverty and vulnerability in the country.

Eugene Peterson translates 1 Peter 5:5 like this: “But all of you, leaders and followers alike, are to be down to earth with each other, for God has had it with the proud, but takes delight in just plain people” (1 Peter 5:5, Message). To offer another context, how can a Hutu or a Tutsi minister to the Twa of Burundi without emptying him/herself of the kind of ethnic pride that has often been the source of the interethnic violence on all sides?

Burundi's history of mass killings during years of civil wars (1972, 1988 and 1993) in which Hutus and Tutsis, including Twas, are victims, combined with problems of overpopulation and poverty victimize and traumatize large segments of the population. There is obligation to be down-to-earth in serving and walking with these communities in need of healing and relief.

Jesus Emptied Himself of Independent Authority

Emptying oneself of independent authority might be interpreted as accepting to work as a team. In 1962, the missionaries asked seven Burundian Friends pastors to form a leadership council. After the first efforts to involve Burundians in the missions decisions, a different leadership model evolved in 1968, with a missionary and a Burundian as Co-Legal Representatives. The term “Legal Representative” was one the government used to identify the church official they would expect to deal with in matters involving the church and the government. Neither was allowed to make a decision on their own. They had to always consult with each other before they moved towards a planned action. This consultation kept the focus on the needs of the group to act as a whole. It seems that during the period of shared leadership between the missionaries and Burundian leaders, there was a consciousness of the importance of being led by the Spirit together.

Maybe this model is similar to the emptying of independent authority that Christ has exemplified and expects us to follow as we seek to love others. As we imitate (1 Cor. 11:1) Christ's humility, in service, let us not follow our “own whim but”, but empty ourselves to “accomplish the will” of God (John 6:38, Message) and come alongside those who need it most.



ABOUT DAVID

David Niyonzima, in promoting psychosocial approaches to rebuilding communities after atrocities, founded Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS). He is convinced that dealing with the past is necessary for lasting peace. He is married to Félicité and they have 4 grown up children and two grandsons. He lives in Bujumbura, Burundi. .

CONNECT WITH DAVID: david.niyonzima@wordmadeoflesh.org

My Deepest Humility

By Bishop Linda Adams, *Bishop of the Free Methodist Church USA*



I was a teenage girl when I first heard God calling my name, so I’ve always been drawn to the story of God calling Mary, a teenage girl, to become the mother of the Messiah.

I’m still intrigued at Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38, where his first words to her are, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary found his words troubling, and puzzled over his greeting. Gabriel made sure she hadn’t missed a key point by repeating, “you have found favor with God.” I love her chutzpah! She boldly asked how she, a virgin, would give birth to the Son of the Most High. When the explanation came, she offered herself fully to cooperate with God’s desire: “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.”

Why did God favor Mary? What about this particular young woman pleased him and caused him to entrust her with an enormous and costly mission? She was poor, young and female.

Why would God’s cosmic plan require someone like Mary? From the way the story unfolds, it’s clear that Mary knew herself and she knew her Lord. From this first encounter, she intuited that she had a choice in the matter and willingly stepped into the role God invited her to play, even as she identified herself as a servant.

She soon visited Elizabeth, and prophesied an expansive vision:

“My soul praises the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
For he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.” (Luke 1:46b-49; 52 NIV)

(Left) Mother, child, and friend near WMF Chennai. (Right) Children during worship and prayer at WMF Sierra Leone.

This prophecy, often referred to as the Magnificat and envisioned as a song, reveals something wonderful about Mary. She rises to praise God and rejoices in her Savior, recognizing that God has been mindful of her humble state. God saw her humility and granted her favor.

“From now on all generations will call me blessed” may sound boastful, as if she’s envisioning eternal fame for herself. But read it carefully. No, she’s not relishing the thought of all generations being impressed with her; she’s celebrating that all generations will recognize how blessed she is to have been the recipient of the Mighty One’s great things. All will see that God brings down rulers from their thrones but exalts the humble, and that’s worth boasting about! She is among the humble who are lifted up by God.

The essence of humility is rightly understanding ourselves in relation to God and others. Mary shows true humility by welcoming God’s call and answering yes. She doesn’t hold back in false humility but steps up to fulfill an amazing role for the glory of God.

As God has entrusted me with wonderful responsibilities in his kingdom, I’ve lived in awe that this gracious God would choose me. I’ve lived the dream—the dream of participating with God in blessing and healing this world he loves. With each succeeding privilege of service in God’s church, I’ve been more deeply humbled to recognize that my Lord has stooped down to lift me up, for his honor and glory.

One of the most hilarious and humbling moments of my life happened a few months ago. Shortly after having been elected a bishop in the Free Methodist Church USA, I was in Brazil for a global Free Methodist gathering. When the Brazilian bishop



announced that for the first time in our 160-year history we have a female bishop, the crowd went wild! They roared—shouted, high-fived, jumped up and embraced one another and danced in the aisles. It was crazy! I could hardly believe their enthusiasm.

After the event ended, dozens of Brazilian men and women asked to take selfies with me. Women wept for joy. Young men exclaimed, “This changes everything for our wives, our daughters, our granddaughters!” I realized in that moment that surrendering to God throughout my life, echoing Mary’s words, “I am the Lord’s servant; let it be to me as you have said” is being used now to encourage others and pave the way for important changes. Barriers to the full participation of women in the leadership of God’s church will not fall quickly or easily, but my election brought hope that one day Brazil’s Free Methodist Church will elevate women to roles appropriate to their gifts and calling.

What an honor to allow God to position me where he wants! What a gift to be God’s servant! Who am I to be given the privilege of representing my sisters around the world? Now it was my turn to cry tears of overwhelming gratitude. In that moment of exaltation, God allowed me to experience my deepest humility.



ABOUT LINDA

In July 2019, Linda Adams became the first woman to be elected as a Bishop for the Free Methodist Church USA, serving the North and North Central United States and overseeing Latin America. Prior to her election, Linda served the Free Methodist Church as Director of International Child Care Ministries (ICCM) for eleven years. ICCM is a child sponsorship initiative serving approximately 20,000 children in 33 countries around the world. Before taking up leadership of ICCM, she served churches in Michigan, Illinois and New York. Linda has earned her Master of Divinity (1991) and Doctor of Ministry (2000) degrees from Asbury Theological Seminary.



Women of the WMF Bolivia community.

Humility in the “Shark Tank”

By Cara Strauss Contreras
SutiSana Co-Founder & Intl. Sales Coordinator,
WMF Bolivia

“How would you like to win \$70,000?”

We were initially excited when early 2020 we were asked to pitch SutiSana for a Bolivian version of the reality show Shark Tank, where we would be competing with 99 other Bolivian businesses for a \$70,000 prize.

Like most businesses, and specifically as a freedom business that employs survivors of sexual exploitation, SutiSana could certainly use the additional funds! We set up a stunning display of our global textile and leather purses,

and the pitch seemed to be going well. Then a sharp-faced executive behind the desk asked, “We hear you work with sexually trafficked women. Would any of them be willing to tell their story on the show?”

I stuttered, “Well, yes, we offer employment to women in vulnerable situations. But we’re proud to be known for the quality of our products and ethical business practices, not just the stories of our artisans.”

She brushed that off, “We have 100 businesses here, and your products aren’t any better than theirs. You need an edge over the competition, and your edge is these women’s stories.”

But I could hear the subtext of her words — “We need to make the audience connect with you, feel pity for the women, maybe even cry. Tears make good TV.”

Asking a survivor to share her experience of exploitation to a television audience so that SutiSana makes more sales is a form of re-exploitation. Every woman in SutiSana was used over and over for her body, for her youth, for her innocence. That physical violation is deeply traumatizing for every woman. Some might assume that the opportunity to tell her story could actually be an empowering experience, an

opportunity to “take back what was robbed from her.” In some cases, and in some situations, it might be.

But even if some of our artisans are far enough along on their healing journey to tell their stories to a larger audience, this was clearly not a healthy or safe environment to do that. We all know the toxicity and unhealthy rhythms that often accompany reality television, and it would be almost impossible to prepare our artisans for the potential vitriol and backlash they could experience.

As a business needing to make a profit in order to continue our work, how must we react when we’re in the shark tank? How do we avoid joining in, and being part of the feeding frenzy? Can we truly prioritize people over profit and pass on the big TV break and still survive as a business? What happens when a business decides to continue on the slower road, instead of grabbing at whatever flashy opportunity comes along?

We usually think of humility as a personal stance, a choice each person makes to think of others before themselves. But humility as an organization or business may mean not taking the road of most visibility if it could cause harm. We’re committed to breaking down the lie that says “All publicity is good publicity,” and instead judging each “opportunity” through the lens of potential exploitation.

A mother and child
during a visit to
their home
(WMF Bolivia).



So, we’ll have to take a hard pass on Bolivian Shark Tank. Instead, we’ll take the slow growth and word-of-mouth marketing. We know that it’s our faithful clients, our passionate advocates, and our principles community, YOU actually, who are the real engine behind the steady growth of our humble little business. And thanks to you, we can still look each artisan in the eye and promise, “This is still a safe space for you. We’re still a family.”



ABOUT CARA

Cara grew up as a daughter of missionaries in Ethiopia. While attending John Brown University, she began to fully pursue Christ and was first exposed to WMF. Later, through an internship in Bolivia, she was discipled into a deeper understanding of God’s heart for the poor and a love for women caught in prostitution. After serving for two years in El Alto, Bolivia as the Servant Team Coordinator, Cara met and fell in love with Mache. They were married in 2010, the same year that Cara co-founded SutiSana: WMF Bolivia’s social enterprise that offers dignified employment to survivors of prostitution. Since 2010, Cara has thrown herself into the growth and development of SutiSana. Mache and Cara now have two daughters, Ariana and Zoe.

CONNECT WITH CARA

cara.contreras
@wordmade flesh.org





Lifestyle Celebrations

Intimacy We celebrate intimacy with Jesus to be our highest calling and our created purpose.

Obedience We celebrate obedience as our loving response to the grace of Jesus.

Humility We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

Community We celebrate community as a means for discipleship and service.

Service We celebrate service as an expression of our fellowship.

Simplicity We celebrate simplicity as a privilege in identification with Jesus and the poor.

Submission We celebrate submission to Jesus, each other and the poor.

Brokenness We celebrate brokenness as our responsibility in ministry among the broken.

Suffering We celebrate suffering as a willing sacrifice in serving Jesus.

“Humility is the mother of all virtues; purity, charity and obedience. It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted and ardent. If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blamed you will not be discouraged. If they call you a saint you will not put yourself on a pedestal.”

—Mother Teresa,
*In the Heart of the World:
Thoughts, Stories and Prayers*



THE **CRY**

Follow **Word Made Flesh International**



Word Made Flesh International
PO Box 70
Wilmore, KY, USA 40390
1.859.388.4646
info@wordmadeflesh.org