

World Hunger  
Campaign

ADULT DEVOTIONAL

Changing  
the story



WorldRenew™

LIVING JUSTICE • LOVING MERCY • SERVING CHRIST

800315

## DAY 1

**Jesus is the Story-Changer**

LUKE 4:14-30

Jesus came to earth to change the story. In the beginning, all was perfect in the Garden of Eden, but when Adam and Eve sinned everything changed. The world became a place with sadness, injustice, and brokenness. It was a story that needed to be changed. In the face of the Fall, God promised to send someone who would crush Satan's head, speak words of victory over death, and prepare the way for everything to be made new. And that's just what He did.

At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

This proclamation revealed that Jesus not only came to save humanity from eternal separation from God, but also to bring his kingdom here on earth. Jesus was changing the story not just of people's souls but also of their physical well-being. It is a story that will come to completion when Jesus comes again, but has already started in the here and now.

Jesus healed the sick, cared for the poor, and fought against injustice. He calls us to do the same.

For more than 50 years, World Renew has been blessed to be an agent of the Church around the world. Christians who want to live out God's call to care for those in need, have trusted World Renew with their financial gifts and volunteer resources. Together with other international aid organizations, World Renew has seen the fruits of this investment.

Recent reports have shown that the number of hungry people in our world has declined by more than 100 million people over the past decade and by more than 200 million since the early 1990s. That is something to truly praise God for!

Yet, we also know that we have a long way to go. Today, 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty. That means that they survive on less than \$1.25 per day. Of those in poverty, 795 million people — approximately one out of every nine people on earth — experience hunger daily. As a result, three million children under the age of five die every year as a result of poor nutrition.

In the next two weeks, World Renew invites you to read the following devotions. You will have the opportunity to give thanks with us for the ways God has changed the stories of people throughout the world. You will also be challenged to join in this transforming work.

Jesus taught that he is the vine and we are the branches. Apart from him we can accomplish nothing, but when we remain in him he will empower us to do great things. As story-changers reflecting the Master Story-Changer, we move forward with confidence because in him we are new creations. The old has gone! The new is come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

## DAY 2

## The Unseen Story

## EPHESIANS 6:10-20

According to the apostle Paul, one of the first steps to becoming a story-changer is to acknowledge the hurdles you are up against. He writes, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

In other words, as we strive to model Jesus and respond to the needs of vulnerable people around the world, we are not just dealing with a physical need to provide healthcare or food. We are also engaged in a spiritual struggle.

A story from World Renew’s ministry with the Fulani people in central Mali provides a great example. World Renew has spent decades in this region, helping people improve their lives through programs in improved healthcare, childhood vaccinations, and adult literacy classes.

As part of this ministry, World Renew has also provided box libraries — metal boxes that contain booklets in the local language that people can use to practice their newfound literacy skills. The booklets are written at a basic level and contain information on a variety of relevant topics such as how to treat common cattle diseases, people’s rights under the Malian legal system, and child health. There are also several books of the Bible.

While most of the people in this region are Muslim, several people have come to Christ as a result of World Renew’s programs.

In 2015, this ministry became dangerous. For several years, a Fulani jihadist group had been attacking communities in the North with an

extreme agenda. Led by a radical preacher named Amadou Koufa, they declared that Western education and culture are evil and must be wiped out. In 2015, this conflict reached the regions where World Renew was working.

“Some of the young men who have joined Koufa’s jihad are from villages where we have box libraries,” said World Renew’s West Africa Team Leader, Mary Crickmore. “This has made it very dangerous for World Renew staff to go out to visit and maintain the box libraries. But it also makes the presence of books and Scriptures in Fulani villages extremely important so that people will have the opportunity to hear the message of truth in Christ.”

One brave young man, named Brehima Diarra, understood the urgency of getting that message out to as many people as possible. He is a Christian and agreed to help with the dangerous job of transporting books on his motorcycle to the villages.

World Renew staff prayed for Brehima Diarra as he travelled. They understood the necessity of prayer as a weapon in the spiritual struggle. They realized that there are forces that want Jesus’ followers to fail as they seek to tell people about him and to help improve people’s lives. Brehima Diarra reached his destination and was also able to return safely!

As we seek to be story-changers, let us remember the amazing weapon we have at our disposal. When we surround ourselves in prayer and give all our activities up to God, we can live in the strength of the Lord and his mighty power.

## DAY 3

## Only

LUKE 9:10-17

Do you ever wish that you could take back just one word? Maybe it was a word of frustration voiced at one of your children, or a complaint expressed at work that was overheard by someone you wish hadn't.

When Jesus commanded his disciples to feed five thousand people, their response included one word that they might have regretted later on: **Only** — “We have **only** five loaves of bread and two fish” (Luke 9:13a).

Most of us can probably relate to the disciples' reaction. **Only** is a word that often shapes the stories we tell ourselves. Sometimes, we think we aren't good enough to do God's work. Maybe we think we have failed him before and that he is no longer interested in our service. Or maybe a deep sense of unworthiness steals our hope of being able to serve God in our future. We're convinced that someone else can do the job better than we can.

These stories we tell ourselves can deter us from fighting injustice, poverty, and oppression in our local communities and around the world. That's not what God has in mind for us. Just as Jesus didn't allow the stories the disciples told themselves to determine the outcome for a crowd of hungry people, so He has great things in mind for us despite the stories we tell ourselves.

Jesus revealed himself as the Story-Changer when the food provided by God was multiplied in ways the disciples could never have dreamed of. Jesus obliterated their narrow vision defined by the word **only** when they witnessed that all the people were satisfied and there were twelve basketfuls of broken pieces left over!

What will it take to delete the word **only** from our stories so that we embrace the liberating view of ourselves that God has of us — a view that will set us free to serve him in his world and to work toward transformation?

The apostle Paul gives us a clue: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Paul's focus is on the immeasurable power of God! That power can bring about changes in ways that we can't even begin to dream of. That power encourages us to delete **only** from our stories and tackle issues like global poverty with the skills and talents that God has given us.

## DAY 4

# Jesus' Love Writes Surprise Endings to Our Stories

LUKE 7:36-50

Sometimes when we read or hear a story, we expect it to end one way, only to be surprised when it ends completely differently. Simon, the Pharisee, experienced a similarly shocking surprise the day he invited Jesus to his home for dinner.

Simon had planned his dinner party. His guest list did not include a woman who had lived a sinful life, but there she was for all the other guests to see, standing by the low couch on which Jesus was reclining. She wept so much that her tears wet his feet. Then she wiped his feet dry with her hair and kissed them. Pouring expensive perfume on Jesus' feet completed her act of adoration and gratitude.

When Simon witnessed this unexpected and disconcerting scene, he figured he had the ammunition against Jesus that he was hoping to uncover. If Jesus were a true prophet, he would know that the woman who was touching him was a sinner. Because Simon disdained the woman, he was convinced that her past sins determined the ending of her story. Simon's imagination failed to grasp the possibility of a surprise ending.

Jesus knew differently. He told Simon a parable about two men who both owed money that they couldn't pay back. In response to this situation, the moneylender cancelled both their debts. Jesus asked Simon, "Now which of them will love him more?"

Jesus' probing question put Simon on the spot. It pointed to the paramount issue — love — and to the

fact that the woman whom Simon had scorned was a shining example of love for Jesus. Jesus' love for the woman changed her story. The life of shame, rejection, and isolation that her family, community, and the religious leaders had written for her had been deleted in the presence of her Savior.

The good news is that Jesus' love still writes surprise endings to our stories today. In Malawi, for example, Yvonne Phiri grew up in a poor home. She attended high school, but was forced to quit so she could help her mother sell goods at the market. As a teenaged girl working in a public place, she was exposed to people who cared nothing for her and was vulnerable to the ploys of unscrupulous men. Desperate to earn money and survive, Yvonne eventually became a sex trade worker.

Yvonne's story seemed destined for a bitter, broken ending, but God had other plans. In Yvonne's village, World Renew had established a social support group for girls trapped in the sex trade. When Yvonne was asked to join the group, she didn't hesitate. Now, she testifies that her life has been completely transformed. She has stopped working in the sex trade, has returned to high school and has a dream of becoming a nurse.

When you consider the needs of people in our world today, what kinds of endings do you anticipate for their stories? Does the truth that Jesus' love writes surprise endings to stories shape your response to global needs?

## DAY 5

**Watch How Our Stories Grow****MARK 9:30-37**

After a farmer plants a field of soybeans, he or she does not just sit down at the side of the field to wait for the seeds to germinate. Planting is just the beginning of the growth process. The crop also requires feeding, watering, and weeding. To get a good harvest, a farmer must have patience, perseverance, and a vision for a good outcome.

That's also how people's stories are transformed through the power of Jesus, the Story-Changer. When Jesus called twelve men to follow him, he patiently cultivated, planted, watered, and weeded the story-soil of their lives. The twelve had a lot to learn.

Once, Jesus told his disciples that he would be given into the hands of evil men, who would kill him. He also explained that after three days he would rise, but the disciples didn't understand what he meant. Even though they had been with Jesus and knew who he was, they were afraid to ask him. Their understanding of his Messianic mission needed time to grow under his patient tutelage.

Another time, Jesus patiently confronted them about an argument they had out of his hearing as they travelled on the road. Ashamed, they kept quiet, not wanting their pride and selfishness exposed. They didn't comprehend that Jesus already knew they were arguing about who among them was the greatest. Jesus patiently taught them that being His follower entailed being a servant, not dominating others.

Thank God that Jesus doesn't plant kingdom seeds in people's lives and then walk away. Through his patience and perseverance, he slowly fashioned them into men who would be used by God to shape the world for him.

Today, God's work in the world continues. At times, results are quickly evident. More often, change comes slowly. For the past 37 years, World Renew has spearheaded a world hunger campaign to help North American Christians respond to needs around the world. For more than 54 years, World Renew and other global aid organizations have worked hard to improve the lives of impoverished people. Despite all this work, there are still places of great need.

In India, for example, Bashanding Kharshandi is a small-scale farmer who lives with his wife and children on a one acre plot where he cultivates rice and vegetables. In the past, he didn't have much difficulty surviving, but now changing weather patterns as well as increasing soil infertility have made it difficult to meet his family's basic needs.

Bashanding was receptive to World Renew's offer to help him change his story. With other farmers, he patiently took small steps to learn about ways to improve his farming and increase his crop yields. Bashanding knows he's just in the initial stage of improving his life, but that's all right with him. He understands that often change comes slowly. The vision of a better future spurs him on.

At what pace do you expect your own and other people's stories to change? Are you willing to patiently persevere and cling to God's vision for his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven even as you work for transformation? Will you join World Renew in continuing to faithfully seek change in the world?

## DAY 6

# Changing the Stories We Tell Ourselves

## JOHN 9

Why are people poor? Some people might respond to this question by saying that poor people are lazy. They don't care about education. They are alcoholics and drug abusers. They don't want to work and prefer handouts.

While these stereotypes are likely far from the truth, they have become part of our culture and shape how we think about people and our responses to them. If we want to participate in helping people change their stories, we first have to make sure that our preconceptions about their current stories are accurate.

One day, Jesus' disciples came upon a man who had been blind from birth. The disciples looked at the man but didn't really see him. He was a problem to be solved and a question that needed to be answered. The disciples asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2)

Jesus, on the other hand, looked at the man and truly saw him. He was a person who needed Jesus. The man's blindness and the miracle of his sight were not a result of his or his parents' sin but had happened so that God's works would be evidenced through Jesus.

What context shapes the questions you ask? Have you ever asked: Why don't poor people work harder? Why can't hungry people find jobs or be more entrepreneurial to earn more income? Why do poor parents have so many children when they can't afford to feed the ones they already have? Why don't poor parents just build a school, hire some teachers, and educate their children? Why should I bother helping

all these people when they don't seem to be helping themselves? Why should I donate money when it won't really make a difference?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus' questions always went right to the heart of people's need for His grace, love, forgiveness, and restoration. As we follow his example, our questions can do the same.

By God's grace, we'll discard our blind misconceptions and begin asking questions with kingdom-insight: How does my lifestyle contribute to the oppression of others? What can I do to better understand the reasons why people are poor and hungry? What is God calling me to do to be part of the solution to global issues? How does my story need to change so the stories of others will flourish?

## DAY 7

**Thank Jesus for Good News Stories**

LUKE 13:10-17

We bring joy to Jesus' heart when we thank him for all his good news stories. When Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and encountered a disabled woman, he set in motion a good news story that we can still thank him for today.

When Jesus saw the woman's physical and spiritual anguish, he called her to come to him, and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity" (Luke 13:12). Then he put his hands on her. She immediately straightened up and stood tall and praised God for her deliverance.

However, where the woman experienced good news, the synagogue ruler pegged Jesus as bad news. He indignantly pointed out to the people who were present that for six days a week they could come to the synagogue for healing. They didn't need to come for healing on the Sabbath!

Angered at the synagogue ruler's hard heart and inability to see the good news story unfolding right in front of him, Jesus exposed his hypocrisy. He pointed to the very Scriptures that the synagogue ruler held dear, zeroing in on God's original intention for Sabbath rest: freedom from bondage, renewal for the journey, and communal worship of Almighty God.

Jesus' good news experienced by the healed woman and many others in the gospel narratives continues today. Matou Karambé's story is a great example. The 35-year-old woman recently joined a microcredit program in her community in Mali. This was a huge step in a society where most women are less educated than men and are expected to rely on men to support them.

Matou has seen her entire life transformed through this opportunity. The mother of four children had never attempted to earn her own income. When she joined the microcredit program, the other women encouraged her to set up her own small business. After receiving the necessary training, Matou decided to sell fried fish.

After successfully paying off her first loan, Matou decided to use some of her profits and a second small loan to invest in other business opportunities. She bought bread to sell at the market, and from the profits she purchased second-hand clothes which she sold. The diversification strategy she employed led to greater financial security and increased income.

Matou is a successful business woman because she dared to buck societal norms and try something very new and different. As a result, she is now able to send her children to school and contribute to her household expenses along with her husband. Her contribution gained her husband's respect and there is now a greater sense of partnership in their relationship.

Matou is thankful to World Renew for walking alongside her and World Renew is thankful to God for bringing this amazing change to Matou's life. What examples of good news stories do you see unfolding in your life today?

## DAY 8

# Jesus Tells a Story to Show the Way

LUKE 10:25-37

When we listen to a great story-teller, we are swiftly drawn into their story-world. We get caught up in a mystery plot's suspense, a comedy's unexpected humor, or a tragedy's heartbreaking conclusion.

When Jesus told stories, his intention was to use these parables to reveal the truth of the coming kingdom of God in such a way that listeners would have to think about God's claim on their lives and their response to him, a response that would have eternal consequences.

One day, Jesus told a parable to a law expert who approached him and asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life. If he had to love God and his neighbor, he wanted to know exactly who his neighbor was. Jesus told a story to show the man what living for God and other people is really all about!

As the expert in the law was drawn in by Jesus' story, he might have first appreciated the plot of the Good Samaritan. It would have made sense to him that the priest and Levite passed by the man because contact with the man's blood would have made them ritually unclean, something pious Jews tried to avoid.

The law expert would probably have grown increasingly uncomfortable when Jesus placed the Samaritan at center stage of the story. How could Jesus give the Samaritan the leading role of saviour to the wounded man, he might have asked.

Jesus' question back was even more significant, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

When the expert in the law answered — "The one who had mercy on him" — did he really understand how Jesus had turned the tables on his original question? Jesus didn't delineating a list of people for the man to love, instead, his focus was on being a neighbor.

Today, Jesus' question still reverberates in our lives. When you think of helping people to change their stories, are you selective about which people you want to help? Are you less likely to help the Muslim in need, the homeless teenager on the street, or the person suffering from AIDS than a Christian family or child overseas?

Jesus tells us that our only concern should be to be a neighbor. It is our responsibility to show mercy where it is needed, and to trust that Jesus will direct our paths to intersect with the people who he has chosen us to meet.

## DAY 9

# No One is Too Small to Change the Story

LUKE 18:15-17

At times in our lives, we all feel small. As a child, you may have felt tiny compared to a tall adult. As a teenager, maybe you shrivelled emotionally because your peers were “cooler” and more popular than you were. Even as an adult, you may find yourself feeling inferior beside someone in your work place or church community. One aspect of our sinful human nature is our constant desire to compare ourselves to others. All too often, we use this comparison to put ourselves down.

Fortunately, our God is One who loves us all equally as his children. While he was on earth, Jesus was never too busy for people who were seemingly small and insignificant. The disciples learned that truth the hard way.

When people brought their babies to Jesus to place his hands on them for a blessing, the disciples saw not an opportunity for their Master to share his love, but an annoying interruption to what they considered his more important agenda. The excited parents deserved to be rebuked! Harsh words must have been hurled as the disciples attempted to send the nuisance crowd away.

Jesus would have none of it! Above the reproaching voices of the disciples, Jesus called out, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Luke 18:15-17).

The disciples should have known that Jesus never shunned smallness. Hadn’t he come to earth as a baby — tiny, vulnerable, and powerless? Hadn’t he repeatedly shown compassion for people on the margins of society — the poor, hungry, rejected, and isolated? Hadn’t he stooped down to show **them** love?

Recognizing the worth and value of every person — no matter how small

or “insignificant” — is an important value of World Renew’s ministry. In fact, it is often the starting place for communities in need.

Like us, many of these people have spent years comparing themselves to others and finding that they come up short. They know they are poor and begin to expect that that is all they can ever be.

World Renew starts by reminding people that they have worth and value to God. While small and insignificant in the eyes of the world, God has given everyone gifts and abilities. Once people recognize these assets that they have at their disposal they are equipped to bring about change.

In Faulonga village in Uganda, people believed that poverty was their destiny. World Renew helped them recognize that by working together and saving as little as a few cents each week, they had the abilities to overcome poverty without external funding.

After saving money and taking out a loan from her community savings group, one woman in Faulonga was successfully able to start a business and turn a profit. She said, “We believed we were poor, but we are not. Any poverty here is just due to poor planning. We thought that banking is for the rich and civil servants, yet saving is possible within the communities. Now that we know how to plan and work together with the little that we have, we have quick access to our own financial and credit services.”

Thank God! Jesus loves all people, regardless of how small they are in their own minds or in the eyes of the world.

## DAY 10

**King of Glory — Lord of the Story!****REVELATION 21:1-5**

Have you ever read a good book and felt impatient to discover the ending? Did you then peek at the last pages, keen to learn about the plot's resolution and what happens to the protagonist, who you have come to care about?

In the last two weeks, you have been reading stories about how Jesus, the Story-Changer, is allowing and empowering World Renew to participate in rewriting people's stories around the world. It's an ongoing story. Each day, new chapters are being written as the Holy Spirit moves throughout the world conveying the good news of King Jesus' victory and the establishment of his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

People who were once impoverished are earning a secure income. Farmers are learning new methods for enriching their soil and planting their crops so that they are able to grow enough food to feed their families and to sell the surplus. Women who have suffered from unjust treatment are becoming business leaders and contributing to their families' incomes. People who were once illiterate are learning to read and have an opportunity to read the Bible.

These are all stories worthy of celebration, but they are only part of a larger story. The story of God's great work and His Kingdom is ongoing.

The book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of how this story will end. In his vision, John saw a new heaven and a new earth, where God's dwelling place was among the people. In this new world, there will be no more tears, death, or pain (Revelations 21:3-4).

John's vision isn't a pie-in-the-sky mirage, nor is it a pot-shot at a dream that might possibly come true if we all work hard enough. Instead, it is a vision that we know will come true and one that we are tasked to play a role in today.

We've peeked at the ending of the story and heard the words of the Word made flesh — not death, but life; not hunger, but plenty; not pain, but health; not mourning, but rejoicing. These words continue to shape our stories from beginning to end, to beginning.

World Renew is thankful to God for letting us have a peek at the ending of the story. We have courage, stamina, and hope to continue participating in helping others to change their stories because the King of glory is Lord of the story!