Stories from our global programme

Lebanon: Dalila

‘I can’t afford to look after my young children’

Dalia and her family have been living in Lebanon since they fled Syria in 2013. Her husband has not been able to find work during the pandemic so they have run up debts of over £3,000 paying rent on their one-bedroom flat. Every day, they fear being evicted. ‘Our two youngest children still wear nappies and drink milk. But we can’t afford these things.’

Our partners have supplied Dalia with food vouchers so she can feed the family and decide how best to use the money.

Ethiopia: Zewditu

‘I had to sell my belongings to feed my children’

Zewditu is a widow and mother-of-four living in Ethiopia. She used to run a food stall serving local labourers but, when their work stopped due to Covid, Zewditu lost all her customers. ‘I had to close my business and sold my equipment to keep feeding my children. I wondered how I’d ever get started again.’

With a cash grant of £30, Zewditu was able to buy new furniture and equipment and reopen her business. This newfound security has restored her hope. ‘The money I received may look small but I know that it brought me out of depression. I’m now confident that I can expand and open a small restaurant.’

Bangladesh: Kanchan

After months of lockdown, the cupboards in Kanchan’s home became completely empty. This desperate family became terrified of starving to death.

Due to Covid-19, the 36-year-old mum lost all her daily wages when she no longer had any work as a housemaid or a labourer in road construction projects.

But, with a cash grant, Kanchan can now feed her family. ‘We have bought some chickens and ducks and rented a piece of land from a neighbour to grow vegetables,’ she says. ‘The cash support was like water in the desert to us.’
Many of us have got to know our neighbours a bit better during the pandemic – maybe we had a quick chat as we came out to ‘clap for carers’ together. Some of us have been keeping a closer eye on elderly or more vulnerable neighbours too.

When an ‘expert in the law’ asks Jesus how to gain eternal life (Luke 10:25–27), Jesus replies, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself,’ a commandment that comes second only to ‘Love the Lord your God…’ (His answer is the same in Matthew 22:37–39.)

And when that same ‘expert in the law’ asks Jesus who his ‘neighbour’ is, Jesus makes clear he doesn’t just mean Mrs Jenkins at No. 38. The story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37 stresses that ‘our neighbour’ is someone in need.

After the man had been in attacked, in recounting the three different responses of the Levite, the Priest and the Samaritan, Jesus asks in Luke 10:36–37:

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

That word ‘mercy’ appears again in Micah 6:8 where the prophet sets out how we should live a good life:

‘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.’

The Hebrew word in Micah translated as ‘mercy’ is hesed, a beautiful word which means ‘loving-kindness’ or ‘steadfast love’.

The word hesed is used 240 times in the Old Testament, especially in Psalms. For example, Psalm 103:4 describes the Lord as the one ‘who crowns you with love [loving-kindness] and compassion’.

Crucially, hesed is the word God uses to describe his covenant with Israel in Hosea 2:19, an unbreakable bond of faithful love, which is beyond the law. ‘I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In loving-kindness and mercy’ (NKJV).

We’re called to love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). In fact, we’re called to love in the same way as he loves us: unconditionally, steadfastly. We’re called to suspend our bias, judgement, preference – and respond to those in need as if they were Jesus himself (Matthew 25:35–40), regardless of their background, nationality, race or faith.


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