

# Hold on light

by Jeff Lewis

Week eight

## A time to reflect

What do you have to be thankful for? In the devotion, *God's Heart for the Nations* by Jeff Lewis, we have looked at the themes of blessing and responsibility. This week is a perfect opportunity to reflect on how God has blessed you. Don't forget that we are responsible for that which God has given us.

"Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name;  
Make known His deeds among the peoples.  
Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;  
Speak of all His wonders.  
Glory in His holy name;  
Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad.  
Seek the Lord and His strength;  
Seek His face continually.  
Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done,  
His marvels and the judgments from His mouth."  
1 Chronicles 16:8-12 (NASB)

Here are a few quotes to remind us of what we have.

## Food:

"Sometimes I think, 'If I die, I won't have to see my children suffering as they are.' Sometimes I even think of killing myself. So often I see them crying, hungry; and there I am, without a cent to buy them some bread. I think, 'My God, I can't face it! I'll end my life. I don't want to look any more!' (Iracema da Silva, Brazil—taken from Ronald J. Sider's *Rich Christians in Age of Hunger* 1997, 3)

"Lacking both food and medicine, poor nations have high infant mortality rates .... Permanent brain damage caused by protein deficiency is one of the most devastating aspects of world poverty. (Sider, 11)

"The developed nations, with one-quarter of the world's people, took about three-quarters of the year's fish catch. Peru has the largest anchovy fisheries in the world, but little of the anchovy protein goes to feed the millions of poor Peruvians; most of it fattens livestock in the United States and Europe. The story of tuna is similar ... at one point two-thirds of the total world tuna catch ended up in the United States. One-third of that tuna went for catfood! (Sider, 134)

"... In 1986 the developed nations exported \$27,367 million worth of food to poor nations; but they imported \$42,282 million worth of food. Poor nations sent rich nations \$14,915 million more food than they received!" (Sider, 133)

## Buying power:

"*Newsweek* did a story on 'The Middle Class Poor,' calmly reporting that U.S. citizens earning \$30,693, \$36,832 or even \$51,155 a year (in 1989 dollars) felt they were at the edge of poverty. To the vast majority of the world's people, such statements would be unintelligible—or dishonest. To be sure, we do need \$30,000, \$50,000 or even more each year if we insist on two cars, an expensively furnished, sprawling suburban home, a \$100,000 life insurance policy, new clothes every time the fashions change, the most recent 'labor-saving devices' for home and garden, an annual three-week vacation to travel and so on. Many North Americans have come to expect precisely that. But that is hardly life at the edge of poverty. (Sider, 26)

Only 9.7 percent of disposable personal income in the United States, 1987, was used for food. (Sider, Table 10)

## **A beautiful world:**

"Everywhere around the world, poverty forces many people to live dangerously close to smoke-belching factories and toxic wastes ... 'The rich get richer and the poor get poisoned.'" (Sider, 132)

"Economic life today, especially in industrialized societies, is producing such severe environmental pollution and degradation that the future for everyone—rich and poor alike—is dangerously threatened. We are destroying our air, forests, lands and water so rapidly that we face disaster in the next century unless we make major changes." (Sider, 132)

## **Knowledge of God's love through Jesus the Christ:**

- Every hour more than 4,000 people die without Christ.
- One of every nine persons in the world is an evangelical Christian.
- One of every five persons in the world is a Muslim.
- 51 percent of the people in the world have never heard the gospel.

We have truly been blessed; there is no denying it. How do we respond?

## **Let us pray together:**

Lord we thank You for the blessings You have so freely given us. Help us to recognize Your provision and to discern the difference between needs and wants. Father, let us not forget our brothers and sisters when we come to the table, that we may share and avoid waste. Draw our attention to the oppressed and poor. Let their cries be heard among the nations that we might be instruments of Your love, peace and provision to them. Anoint us that we might preach good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim freedom to the captives and release from darkness those in prison. Give us boldness to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of the vengeance of our God. Fill us with compassion so that we can comfort those who mourn and provide for those who grieve. Let all who hear and believe say, 'Send me' to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

## **Scriptural Response:**

### **Christ's Ministry**

Isaiah 61:1-3

Truly this was Jesus' ministry, and the ministry to which we are also called

### **A warning**

James 5:1-5

### **Where is your focus?**

Mathew 6:16-34

### **Hold on light!**

1 John 3:17-18

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Luke 12:16-21

not hold on tight

God continues to bless us. Material things can be a form of blessing. They can also become a curse. Remember that God blesses us so that we can bless others, bringing glory to Him. If we hoard the blessings of the Lord like the Rich Fool, the things that were intended to be blessings can harden our hearts towards God, making them a curse. Learning to be content with and thankful for what we have helps us to hear and obey the prompting of Christ. For even "a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23, NIV). When we trust God for our provision and direction, we are free of the worries of this world and are empowered to do His will. Therefore, be thankful, and hold on light!

- What do you have to be thankful for?
- How does God want to use the blessing?
- What hinders your ability to serve God?