**GRACE OF GIVING IN UGANDA**

80,000 people find themselves in refugee camps.

Families crowded in houses, children going without food. Living in fear. Many orphans.

“How can I help them Lord out of this situation?”

Putting into practice what he had learned at a stewardship workshop. Had been taught that everything we have comes from God so even in the refugee camp God had given them abundant resources.

Called upon the believers to start sharing what they had.

He taught them about stewardship and giving so they started giving blankets to the orphans.

The young girls says “I realized it was God who as looking after me.”

After two years in captivity it was safe to return home, but it had been destroyed. They were starting from scratch. They had no money. Need was too great. They started asking the all too common question “How can the people from the west help us?” However, Hannington inspired his people to ask a different question. “How soon can my people raise to the challenge of funding, not only immediate needs but the future as well. God has given us everything we need for our community.” Everyone started using their gifts to rebuild the community.

The message was spread. The farmer lady wanted to help by selling her tomatoes. One by one the story spread and the town was being transformed. Rebuild churches, provided homes and schooling for orphans and the needs of the people were met. They understood that they needed to create wealth in order to allow for tangible generosity. They used their gifts and resources they already had a cycle of sustainability was established.

Consider the lady with the chicken. She heard what was happening and wanted to be involved. Even though she was cripple she wanted to be involved. So she donated her only chicken and the church she worships in is made of bricks. How scriptural can you get with this example of someone giving her absolute all.

Once we gave out of a sense of duty but no longer. Now willing and count it a joy in our hearts out of joy because it will make a great change in our community. This message can work in every community because generosity is transformation. No longer waiting for outside relief they have discovered the grace of giving and is replaced the welfare mentality and an entire town was rebuilt.

I was reminded by a few scriptures as I listened to this, yet again.

***1 Kings 17:7-16 – Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath*** *(The Voice) v9 “There is a widow in Zarephath whom I have told to take care of you.”*

*V12 …As certain as the Eternal One, your True god lives, I don’t have any bread. In fact, I am starving. I don’t have anything except for a bit of flour in a bowl and a few drops of oil in a jar. I was gathering sticks when you arrived to make a fire so that my son and I could eat one last bite of food and then die. It’s all over for us.*

*V 13 I assure you that it’s not over for you yet. Don’t be afraid. Continue what you were doing, but make a small bread cake for me first, and bring it here to me. Then you and your son may eat your own bread cakes.*

 *V14 This is the message of the Eternal God of Israel: “The flour and the oil will not run out until the moment when the Eternal showers the earth with rain.”*

 *V15 She did exactly as Elijah had instructed her to do, and* ***everyone who lived in her house had food for days.***

*V16 The bowl of flour and the jar of oil did not run out, just as the Eternal had said through Elijah.*

This woman was truly at the end of her rope. Just enough oil and flour to make something for her and her son and then that’s it. They would starve to death. And here comes this man who firstly asks her to get him some water and then to make him some bread to eat. What might have gone through your mind in that situation? I’m interested by the verse 9 which says “there is a widow whom I have told to take care of you.” Maybe that meant God had prepared her heart for Elijah’s arrival? Maybe she was a generous person anyway and that was how God had prepared her heart to take care of him. She might have been a person who just did that. You probably know that type of person who would, as we say, give you the shirt off their back.

He arrives with quite a big ask.

The statement towards the end is interesting too: “and everyone who lived in her house had food for days.” Sounds like it wasn’t just her, the son and Elijah. Maybe because of her generous heart that fed Elijah she was feeding others as well.

Any thoughts about this? You may be much more knowledgeable than I am on this.

Another scripture:

***Mark 12:41-44 - The Widows Offering – Giving her last two coins.***

***41****Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.****42****But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.*

***43****Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.****44****They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”*

* Jesus watches our actions.
* He sees our generosity.
* How impressed must Jesus have been at what this woman did because He called His disciples to Him to point out her generosity.
* She gave all she had to live on.

I think back to the video and the circumstances those people found themselves in.

* What stood out for you?
* What lessons can we learn from these people?
* What happens when people realise the God given gifts and resources they have?

For me when the young girl responds after being given a blanket that she realized it was God looking after her. I think of the work being done through **Connect**. People simply being Jesus to those who come in. We want them to see that this is Jesus showing His love for them.

Combining the message from the video and the song:

How easy is it to blame God for what isn’t happening, sometimes more than what is happening?

I’ve often heard people complain that there are people who are in need and God isn’t doing anything about it, yet I would stop and think what are we doing?

We have had times when we’ve received a call from ‘helpful’ people in the community to let us know someone was sleeping on the street in front of their shop and could we come and get them. They were worried about this person’s wellbeing – nothing to do with wanting the person gone from the shop front. I would always think, so if you are that worried why don’t you do something. Which is probably why I find the song so interesting. Why don’t you do something? We did have to mention that we can’t actually go and get anyone off the street under any circumstances as we aren’t the police. The thing which stands out to me is that it is so easy to call someone else or blame someone else for the uncomfortable situation.

It’s so easy for us to see the terrible things in the world and ask God why does He let this happen? God as given us gifts and resources to make a difference. Open your hands and allow God to use what is needed and accept the blessings He wants to give you. You’ll be amazed at the difference from when we keep things for ourselves and expect others to ‘look after us’ to opening up and giving our all to God.