

Model Talk

AWAKENED

tearfund



Preparation

Please pray God will use your talk to bless the people who hear you. Pray that Jesus will inspire and challenge those who hear you to commit to give regularly and generously to our brothers and sisters in Christ back home through this Awakened product.

You are welcome to adapt all that follows to suit your own style. Please ask the church leader to introduce you and endorse the work of Tearfund during the service and before you speak.



Delivering the talk in person

Make sure all the congregation are given sign-up forms and pens as they come into church or that these are put on the pews seats.

You will need to brief the AV people and give them a copy of your talk (please share this in advance AND bring a copy on the day on a USB).

It can be helpful to draw people's attention to the regular giving cards throughout the talk by asking them to look at them.

Take a poster to the church and ask for it to be displayed to remind people of Tearfund after your talk.



Delivering the talk online

Introduce yourself to the church leader by email prior to the speaking engagement.

You will need to send a copy of the promotional video and online giving link to the church in advance of the service.

It can be helpful to mention the online regular giving link throughout the talk to prepare people for the financial ask at the end. You can also ask the church to put the giving link in the chat on Zoom, YouTube or whichever platform they are using.

What's in your hand?



Talk outline

- The talk refers to 2 Kings 4, the story of the woman with the oil.
- You may want to open by reading this scripture yourself. This often gives people confidence that you are going to speak about the passage.
- Scripture holds an important place in the life of Black majority churches. Therefore, introducing what you are about to share by rooting it in scripture will go a long way towards securing the confidence of the congregation.
- In Black majority churches, preaching from the Bible is the most important thing and it will inspire confidence if they know you are going to do this.



How to structure your introduction

- Thank the church leader for the introduction and for allowing you to speak.
- Thank the congregation for their warm welcome and talk about how it's a privilege to be there.
- Re-introduce yourself ('As Pastor said, my name is ____ and I'm the ____ at Tearfund').
- Pray briefly over the congregation that God will speak and that nothing in you will stand in the way. This gives them extra confidence that you're a person who believes in the word and prayer and that you really do want it to be about what God wants.

Thank the church for their history of support (and/or recent donations).

Remind the congregation that what they are about to hear is not just an opportunity to become aware but an invitation to get involved. And partner with individuals on the group by partnering with Tearfund

Introduction (example)

Good morning, and thank you for your warm welcome! I'm [introduce yourself]

There are times in the Bible when God does big things with just a little, or with what seems like nothing. In fact, a close reading of the Bible may seem to suggest that this is God's preferred way of operating.

We see this principle at work with the feeding of the 5,000, - where Jesus takes the packed lunch of a little boy and feeds a multitude of people. The writer intentionally includes specific details about the insignificance of both the source (the little boy) and the substance of the food (five loaves and two fishes).

We also see this when God asks Moses what is in his hand. A staff which was routinely used to guide stubborn sheep became an instrument by which miracles were performed. It turned into a serpent, it turned the water in the river Nile into blood, and it aided the parting of the Red Sea.

But there is one particular story that I would like to take us to, and I'm sure you all know it well. It is the story of the prophet Elisha and the widow's oil. It is an incredible story that shows how God works with people like you and me, through partnership, in desperate situations.

In this story we are introduced to a woman, a widow, who finds herself in a desperately unfortunate situation. Her husband, a prophet, has passed away, and she is unable to provide food for herself and her two sons. The situation is so desperate that the widow is down to her last bottle of oil that will allow her to cook their last meal. Her sons would eat with her for the last time before being taken by creditors and she would be left alone. In ancient times a woman without a husband and her children was in a vulnerable position.

A close reading of the story clearly communicates something of the widow's frustration at the situation she finds herself in. The widow is either reminding Elisha of what he already knew or covertly expressing some contempt about the apparent contradiction between her faith and her domestic reality when she says, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.' (2 Kings 4:1) The widow seems to want to hold Elisha accountable to what he knew by reminding him that her deceased husband was one of his servants as a prophet, and that he had a deep love for and fear of God.

The story immediately reminds us of the reality of the world we live in today, where people who live lives that are committed to the gospel of Christ do so in conditions of abject poverty. We are reminded that faithful service to God does not always result in earthly blessings. However, it does not mean that we leave others in the situations they find themselves in. Our responsibility is to be a blessing wherever we can. At Tearfund, we have invested our time and energy over the past 50 years in deliberately 'following Jesus where the need is greatest'. Our experience has shown us that many faithful Christians and communities around the world struggle to secure for themselves and their families the most basic necessities for life.

Being rich in faith and poor in material possessions is not a sign that God is not with the 'least of these'. Instead it reflects some of the structural injustices that define our world and undermines our God-given responsibility for each other. In Christ, we are called by God to act to see those injustices removed from our world, whether they are near or far. Sometimes that call is to seek justice through lobbying our local MPs or advocating for change through various organisations. At other times our call to do justice means that we have to put our hands in our pockets and give of our material wealth to those that need it most.

The practical 'self-help' approach has been a long-standing strategy used by many communities around the world. Joining hands with individuals and communities, in an act of genuine partnership and solidarity, to bring about change, is a privilege, and I invite you to join us at Tearfund as we commit to partnering with individuals and communities to bring about change.

You and I find ourselves sitting here today in a similar situation to the prophet Elisha. The cries for help that we are hearing may not be from a widow concerned with where the next meal would come from. However, if we allow ourselves, we can attune our ears to the cries of mothers and fathers that share the same aspirations we have for our own futures and families but who might not be able to realise them without our help.

The story of Elisha's interaction with the widow reminds us that no matter how powerfully God is using us, how spiritual or anointed we are, how evangelistic our church is, how transformational our impact is on our local community (and we celebrate all of those things individually and collectively), it is never an excuse to conveniently dull our ears from hearing the cries of those that we can help.

Elisha's response to the woman, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" 2 Kings 4:2 shows us that like Elisha, we have to make a decision and either choose to ignore what we have heard or take concrete action to do something about it! Elisha sets the benchmark for our response. He made no excuses. He chose to respond proactively and the reality was that responding with what he had was the only valid response that he could have to the widow's pain. We should be audacious enough to ask ourselves, 'What kind of "man of God" would Elisha have been if he turned away from the widow's plight?' We must ask ourselves a similar question: What kind of person, kind of Christian, can we say we are if we turn our eyes away from the possibility to partner with others to bring about real change in the lives of families and communities of others?

Elisha's response

Note that Elisha did not ask probing questions about the family's saving plan, pension policy, budgeting practices or how they came to be in debt, or even attempt a systematic analysis of their financial expenditure. He simply responded with compassion because that was what was needed. Elisha saw the need of the widow and her family and that was what he prioritised. Let's look at the two questions Elisha asked the widow and ask God to speak to us through them.

The two questions are:

- 1 How can I help you?
- 2 What do you have in your house?

Elisha's response communicates two things to the widow:

- 1 His willingness to help the widow.
- 2 The need for the widow to be involved in helping herself and her family.

Question one: how can I help you?

Elisha did not assume responsibility and relieve the widow of a sense of dignity and agency. Instead, he recognised that combining whatever he could give with whatever the widow had available was the most dignified and practical way to turn the situation around. It worked! This is partnership. It is the model we are committed to and have worked with at Tearfund since our inception.

We do not see ourselves as modern-day rescuers any more than Elisha saw himself as rescuing the widow and her two sons thousands of years ago. We are partners working together with the church and local communities to improve lives on the ground. By combining resources, Elisha and the widow were able to look to God to turn an unfortunate and desperate situation around. This is precisely what we seek to do at Tearfund – partner with God, partner with the local church and partner with local communities where the need is greatest.

A call to partnership

Partnership happens by design. It is about being intentional. It is an ethical way to collaborate and make a contribution towards resolving a problem. Partnership is at the heart of our model of ministry at Tearfund. For us, and for you who may be more like Elisha than the widow in the story, meaning that we have something to give, partnership requires us to hear the stories of those we seek to partner with and recognise what they too can bring to the partnership.

There is an important and powerful lesson here for all of us. Elisha does not assume a superior or more powerful position. He does not humiliate the woman or berate her or her deceased husband for not adequately anticipating or planning for the possibility of his passing. He never chastised the widow for being lazy and not securing employment. Neither did he dismiss her as being beyond help and irresponsible for allowing her domestic situation to become so desperate that her sons were about to be taken by a creditor. He simply responded compassionately and in a practical manner despite the demands on his own life.

Elima's story

There are similar stories across the continent of Africa and beyond. They are stories of communities that have few resources compared to those of us that live in the West. However, through working in partnership with community members, local churches and Tearfund, they have released incredible innovative and entrepreneurial skills that have created opportunities for themselves and others that were unimaginable. That is the power of partnership! We believe in working in partnership with communities to equip and inspire them to make the changes they want to see.

Allow me to give you an example. Recently, a team of senior Black leaders from London visited Ethiopia to explore Tearfund's work on the ground with self-help groups. They were introduced to a middle-aged lady (we will call her Elima) who had joined a local self-help group after observing the difference they made in her community and to its members. When Elima joined she and her family were desperate and had very little money to sustain themselves.

When the church leaders met Elima she had been a member of the self-help group for many years and now owned her own spice company which traded in the centre of Addis Ababa. Elima's husband had retired from the police force and they had bought a shop for him to sell electrical goods.

The team were amazed to hear that she was also a member of a huge cooperative that was building a multi-storey car park in the centre of the city.

Through the local self-help group Elima had taken her last jar of oil (saving 2 pence monthly) and by faith, in partnership with others in her self-help group, started pouring it into every jar that she could find, including those borrowed from neighbours.

Elima's story is not unusual. The senior church leaders met many women whose lives had been transformed by partnering with self-help groups which radically changed their family and community.

Time to stop

The busyness of our lives and the daily pressures we live under can make it so easy to forget that there are individuals and communities outside of the daily sphere of our lives that we can help in small but significant ways. However, we have to be willing to stop and to hear their cry for help in the midst of so many other competing noises. We may feel overwhelmed from time to time and consciously or unconsciously attempt to silence the cry that we hear.

Alternatively, like Elisha, we can be deliberate and take the time to stop in the midst of our busy and pressured lives, hear the pain and respond to the opportunity to make a difference. This very moment may be one of those God-given opportunities to do so.

Stopping is not something we are used to doing. Stopping and listening is even more challenging than just stopping. It requires that we quiet the noises – distractions – in our minds and focus on what is truly important. For the majority of us we feel like there is always somewhere to go, someone to ring or something to do. Busyness can mean that we do not hear the things that God is attempting to bring to our attention. Elisha seems to have been really busy. In fact the Bible records him performing twice as many miracles as Elijah!

Hearing from God and serving people, along with the personal demands of his own life, meant that Elisha had more than enough to do. Stopping, listening and responding to the widow's cry for help was an intentional choice that Elisha made. It is also an intentional choice you and I have to make if we are to be available to partner with God and others.

Community connections

Tearfund has learnt through its partnership work with communities across the continent of Africa that individuals belong to communities. The community shapes individual identity and informs a sense of belonging. Powerful cultural concepts like *Ubuntu* ('We are, therefore I am') communicate this beautiful sense of shared humanity. It reminds us that we are each connected to one another in such a fundamental way that whether we accept it or not, whatever happens to one of us happens to all of us.

The early Christians understood this concept in a way that seems to evade the church today. Individualism has gone a long way to erode our sense of collective identity and we have sometimes failed to be one another's keeper. The reality of our individualism seems even clearer and closer when we think about how communities that are thousands of miles away fail to be present in our lives as often as they should.

Question two: what do you have in your house?

Elijah's second question is just as powerful as the first. He asks the widow, 'What do you have in your house?' It is an important question because it forces the widow to reflect on what she might already have in her possession that she could contribute to the partnership with Elisha. The question also indicates Elisha's heart as a partner joining forces and faith with the widow. He recognises that to act on behalf of the widow is to remove her sense of dignity and agency. On the other hand, to partner is to be jointly responsible for changing the circumstances she finds herself in.

Neighbours

Elisha goes further than a partnership between him and the widow. He encourages her to draw on the already existing relationships that she is in and that exist within her community. He encourages the widow to 'go round and ask all your neighbours for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few.' (2 Kings 4:3) The widow may have found herself wondering why Elisha was asking her to do what he did. Why would she need so many jars for so little oil? The answer was simple: Elisha was not contained by the reality of her circumstances. Through faith, he had a God-given vision of her potential and the potential of the community to which she belonged.

A call to action

The next step is to take further action. The widow is commanded to 'go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.' The partnership between the widow, Elisha and her wider community yields miraculous results. This is what we consistently observe at Tearfund: partnership makes miracles happen! You can be a part of the many miracles of transformed individuals and communities that we see as we serve alongside some of the poorest communities.

[Hold up the Awakened booklet]

Awakened is a chance for us to bring our jars, and together empower other people to change their stories like the widowed woman. It's an initiative that supports self-help groups similar to Elima's.

Tearfund works with local church partners in countries across Africa such as ____ *[If we work there, list the countries the congregation might be from in order to build that emotional connection].*

These groups consist of 15 to 20 people who put money together and can take out loans from these pots of money to improve their lives. People have started businesses, improved their businesses and used the loans to fortify their houses in the event of a natural disaster.

Individuals in these groups learn practical skills and the financial know-how to be able to increase their household incomes. They encourage each other, learn together, motivate and support each other like an extended family.

People are taught better farming techniques in order to diversify their crops to cover the hunger gap, and by saving money in their self-help groups, they can afford to send their children to school.

Over to you

I would like you to pick up the leaflet that is on your pew/seat.

What is in your hand now *[raise your booklet]*? Just a few pieces of paper stapled together? At first glance, yes. But it has the potential to be much more than that. It has the potential to be your jar that can be used by God, to empower somebody else to turn their life around.

Tearfund has been working with self-help groups since the first programme was started in Ethiopia in 2002, and we now support over 27,000 of them in sub-Saharan Africa. *Awakened* gives us an opportunity to see more of our sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, take hold of their vision to build better futures. By signing up to give £10 a month, your generous donation could support new self-help groups across Africa.

I would like to invite you to open the leaflet in your hand. You should also have a pen for you to complete your details including your bank details.

This is your opportunity to see how the little in your hand, your jar, can be multiplied by God to do the miraculous in someone else's life. Let us pray.

"What is in your hands can be multiplied to make a huge difference in God's hands."

The impact of your £10 a month

Returns on investment with *Awakened* are far higher than traditional development programmes. This is because self-help groups grow organically: the first groups develop and replicate themselves. In new self-help groups, growth in returns on initial investments is exponential.



Every £1 spent on self-help groups creates a return of over £58 in benefits.



Self-help groups programmes grow by 20 per cent every year.

tearfund.org

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