

Theology of Jubilee

Introduction

This paper provides an overview and discussion of the biblical concept and event of jubilee. Its primary role is to provide an underpinning for our upcoming 50th birthday campaign (in 2018). However, these ideas are also relevant to much of Tearfund's frontline work: they are already being discussed and used in shaping some of our work, most notably our thinking, campaigning and capacity building around creation care and restorative economics, and we encourage further reflection on these ideas. We hope that this discussion of jubilee, which is built on much previous work, will help Tearfund as we explain to churches some of the ways that our identity and theology shapes our practice as a development and humanitarian organisation in distinctively Christian ways, and how we believe our work is a part of the church's role in the mission of God.

This paper looks at jubilee through our understanding of the Bible as the story of God's mission to redeem and restore all of creation.¹ Tearfund's theology of mission is the basis of all our work, and here we want (i) to explain jubilee's place in this story and (ii) to reflect on what this means for us as a relief and development organisation today. This paper will look first at the jubilee in the Old Testament and the place it has in ancient Israel's relationship with God. It will then look at the New Testament in order to see how Christ fulfils the idea of jubilee and transforms what it means for Christians. Finally, we will draw out six commitments for Tearfund's work that are rooted in jubilee.

We believe that the essence of jubilee is its provision of a way of life for God's redeemed, liberated people, enabling them to flourish and thrive through the restoration of their relationships with God, with understanding of themselves as God's children, with each other, and with creation. Jubilee is about justice: redemption and restoration; liberation and renewal. It is radical and counter-cultural - both in the ancient world and today - and prophetic. It provides a model for a community living *well* according to God's will for his creation so that they can flourish and thrive as individuals and a community, and so that they can be an example, or light, to the rest of the world.

I. The Old Testament: Israel's Jubilee

The primary account of jubilee in the Bible comes in Leviticus 25, where it is laid out in the establishment of the law that would define Israel's new post-Exodus relationship with God.

'Count seven sabbath years – seven times seven years – so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then sound the trumpet everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.'

(Leviticus 25:8 -12)

¹ See *Theology of Mission*.

God had liberated his people and given them the land he had promised them to steward. God wanted them to live as the nation they were called to be. Chris Wright has described Israel's law as the way in which the Exodus story's essential promise and principles of redemption and liberty were established as the guiding principles and ongoing commitments of God's people as the nation of Israel.² They provided economic and social rules for living in good relationships with each other, with resident aliens,³ with the land, and with God – and it is this last relationship that gives the laws their distinctive shape. As Wright points out: '*Jubilee is concerned for social and economic need but cannot be understood or practiced without the theological and spiritual principles intrinsic to it.*'⁴ The Old Testament rules of sabbath and jubilee described the way in which the people of God should work, rest and live together in this new society: emphasising the relationships between humanity, creation and God.

Israel's jubilee principles and laws are God's command to his people, and as such they are shaped by his character and his desire for the world he created. They remind Israel of God's sovereignty, his providence, promises and laws and they reflect a God who loves, and whose love is manifested in liberation and redemption, mercy, justice and generosity. And while the jubilee laws focused on socio-economic restoration, they were part of a bigger restoration. Israel's jubilee was declared on the day of atonement (Lev. 25:9). This meant that socio-economic redemption and restoration had to be understood as a part of God's redemption and restoration of his people from sin.⁵ God's forgiveness was accompanied by the forgiveness of material debts; the restoration of a relationship with God was accompanied by the restoration of relationships with family, community and land. The spiritual, social and economic were integrated. God's liberation comes with a call to obedience and to trust in his goodness.

The jubilee laws are essentially concerned with social relationship, economic security, and stability and the wellbeing of the community. They seek to ensure the people live in ways that reflect good relationships with God, with each other, and with creation. The assumptions that they make about what is *good* within the society are rooted in an understanding of Yahweh's character and desires for his people and creation. The key principles that jubilee give to Israel here can be summarised as follows:

- The land on which Israel lived was God's land (Lev. 25:23) and they were his tenants and the stewards of his creation. This 'stewardship' is a part of humanity's original mandate for creation (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15). Israel's residence in this promised land demonstrated their identity as God's chosen people, living in a place to which he had led them (Lev. 25:38).
- Life was to be lived within communities. Israel's socio-economic structure was built on kinship principles: everyone belonged to a tribe, a clan and a household. Each household unit was to have its own piece of the land on which to live (Lev. 25:15) with roughly

² Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.289 – 323. This chapter provides a deeper account of the Old Testament jubilee than is possible in this paper.

³ See Christopher J. H Wright, (2016) 'The Refugee Crisis, A Shared Human Condition: An Old Testament Perspective', from the *INFEMIT Stott-Bediako Forum* (<https://sites.google.com/a/infemit.org/stott-bediako-2016/sessions/the-old-testament-and-refugees>) for a helpful description of the different kinds of non-Israelites present in Israel. He distinguishes between the *gērîm*, who were long-term residents in the land, to whom the law applied, and the *nokr iyîm and zārîm*, who were temporary visitors or travelers, to whom the law did not apply.

⁴ Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.290

⁵ Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.298-9.

equitable access to the resources and security that land provided and thus have equal opportunity to flourish.

- The Israelites had equality and personal dignity in their shared identity as God's people and as people made in God's image (Gen. 1:27) – and each was equally worthy of redemption.
- Life has a rhythm of worship, work and rest. While work is good and an essential part of God's mandate for humans in his creation, rest is also essential - and worship pre-eminent. Sabbath days and years, as well as the jubilee, provided time for both people and the land they lived on to rest and to be restored. The laws emphasised that the relationship with God was the heart of their lives in order for all other relationships to be healthy and restored within a Godly society. And life was to be lived like this, because Yahweh was God and Israel was his people.

The jubilee laws acknowledged the reality of living in a broken world: that some families would do better than others, land would be bought and sold over time, people would move around – and sometimes even need to sell themselves into bonded labour. They offered a dramatic, radical answer to the situation: a resetting of the society and economy that expressed God's justice and desire his whole creation to flourish. The year of jubilee, which was to take place once a generation (every fiftieth year), would restore Israel and the Israelites to the life that God intended for them. By mandating the return of people to their households and land, the jubilee provided a counter to natural successes and failures, to greed and exploitation and other sin, that lead to growing inequality and poverty. Jubilee demanded more than generosity of the Israelites: it was the way in which their society was *repaired*, as God reminded his people that, ultimately, all things belonged to him. Jubilee enabled liberation from poverty and injustice and the restoration of Israel as a just society in which all creation could flourish, under God.

Israel's jubilee and jubilee legislation did not just apply to the Israelites. They were also applicable to the long term residents in the land. These resident aliens were objects of concern for justice because of their vulnerability - their wellbeing depended on the households they were associated with as employees and slaves. The fact that the Israelites are commanded to care for their fellow Israelites who have fallen into poverty *as they would a foreigner and a stranger* (Lev.25:35) and the way that this looks in practice, clearly implies that they are to treat the resident foreigners with compassion, justice and generosity. Indeed, as Wright points out, the jubilee legislation describes the Israelites as *aliens* in God's land: their relationship to God is analogous to their resident aliens' relationship to *them*. Israel must, therefore, treat anyone who is impoverished in the way that God treats Israel.⁶

Other passages and commands support this, for example:

'Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt of justice and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.' (Deut. 24:17-18)⁷

The *whole* of the jubilee (liberation from slavery, restoration to home, family, and land) might have been primarily for the Israelite people, but this was to be extended to the other, non-Israelite, members of the community and it marked Israel as distinctive and different.

⁶ Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.293. Wright's paper at the Stott-Bediako forum expands on this idea, describing the essentially migrant nature of God's people throughout the Bible and discussing its implication for our response to refugees and migrants.

⁷ See also Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 1:16-27; Lev. 19:33-34.

It is unclear whether or not Israel ever fulfilled its jubilee laws completely: certainly by the time of the monarchy, jubilee was not being upheld. What we see in the Old Testament is a narrative of Israel's inability to fully obey the law and assure their redemption and restoration on their own. The prophets explain Israel's fall as a consequence of their failures: Jeremiah 34 explicitly references how, in a jubilee year, the Hebrew aristocracy freed their slaves but then promptly re-enslaved them. He directly connects the fall of Jerusalem and the exile in Babylon to Israel's failure to uphold the jubilee and seek justice. The prophets of the Old Testament, most notably Isaiah,⁸ point to the one who would be able to fulfil the law and God's desire for redemption and restoration of his creation.

II. Christ

As we come to the New Testament, we need to reflect on the impact that Christ's life, death and resurrection on our understanding of jubilee. This is essential to thinking about its place in our lives as disciples today.

One of the most commonly referenced passages in discussing Jesus' mission and his role in the mission of God comes in Luke:

'He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*'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 favour.'

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' (Luke 4: 16-20)

Here Jesus is reading from Isaiah 61, which in turn refers to Leviticus 25 and the jubilee laws. In this moment, Jesus is announcing that his mission was God's mission: the redemption of God's creation and the restoration of its relationship with God. This mission had begun with the covenant with Abraham, continued through the Exodus and the nation of Israel and would be fulfilled by the Messiah, as foretold by Isaiah. Here Jesus is identifying himself as that Messiah and the fulfilment of jubilee. In this he declares that his mission is proclaimed and enacted, spiritual and physical, and for Israel and the nations.⁹

In Luke's gospel we see how Jesus' service of the poor is linked to the themes of repentance and salvation.¹⁰ For example, sinful behaviour is often associated with moral misconduct or failures towards other people, such as the rich man's failure to show compassion for the poor man Lazarus

⁸ See for example Isaiah 61, which is the passage Jesus reads in Luke 4.

⁹ Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.302

¹⁰ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp.107-108

(16:19-31), the rich young ruler's reluctance to give away his possessions despite his desire for eternal life (18:18-23), or Zacchaeus' extortion which impoverishes others. Zacchaeus' salvation comes through his repentance and his forgiveness, *and* the restoration of his bonds with his community, including making economic restitution (19:1-10). We can also see this in Acts (which Luke wrote). In the description of the early church we see that being restored to God also means that people are restored to relationship with each other, with an emphasis on sharing together in community (most notably Acts 2:44, 4:32, 36).¹¹ Paul would later describe the fact that being restored to Christ breaks down other social barriers: male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:27-28). Liberation is always *from* sin *for* something else – a life of love in Christ and with others.

Just as we saw for Old Testament Israel, jubilee and atonement are essentially linked in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Here they are dramatically fulfilled in an even greater redemption than that provided for by the jubilee laws. Chris Wright explains this: '*A full biblical understanding of the atoning work of Christ on the cross goes far beyond (though of course it includes) the matter of personal guilt and individual forgiveness. God's mission has wider redemptive dimensions and the gospel is good news for all creation. The cross is important across the whole of mission, because the whole of mission confronts the powers of evil and kingdom of Satan. If Christ is king, he is king of everything.*'¹² Both jubilee and atonement are about restoration, reuniting things that have been torn apart. And the fulfilment of both atonement and jubilee requires sacrifice: Christ gives up his life, and so God offers the possibility of restoration with himself, our neighbours, our enemies, and even creation.

We are liberated by Jesus' death and resurrection, an event that becomes the foundation of our hope for the future: the new creation that we are promised (Rom. 8:18-25; Rev. 21). This salvation and hope place an ethical demand on Jesus' followers in their present time (both in the first century and in the twenty-first). In Romans 8, Paul explores what it means for humans to be saved and set free by Christ.

'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering... Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace... For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship... For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God...' (Romans 8: 1-3, 5-6, 14-15, 19-21)

¹¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp.105

¹² Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.314. Cf. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp.143-147.

He reminds his readers that living in the spirit has an effect that is seen in people who pursue life (*zoe* - the full life inspired and sustained by God) and peace (*eirene*, the New Testament Greek equivalent of the Old Testament's Hebrew *Shalom*), rather than continuing in sin towards death.

As Tom Wright points out, Paul distinguishes between adamic-humanity (living according to the flesh) and messiah-humanity (living according to the spirit) by looking at what their minds are set upon, arguing that 'Paul implies that the mind characterised by the spirit does in fact submit to and fulfil God's law.'¹³ Paul does not explicitly reference the idea of jubilee here, but the inferences are strong.¹⁴ Paul describes the way that the law could not set people free from sin for a restored relationship with God, the way that the work of Christ fulfils the requirements of the law (8:3-7). Jubilee is a critical part of Jewish law, teaching God's people how to govern and live in the land God gave them (Canaan). As Chris Wright points out, the land was a goal of the exodus redemption tradition - a fulcrum of the relationship between God and Israel and a tangible witness to the divine control of history. Jubilee proclaimed this Godly sovereignty and explicated the moral and practical demands of the relationship between God and Israel.¹⁵

The promised inheritance of the land, given to Israel, becomes a promise of an inheritance of the kingdom of God, embracing all of creation and the cosmos, to all those in Christ (Psalms 2:8; Gal. 3:29).¹⁶ Romans describes the way that the whole of creation has been waiting for the time when the children of God are revealed (8:19-22) - for the restoration of God's original plan for humanity being to rule creation as God's image bearers.¹⁷ Wright argues that jubilee is the picture of the new age of salvation announced in the New Testament. This is seen most clearly in Luke 4,¹⁸ but Romans 8 also paints a picture of the new age. Here creation is said to be waiting for the children of God - those who live in the Spirit - to be revealed and for the liberation and glory that will follow. In Christ we are shaped by the Spirit to live righteous lives. While Paul's language is poetic, it is clear that the consequence of a life lived in the spirit should be *life* and *peace*.

Life and peace exemplify the liberation, restoration and flourishing made possible in jubilee. And Paul is clear in Romans 8 that this liberation and restoration of life and peace are not just for humans, but for *all* of creation. However, this life is not easy: Jesus's life - and death - show us the lengths to which the son of God went in order to secure our liberation. We are called to take up our cross (Matthew 16:24) and follow him in obedience. This sacrifice, again, is more than generosity: it is a willingness to honour God's sovereignty and to make reparations for sin in order to end injustice and enable restoration and flourishing.

III. The Church, living in the power of the Spirit.

When we understand Jesus' resurrection as the inaugural act of 'remaking' in God's creation it becomes clear that God's people - the church - are meant to be a foretaste of what God wants to do

¹³ N.T Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1, chapters 1-8*, p.141-142

¹⁴ It is worth noting, as Wright points out, that, 'In a tight argument like this, he [Paul] is forced to presuppose all kinds of things, to hint rather than to spell out, in order to keep the forward movement going.' (p.142)

¹⁵ Christopher J.H Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* pp.203-209.

¹⁶ David E. Holwerda (1995) *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids & Apollos, Leicester), p.104

¹⁷ N.T Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1, chapters 1-8*, p.145-149.

¹⁸ Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.300.

for the entire creation, and are part of his means of doing that. We live in the time between the arrival of the Holy Spirit's new redemptive power on earth following Christ's resurrection and full revelation of the kingdom of God when Christ returns. The world is not yet perfect: there are still wars and famines; the rich still protect their own interests at the expense of the poor.

The church is the body of Christ, called and commissioned to bear witness to the gospel. As such it is called to be a new community that marks the kingdom of God breaking into the world and to show the world what it looks like to live under the rule of the king. The church is called both to proclaim and enact the certain hope of our salvation in the future, seeking to show what the promised restoration will look like in our present reality.¹⁹ As a way of life it stands in marked contrast to that of the world around us.

Jesus promised his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 14:15-25; Acts 1:8). In Acts 2, Peter quotes the prophet Joel explaining the promise of the Spirit: *'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.* (Acts 2:17).²⁰ It is this gift of the Spirit that reminds us of the truth of Christ (John 14:15), enables us to be transformed (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), and to share this truth with the world. The Holy Spirit works in and through communities of disciples of Jesus Christ, in local churches and the global church. In this way peace, justice and prosperity – the qualities of Jesus Christ's rule – can be revealed and experienced now as a foretaste of what is to come.²¹

Christians are called to share the good news of salvation. Jubilee reminds us that God expects his people to challenge worldly imperfection both through their relationships with each other and the pursuit of justice - through social and legal provision (as enshrined for Israel in the laws) and through personal action and interaction, including generosity and sacrifice (as in the instruction to the disciples). The gift of the Spirit empowers and enables us to be a part of God's mission to bring freedom and restoration in all areas of life.

IV. Tearfund Commitments

The previous sections have looked at the role of jubilee in the Bible and discussed its place in God's mission of restoration and redemption. Now it is time to think about what the idea of jubilee means for Tearfund today, as Christ's disciples in the modern world. As we do so, there are some important points that we need to remember.

Firstly, we need to remember that the political, social and economic conditions in which the jubilee laws were given no longer exist. The world has changed and, because of Christ, so has the way that God and his people interact with the world. God's people live in all the nations of the world, alongside others of different faiths and of none, and we are called to share the good news wherever we are, as Christians and as churches. In reflecting on how jubilee shapes our lives and work today, we need look at the themes and aims of jubilee more than the method of their application and think about how we can express these principles and move towards these aims in our own communities.

¹⁹ Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.303

²⁰ Joel 2:28-32.

²¹ See, for example, Romans 8, which describes the way that creation waits for the children of God, who live in the Spirit, to be revealed.

Secondly, we must remember that Israel, Jesus and the early church all represented a radical political challenge to the contemporary world and the other political and socio-economic powers. For example, in the first century BC, the claim that Christ was king denied the Roman Caesar his claim to be the lord of the known-world – a claim that held the Roman empire together. Jesus gave the idea of a kingdom – this time of God – a new meaning: it was a kingdom of justice and liberation, and a fulfilling life for all.²² This is the picture we need to start from as we work out jubilee principles that are essential for our lives and work today.

Thirdly, we need to remember that Tearfund is a part of the body of Christ and the global church. Our particular calling is to alleviate poverty and respond to disasters, to do so in a way that recognises that poverty and need are holistic, and to work with and alongside local churches in serving those in greatest need. In drawing out principles of jubilee, we are particularly looking for principles that shape our work.

Here we have identified six commitments that Tearfund believe God calls us to make. These are rooted in the key themes and principles of jubilee discussed above, and express our desire to see the freedom and restoration that God offers to the world. We have noted some key values and activities related to each commitment, and a short reflection on how they are connected to the Bible's story.

1. A commitment to seeking freedom from injustice, oppression and poverty.

The Bible's stories of exodus and jubilee, and of Christ's life, death and resurrection tell us that God's mission is to set people free from sin and the consequences of sin and the fall. The Bible tells us that God wants to set people free from injustice, oppression and poverty, to live and to thrive in restored relationships with God, ourselves, each other and creation. It also tells us that we, as Christians and as part of the global church are called to be a part of this mission.

Tearfund is committed to:

1. Seeking freedom and restoration from injustice and oppression. We recognise that oppression and injustice take many different forms, and are called, as an organisation, to respond particularly to the causes and consequences of economic poverty, and that this is only one aspect of the liberation and restoration that God promises.
2. Working with the local and global church to increase the understanding that God's mission is holistic.
3. Working with and supporting churches as they serve their communities to see freedom from poverty with our own expertise in this area, using our CLCT approaches.
4. Working directly with those impoverished by crises and disaster (both man-made and natural) to provide immediate relief.
5. Raising awareness of the causes and consequences of global poverty in the global church and civil society, using influencing and advocacy to promote changes in theology, policy and lifestyle in order to see people living and giving in radical and sacrificial ways that reveal the kingdom.
6. Celebrating the role of the local church in bringing whole life transformation to the world's poorest.

²² Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp.306-8.

2. A commitment to good stewardship of the resources that God has given us in creation.

The jubilee laws emphasise the importance of looking after the land that God gave to Israel by commanding sabbath years every seven years, and an extra year of jubilee in the fiftieth year (Lev. 25:2-12). These years allowed the land to be rested and restored before the Israelites started farming it again. In Romans 8 Paul tells his readers that the freedom Christ brings is for creation as well as for humanity (18-25). Good stewardship of the land and its resources involves ensuring that everyone has equitable access to these resources and seeking to prevent accumulation of resources by some people at the expense of others. This is why the jubilee laws provide everyone with access to land and a means for it to be restored, and why the early church held shared their resources (Lev. 25; Acts 2:44, 4:32, 36; 2 Cor. 8-9).

Tearfund is committed to:

1. Good stewardship of the resources God has given to us; both financial and material; and gratitude for this provision.
2. Encouraging sustainable development and economic growth in our own development methods and through our influencing of civil society.
3. Responding to the poverty and disasters that are consequence of poor stewardship.
4. Challenging over-consumption and encouraging sustainable living and generosity where there is abundance by helping people to redefine what it means to have 'enough.'
5. Encouraging Christians and churches to:
 - a. recognise the realities of climate change and its impact upon poverty.
 - b. change their teaching and lifestyles to care for God's creation by seeking to reduce reverse climate change and its impact.
 - c. be recognise that the resources that they have belong to God and to use them to seek freedom, justice and restoration through in generous and sacrificial ways.
6. Challenging rising economic inequality and seeking alternative economic models that will enable equitable access to the resources God has provided and allow people to thrive.

3. A commitment to the restoration of relationships between people.

The original jubilee laws were given to Israel as a community of God's people who were called and established to be a blessing to the rest of the world (Gen. 12:2-3), to instruct them in how to live together as God intended. Israel's society was built on relationships: they were called to value each other as God's people and image bearers, and not to take advantage of each other for their individual benefit. They were also instructed to look after non-Israelite residents with justice and compassion (Lev. 25). In the New Testament Jesus taught people to understand that anyone might be their neighbour (Luke 10:25-37), who we are called to love as we love ourselves, and he served the needs of both Jews and Gentiles (Luke 7:1-10; John 4:4-30). As members of the body of Christ Christians are able to experience restored relationships with each other and are called to extend that welcome and restoration to all people.

Tearfund is committed to:

1. Working collaboratively with other people, organisations and institutions to tackle the root causes and consequences of poverty, and particularly to working with other Christians and churches.

2. Recognising that Jesus' generosity and sacrifice in restoring our relationship with God calls for similar generosity and sacrifice from Christians towards others in order to restore relationships.
3. Identifying, challenging and seeking solutions to the causes of broken relationships between people, including economic inequality, social exclusion, violence and conflict.
4. Enabling churches and communities to be loving, welcoming, generous, and resilient.
5. Encouraging generosity and personal sacrifice within the global church, calling on those with plenty to share, give, and make reparations to those who have less.
6. Celebrating and thanking God for the generosity we see in the course of our work.

4. Commitment to seeking restored relationships with God

The jubilee was an expression of the restoration of God with his people. The personal, social, and economic flourishing jubilee made possible was secured for Israel through the law and is secured for us in Christ because of God's willingness to make it possible for our sins to be forgiven, for us to experience his love and to overflow with that love to the extent that is seen and experienced by others. The jubilee proclaims God's sovereignty over all things and our faith in his love, forgiveness and providence in all areas of our lives. By living in ways that express the principles of jubilee we show the world that there is a better world, what 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) can look like, and make it possible to invite others to experience this life with God.

Tearfund is committed to:

1. Being explicit about our Christian identity, by being honest about our faith as we register in different countries and by responding honestly to questions asked about our motivations and beliefs and acknowledging Jesus in all things as the bringer of all hope, new life and restoration.
2. Bearing witness to our faith by ensuring that our work expresses the values of the kingdom of God and by encouraging and equipping our staff to be able to share and explain their faith well and appropriately in the different contexts in which they work.²³
3. Respecting people's right to freedom of religion and to choose how they respond to Christ's offer of salvation; the aid and services we provide to people do not depend on their profession of faith. God's love is freely given, and must be freely received.
4. Recognising that the work we do in alleviating poverty and providing aid is only one part of the mission of God and of the church, and articulating Tearfund's mission as a *part* of holistic mission.
5. Directing beneficiaries who express an interest in our faith and in learning more about God towards local Christian communities and churches that will be able to build relationships with them over the longer-term.
6. Monitoring, evaluating and celebrating the spiritual growth as part of the whole-life transformation we seek to see in the course of our work.

5. A commitment to the restoration of people's understanding of their inherent worth

Genesis tells us that humans are made in the image of God. The fall not only damaged our ability to reflect that image fully in the world, it has also damaged our ability to see ourselves as God's

²³ If staff want to understand more about what this looks like in practice, they should look at Tearfund's [Policy Approach](#) and [Guidance](#) on Sharing our Faith.

children and as people who have innate value because of this image-bearing. In our work we regularly see how poverty and injustice damages and destroys people's self-esteem. The connection of the jubilee with the day of atonement reminded the Israelites that they were God's chosen people, worthy of love and able to be forgiven (Lev 25:9). This is sung of in the Psalms (e.g Psalm 139). Christ's death and resurrection has extended that promise to all people (Matt 28:16-20; Gal 3:26-29). We've seen that the jubilee laws reminded Israel to treat each other and other people well, restoring relationships between people; they also reminded people that they were worthy of being treated well. Jesus' inclusion of those who were seen as outcasts showed them that they had worth, and reminds us of the same. People's individual identities are formed through their relationships with God and with other people: as these are restored so is people's ability to recognise their value and worth.

Tearfund is committed to:

1. Recognising that all people are made in the image of God, are worthy of love and must be treated with dignity and respect.
2. Affirming human rights, grounded in our identity as image-bearers, as well as our responsibilities to each other to secure those rights.
3. Serving people regardless of race, gender, age, capability, social status or health, or any other factor that might be used to exclude people from a community.
4. Working with churches to help people to recognise their value as humans, and to heal from past wounds and stigma.
5. Empowering individuals, churches and communities to use the gifts and resources God has given them to lift themselves out of poverty.
6. Empowering the voiceless, captive and enslaved to speak and advocate for themselves.

6. Commitment to discipleship

Tearfund's recognizes that our ability to hold to the commitments listed above is dependent upon our own relationship with God and the way that we allow that to transform our lives as disciples (Romans 12:1-2, 9-21): individually and as an organization. We know that our relationship with God overflows into our relationship with others. Because of this we are committed to:

1. Worshipping together as an organisation, ensuring that our relationship with God is at the heart of our life as a community, and encouraging our staff and partners in their own growth as disciples.
2. Praying expectantly for God to act in and through our work, and in order to discern our own calling and work, as well as for *shalom* and coming of the kingdom of God.
3. Rooting our methodology in biblical truths and theological reflection in order ensure that our work reflects Christ's character and love and reveals and seeks the kingdom in the world.
4. Embracing our commitment to restoring relationships with ourselves, others and creation, being willing taking risks and making sacrifices to do so, understanding that this gives us the authority and credibility to challenge others to follow this path and embody the prophetic aspect of jubilee.
5. Audacious and faith-filled fundraising, influencing, advocacy, development and relief work that seeks the restoration of relationships for all people with God, themselves, others and creation.
6. Remaining hope-filled and Christ-centred in the face of adversity and evil.