

# Experiencing the **HOPE-FILLED JOY** Jesus brings

**† DURING THE CHRISTMAS** season, joy fills our songs and our celebrations. For God’s people around the world, the source of this joy is our Savior’s incarnation—His love-filled entrance into the middle of the human story that so deeply needed a new vision of life.

We can say with Nehemiah that “the joy of the Lord is [our] strength” (8:10), and this season of incarnation is a chance for God’s people to display the depth of our joy to the broken world. But the joy that Jesus’ birth heralded doesn’t end with individual or personal happiness—after all, His first recorded quotation of Scripture, in Luke 4:17–19, is about “good news,” “sight,” and “liberty” to people who are poor, captive, blind, and oppressed. It’s an early glimpse of Jesus’ mission to shine the light of God’s kingdom into the darkest places of the world and human hearts. And it’s a foreshadowing of His ultimate call on all His followers to go and do the same for people in need.

## **Exalting the humble**

The goodness of God’s kingdom is especially for people who are most oppressed, whose lives seem furthest from anything resembling joy. In World Vision’s work, we get to witness the new life that God’s Spirit brings into spiritual poverty—and the joy when physical poverty is overcome. We see restoration of broken relationships with God and others—and progress from despair to hope as a family takes hold of their future. We witness a deepened trust in God’s truth—and people’s new understanding of their capacity to tackle poverty as image-bearers of God.

Remember who God exalts in the words of Mary’s famous song? “He has brought down rulers from their

thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:52–53). The people our culture marginalizes and see as most forgettable are the ones God came for in Jesus.

This season, reflect on these stories that show the joy of vulnerable people living into their God-given potential. We pray that they also bring *you* joy as you celebrate what God is doing around the world.

## **Strong families display God’s goodness**

The close relationship that Meshack has with his wife, Abigail, and son, Rashford, is rare in most rural communities in Kenya, where culture dissuades men from expressing emotions. Though men are expected to provide physically for their families, they’re not typically responsible for



raising children or cultivating a loving relationship with their wives. But World Vision's Men Care training, a global fatherhood campaign, seeks to enhance men's involvement in their families as equitable, responsive, and nonviolent fathers and spouses who promote gender equality and seek to improve all children's well-being.

Abigael persuaded Meshack to join a local Men Care group, where he met with others to discuss and learn about childcare, maternal and reproductive health matters, good parenting skills, and the significance of strong marriages for the well-being of children and families. Meshack has learned how "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3). Now, Meshack and Abigael pray together about challenging situations or decisions that affect their family, and their joy-filled unity points their community to God's transformative power.

### **A generous heart molded by service**

In the rural Honduran community where Eber lives, thousands of families used to have no access to clean water. But Eber had abundant clean water on his property in the hills. When he witnessed firsthand the muddy pools that children were collecting water from, his compassion prompted him

to undertake a seemingly impossible project. Twelve years spent caring for a severely disabled daughter—whom he saw as a gift from God—had softened his heart toward children in need. He was determined to make sure families in the valley below had clean water.

Eber and the community dug trenches, laid pipes, advocated with the government for funding, and prayed for over a year until they finally saw the clean water flowing down from Eber's land into homes. "God has been with us at all times, in every step we have taken," affirms one community member who helped with the project, which has blessed thousands with clean water. Eber trusted God with his resources, believing that "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9:11).

### **Education opens new doors of hope**

In India, the name of the informal settlement Anand Parbat means "joyous mountain," but it's an ironic name for a place of deep struggle and poverty. When their impoverished neighborhood was demolished as part of a government promise to build better housing, thousands of families were forced into worse temporary conditions, with no end in sight. Opportunities for earning incomes

here are limited to begging and sorting garbage on the streets.

But because donors and partners support World Vision educational centers, three teenage girls have become the first ever from this struggling community to take India's national class 10 exam and pursue higher education. As Proverbs 24:14 explains, education and knowledge are ways God's goodness reaches many people—"Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off." For Poonam, Tulsi, and Pooja, their difficult background didn't define their dreams, and their achievement has become an example to other girls from their community who faced a future of extreme poverty—but who now see the possibility of a future hope.

### **Our call this Christmas**

May the joy of the Lord be your strength this Christmas as you consider the incomparably good news of Jesus' arrival into our stories and the stories of people around the world. Let's celebrate our Savior's birth as "good news that will cause great joy for all the people" (Luke 2:10)—including the most vulnerable. +

