

ROGER THUROW

A YEAR IN AN AFRICAN
FARM COMMUNITY ON
THE BRINK OF CHANGE

THE LAST HUNGER SEASON



Study Guide

for congregations & other groups of faith

ONE

Introduction

Welcome to ONE's study guide for *The Last Hunger Season*, by Roger Thurow. Included here are five weeks of discussion guides that your congregation can use as a whole, or in small faith groups, each with an introductory letter from Roger Thurow to help spur ideas for discussion. The first week will focus on some of the general issues of hunger and struggling farmers in the developing world, while each of the following four weeks will focus on one section of the book.

What you will need:

- * Copies of the book for the members of your discussion group.
- * A computer and projector or DVD player to show the video clips (optional).
- * A Bible for the group, as the discussion sections point to relevant scripture.

Each section includes suggested prayers to help focus your group, an optional video clip, and some discussion questions to guide you and your small faith group, as well as suggested scripture. We suggest that you take turns as group leaders, and take turns reading the scriptures out loud to discuss as a group.

There are also suggestions for a week of action after your congregation has discussed the issues put forth in the book. If you have questions, or would like to share what your congregation is doing, feel free to get in touch with me.

Thank you!

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ONE is a grassroots advocacy organization that fights extreme poverty and preventable disease by raising public awareness. Cofounded by Bono, ONE is backed by more than 3 million members. We hold world leaders accountable for the commitments they've made to fight extreme poverty, and we campaign for better development policies, more effective aid and trade reform by signing petitions, making phone calls, writing letters, and meeting with our representatives on a local, national and international level. ONE is not a grant-making organization and we do not solicit funding from the general public. At ONE, we're not asking for your money, we're asking for your voice.

Week 1 – Opening Week

From Survive to Thrive

Welcome to a most extraordinary journey.

It begins, as it did for Kenyan farmer Leonida Wanyama, with the Bible. Leonida sat in a crude wooden chair in her tiny house made of sticks, mud and dung. Her harvests were meager, malnutrition and malaria were rife, high school education for her children a pipedream. She opened her Bible and turned the pages to Exodus 3:17. There she read:

“And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites...a land flowing with milk and honey.”



With that inspiration, Leonida and her neighbors in western Kenya decided to join a modern-day exodus of smallholder farmers from lives of extreme poverty. We hope it is a movement that will eventually include tens of millions of rural Africans like her.

Their journey isn't a trek from one place to another; rather, it is a transformation of their small farmsteads from failing harvests to nutritious abundance. These farmers, tilling less than three acres of land, desire to move from farming to live to farming to make a living. Increasing the productivity of their farming allows them to advance from barely surviving to robustly thriving, to be able to feed their families throughout the year and escape the clutches of the cruel Hunger Season.

You won't find the Hunger Season fixed on any calendar, but it is a distinct fact of life for millions of farmers and their families. It stretches from the time when the food from their previous harvest runs out to the time when the new harvest begins to come in. It can last from one or two months to as many as nine or ten. It is a time of shrinking portions and dwindling meals, from three a day to two to one to none. It is a time when children go to school on empty stomachs and parents scramble for whatever income they can find and scrounge whatever assets they can sell to afford daily nourishment. It is a time of rising malnutrition and falling expectations. It is the source of a wicked oxymoron: Hungry Farmers.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We know how to improve yields and expand harvests. Agricultural development is one of the great achievements of the United States. By reversing the decades-long neglect of Africa's smallholder farmers, by investing in their agricultural development, we can help create the conditions for them to be as productive as possible, to feed their families, their communities, their countries. We can all work together to conquer the hunger season. As people of faith, we all have a role to play. We all have a voice to raise.

I believe I was called to do my part as a journalist, to raise the clamor, during the 2003 famine in Ethiopia, when 14 million people were on the doorstep of starvation. On my first day in Addis Ababa, a humanitarian worker shared some advice, which actually was more of a warning: “Looking into the eyes of someone dying of hunger becomes a disease of the soul,” he told me. “What you see is that no one should have to die of hunger.”

The next day, entering the emergency feeding tents in the hunger zones of southern Ethiopia, I looked into the eyes of starving children and their parents, and what I saw did indeed change my life. Looking into their empty eyes finally opened mine. Why was such ancient suffering happening in our world of technological marvel? How could there be such want in a world of plenty? I saw that no one should have to die of hunger. Not now. Not in the 21st Century, not when more food was being produced worldwide than ever before. I knew that my business-as-usual as a foreign correspondent for The Wall Street Journal – moving from story to story, from country to country – was over. I couldn't walk away from this story of hunger in the modern world. My soul – my diseased soul – wouldn't let me.

As Leonida sought inspiration in the Scriptures, so did I. I was drawn to one passage that I had always found particularly powerful and lyrical since my Lutheran elementary school days in northern Illinois. Jesus' parable of Matthew 25: For I was hungry and you gave me food; what you do for the least of our brothers and sisters, you also do for me.

Here, in front of me now, were the "least," the poorest, of our brothers and sisters – these "hungry farmers" and their starving children. They needed food, yes, but above all they needed the ability to grow their own food, enough to feed their families and bring the surplus to market. I stayed with the story, following my afflicted soul, and it led me to the farmers of western Kenya – farmers with abiding faith – and to the book, *The Last Hunger Season*.

Ending the hunger season is the essence of ONE's THRIVE campaign: increasing investments in agriculture by the private sector, governments and development agencies so the smallholder farmers in Africa can finally have access to the same essential elements – better quality seeds, judicious amounts of soil nutrients, practical advice, financing, storage, markets – that farmers in the U.S. and elsewhere in the rich world take for granted. With greater, more nutritious harvests will come healthier lives, increased income and more educational opportunity for the farmers' children.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah tells us: "And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday." (Isaiah 58:10, KJV). It is a light that will illuminate the way from the misery of hunger to harvests of plenty.

1. Opening for Session

A Prayer of St. Francis

BCP p. 833, #62

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

2. Watch Last Hunger Season Documentary

3. Brief Discussion

A. What are the problems facing smallholder farmers?

The issues: These smallholder farmers lack access to agricultural inputs, technologies and techniques that farmers in the U.S. and elsewhere take for granted (better quality seeds, soil nutrients, technical advice and training, financing and credit, improved storage, efficient markets). Lack of access to modern farming technologies means that an acre in rural Kenya produces far less maize than farmers routinely produce in the US per acre. Lack of credit and access to high-quality storage facilities makes it very difficult for farmers to wait for prices to rise before selling their crops. Without access to credit, the need to pay school fees, a wedding, the cost of medicine for a sick child can all force families to sell crops when prices are low and have to buy food later in the season at inflated rates.

Poor roads make it difficult to transport food from areas where the harvest has been plentiful to areas that have suffered from drought or crop failures. This as well as food aid, shipped in primarily from the US, often distorts the market further and can cause prices to rise and fall dramatically throughout the season.

Because of this, many farmers have to choose between sending their children to school and buying food. Malnutrition, which can stunt children's physical and mental development, is a serious threat to families.

All of these factors contribute to the phenomenon of the "hungry farmer." An oxymoron, don't you think?

Discussion starters: How can a farmer be hungry? How is farming in the US different from farming in rural Kenya?

B. What biblical principles apply? Why does Leonida identify with the story of Exodus?

Read the relevant scripture passages below and discuss how they apply.

Relevant scripture: Matthew 25:35-40; Exodus 3:17; Galatians 6:7-10

C. What are some possible prescriptions for these issues?

- What can we do as individuals?
- What can and can't be done by institutions?
- What can and can't be done through government policy?

Some solutions: Farming in many parts of Africa today looks a lot like it did in the US 200 years ago. Back then, we were a country of smallholder subsistence farmers. However, the technology and resources needed to increase crop yields exist and are commonplace in developed farming societies. While farming in the rest of the world has become more and more sophisticated, with the invention of new technologies, farm productivity in Africa has actually been on the decline. Over the past 50 years, Africa has gone from an exporter of food to an importer of food assistance. Enterprises like the One Acre Fund, innovative insurance schemes like Syngenta's Kilimo Salama (swahili for 'safe farming') and microfinance institutions are beginning to reverse the neglect of Africa's smallholder farmers by tailoring services to their needs. With the global population expected to hit 9 billion by 2050, increasing

investment in long-term agricultural development in Africa may help us all achieve a world in which no one goes hungry. Some examples of efforts to do just this are; Obama's Feed the Future initiative, the G-8s New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition and ONE's THRIVE campaign.

Discussions starters: How do farmers in the US deal with uncertainty? Is there protection available to them? How does farming in Kenya compare with farming in the US?

4. Closing Prayer

A Collect for Church Unity

BCP p. 255, #14

Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before his passion prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as you and he are one: Grant that your Church, being bound together in love and obedience to you, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in him whom you have sent, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

5. Homework: Read the Prologue, Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Week 2 – Preparation

“God knows where we live.”

That’s what smallholder farmer Agnes Wekhwela told me as her neighbors prayed for rain. The rains that would herald the beginning of the planting season were late. With each day of gorgeous weather – blue skies, little wind, hot – the anxiety of the farmers increased. They knew that drought and desperate hunger were spreading across other parts of Kenya in 2011.

What if it didn’t rain here, in western Kenya?, I had asked Agnes, who was in her 70s and had surely seen her share of extreme weather.

“It will rain,” she said with great conviction. I was taken aback by her firm response.

“How can you be so confident?,” I pressed.

“God knows where we live,” Agnes replied with even greater certainty. “God knows who we are.”

Sure enough, a few days later, the rains arrived. It was the start of the long-rains season during which the farmers plant corn, their staple crop. After three consecutive days of good rain, the farmers, wielding their hoes, dug holes and dropped in their corn seeds. The rains confirmed Agnes’ steadfast faith.

For me, that conversation with Agnes became a touchstone of my reporting of *The Last Hunger Season*. Surely God knows where these farmers live, God knows who they are. But do we? Do we in rich, wealthy America know who these farmers are? Do we care?

We must know who they are. Ending their hunger season is certainly a great humanitarian challenge for the world, the charge to people of all faiths. But the importance of this mission goes beyond the humanitarian impact of improving the health of one farmer or one family. Increasing the harvests of these smallholder farmers is vital for all of us on this planet. For estimates are that by 2050, we will need to nearly double global food production to meet increasing demand from a growing population that is also growing in prosperity. Where will this increase come from? Africa’s smallholder farmers, whose yields are far lower than farmers elsewhere in the world, are indispensable in meeting this challenge. It is critical that they are able to grow and bring to market as much food as possible, to not only feed their families but also to help feed the world.

Do we know who they are? We must. For if they succeed, so might we all.

1. Opening for Session

Francis’ prayer for rain

The Last Hunger Season, p. 77

God, have mercy on us. Provide us with the rain, for when it rains enough, the dirt will easily break and make our work easier. And the seeds will germinate and push up through the soil. Hear my prayer, dear God.

Zipporah's prayer at the time of planting

The Last Hunger Season, p. 109

Thank you, Father, for the new day you have given us. You have given us this day to plant. Bless all those who are coming to help us. Give us the strength to complete the planting in one day.

2. Video #1 – “God Knows Where We Live”

3. Discussion

A. What problems does the community encounter as they prepare and plant?

The issue: The farmers of One Acre Fund have tough decisions to make. While the old traditional farming methods seem to be less and less successful, the new technologies being introduced are expensive and, in their regions, largely untried. The laborious and unfamiliar work of spacing crops and meticulously measuring out fertilizer for each seed is tedious and ridiculed by other women in the village. For a farmer whose crops are his or her livelihood, investing in fertilizer and enriched seeds is a huge leap of faith. The climate change in the East African region has created much uncertainty for farmers, whose traditional farming techniques have become even less effective as a result.

Discussion starters: Has anyone ever planted a garden? How did you plan? What happens if it doesn't rain? How are the experiences of the four farmers different?

B. What biblical principles apply? How do the scripture readings below apply to the lives of the farmers of One Acre?

Relevant scripture: Exodus 3:17, Matthew 13:3-23 - The parable of the sower, Acts 26:22

C. What are some possible prescriptions for these issues?

- What can we do as individuals?
- What can and can't be done by institutions?
- What can and can't be done through government policy?

Some solutions: Organizations like the One Acre Fund are doing a lot to lower the barriers to entry for smallholder farmers. Providing seeds and fertilizer on credit and in smaller quantities than are available from the standard channels can make agricultural technologies, once only accessible to large-scale farmers, within the reach of the smallholder. International governments, foundations and private companies are pitching in to help back agricultural development programs like One Acre. Obama's Feed the Future initiative, the G-8s Alliance to End Hunger and ONE's THRIVE campaign are all fighting for the success of the smallholder farmer.

Discussion starters: How did the community address the problems they faced? What did and didn't work?

4. Closing Prayer

A Prayer for Agriculture

BCP p. 824, #29

Almighty God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits for the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

5. Homework: Read Chapter 4

Week 3 – Hunger

When I first walked into the small mud-and-sticks house of Rasoa Wasike, I discovered what sustains these smallholder farmers during the hunger season. The writing was literally on the wall.

The walls of her house weren't painted in vibrant colors or covered with decorative wallpaper. There were no beautiful paintings to catch your eye, no shelves laden with artwork. What immediately commanded my attention was simple and humble: Rasoa's declarations of faith scrawled in white chalk on the rough brown mud walls.

"With God everything is possible."

"Lord is good all the time."

"Nothing but prayer."

"I love my God."

As the hunger season deepened, as food portions were rationed and meals were skipped, a plentiful spiritual sustenance surrounded Rasoa's family and all those who entered the house. I found the same bedrock faith supporting the other farm families I followed: Leonida Wanyama, Francis Mamati, Zipporah Biketi.



On the day her hunger season began, when the last kernels of corn from her previous harvest were consumed, Leonida said, "From now on, I start every day with nothing, except the grace of God."

Among the writings on the walls of Rasoa's house were references to particular Bible passages: Ruth 1:16-17 and Jeremiah 29:11. Ruth spoke of steadfast commitment; Jeremiah of "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

Rasoa's great expectation was to build a thriving business on the farmstead. She hoped to rent or buy more land to grow more corn as a cash crop and to diversify into other products such as tomatoes and onions to improve the family's nutrition. She intended to buy more milk cows. And she also dreamed of opening a small kiosk near the well-trod path beside her house. It would all increase her income to pay for the education of her three sons.

She dearly desired to go from merely surviving the hunger season to robustly thriving. She knew it would be a long journey, but her faith would guide her. The writing was on her wall: With God everything is possible.

1. Opening Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

2. Video #2—Hunger Season

3. Discussion

A. What problems did the farmers face during the hunger season? How did they face these problems?

The issue: The farmers in Lutacho work hard in the fields during the hunger season, knowing that the coming harvest is their deliverance. There is a particularly cruel irony during the hunger season: the work in the field increases as the farmers grow weaker. Prices skyrocket as families have to scrimp and save to keep their children in school in anticipation of exams that will determine their future. The hunger season is a time when families have to make tough choices between having food on the table and investing in their future. As the rains water the crops, the excess standing water becomes a breeding-ground for mosquitoes that carry malaria. Just as cash is scarcest and the work is most backbreaking, many farmers become weakened by malaria. Many have to rely on the goodwill of others or their emergency savings to keep their families healthy. To meet the need in Lutacho, Janet, the local pharmacist, dispatches medications to many on credit. Inclement weather also poses a threat to local crops. Hail cost the Lutacho farmers stalks of maize and killed a number of chickens. The insurance companies that protect larger-scale farming enterprises ignore smallholder farmers as too poor to pay premiums.

Discussion starters: Have you ever sacrificed to put a family member through school? To put yourself through school? To save for your or your family's future? Why or why not? What do these decisions look like for the smallholder farmers of Lutacho? Have you ever experienced hunger?

B. What biblical principles apply? How do the scriptures relate? What other scriptures speak to these challenges?

Relevant scripture: Psalm 46, Mark 6:31-44--The feeding of the 5,000, John 6:32-35, I Thessalonians 5:16-18

C. What are some possible prescriptions for these issues?

- What can we do as individuals?
- What can and can't be done by institutions?
- What can and can't be done through government policy?

Some solutions: The hunger season didn't always exist in Kenya. As the population has grown and plot sizes have shrunk, the soil has gotten more and more stressed. This year, Leonida decided this year to diversify her crops, planting beans between her corn stalks. Not only did this shorten the hunger season for her and her family and make their diet more nutritious, it also helped to replenish nutrients in the soil, depleted by years of growing only maize. Programs like the Improved Maize for African Soils, at the Kenyan Agriculture Research Institute and funded by the Gates Foundation and USAID are working to develop new maize strains that use nitrogen in the soil more effectively. The Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa program, funded by the Gates and Howard Buffett Foundations and overseen by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) has created new drought-resistant varieties of maize which is helping to shield farmers from unpredictable rainfall. President Obama, some of whose relatives are farmers in Kenya, helped convince the G8 to pledge \$22 billion to help end hunger through agricultural development. His Feed the Future Initiative is working to increase investment in agricultural technology and science. For smallholder farmers, timing is everything. Leonida, who had sold her radio to convince Gideon's principle to let him remain in school until she could pay off her debt in full, points out that the government requires that school fees be paid when maize prices are low. If the government were more in touch with the needs of farmers (who make up the majority of the population) and adjusted the dates when school fees are due accordingly, they could ease the burden on these farmers so they wouldn't have to choose between food and education. Designing irrigation systems tailored to the needs of smallholder farmers and the expansion of insurance schemes like Kilimo Salama could help protect farmers from crop-failures caused by bad weather.

Discussion Starters: How did the farmers address the problems they faced during the hunger season? What did and didn't work? What systemic solutions did they mention? Was the food assistance depicted in the book effective? Why or why not? Have you ever had to work when you were hungry?

4. Closing Prayer

A Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

BCP p. 219

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

5. Homework: Read Chapter 5

Week 4 – Harvest

As I approached the tiny, thatched-roof house in the pre-dawn darkness, a soft, beautiful voice broke the silence. “There is no other like God,” Zipporah Biketi sang. “Oh God, I’m fine. You are worthy of my praises today.”

It was harvest day, and Zipporah was too excited to sleep any longer. As the sun came up, her husband, Sanet, emerged from the house carrying a machete in his right hand.

Barefoot, he walked twenty yards to the very edge of his corn field and looked heavenward in supplication. He spoke into the thicket of stalks bowing before him with their heavy, ripe cobs.

“Thank you, Father. This is the day you planned for me to take my harvest,” he prayed. “You control everything in this field. Since I planted this maize, you have taken care of it. Now I see the results of your work. I will remember the results of my field.”

Just as he said “Amen,” he raised the machete above his head and brought it down with a quick, violent slash. A stalk of corn fell. Whack, he cut down another stalk. The harvest, signaling the full end of the hunger season, had begun.

Before she joined her husband in the field, Zipporah said her own prayer of thanksgiving. “We worship you, Oh God, because you are about to unleash a miracle on us. Help us, Oh King of Glory, to realize the work of our seeds.”

Zipporah and Sanet did indeed reap a miracle harvest. For the first time, as members of a social enterprise organization called One Acre Fund, they had access to better quality seeds, judicious use of fertilizer (a thimble-full per plant), proper planting and tending advice, and financing to pay for it all. With all this, the Biketis were able to increase the size of their corn field to one full acre from just one-quarter acre the year before. And their harvest swelled to twenty 90-kilogram bags of corn from barely two bags.

Their bountiful harvest was proof of the effectiveness of agricultural development work in creating the conditions for the farmers to be as successful as possible. The hunger season was conquered. The children, who suffered from malnourishment, began to thrive. Zipporah’s hymns of praise and prayers of thanksgiving were unending.

“There is none like you upon our earth, Dear Jehovah.”



1. Opening Prayer

A Prayer for the Harvest of Lands and Waters

BCP 828 #42

O gracious Father, who openest thine hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness: Bless the lands and waters, and multiply the harvests of the world; let thy Spirit go forth, that it may renew the face of the earth; show thy loving-kindness, that our land may give her increase; and save us from selfish use of what thou givest, that men and women everywhere may give thee thanks; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. Video #3 - Harvest

3. Discussion

A. What new challenges did the community encounter during the harvest season?

The issue: In order to reap as much as possible from their hard work all year, it is crucial that the farmers harvest their crops at just the right time. As the kernels become ripe enough for roasting, the temptation for hungry neighbors to pilfer a few cobs becomes all too great. But, before the cobs can be harvested, the rains have to slow enough for the cobs to dry on the stalks. But just as the One Acre farmers are harvesting yields far higher than they had been able to achieve in past years, the price of maize, which had been stubbornly high all throughout the hunger season, plummets. This is exacerbated by the influx of maize food assistance from abroad, shipped to other regions of the country suffering from drought and crop failure, creating an exorbitantly low price. The question of how long to hold onto their harvest is front and center in the minds of these farmers. Selling now means they will get far less cash than they would if they sold later. Storing their crops, sometimes in the driest corner of a bedroom, they run the risk of mold or pests ruining their hard-earned harvest.

Discussion starters: Have you ever harvested a crop? Vegetables from your garden? What happens if you harvest too early or too late? Is the food assistance sent to Kipnai (p. 190-197) effective? Why or why not? How about 'Kenyans for Kenya'? (p. 186)

B. What biblical principles apply? What does the Bible say?

Relevant Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:12, Isaiah 49:10, Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 7:17-19, Revelation 22:2, Genesis 41:15-31 & 47-57

C. What are some possible prescriptions for these issues?

- What can we do as individuals?
- What can and can't be done by institutions?
- What can and can't be done through government policy?

Some solutions: Being a One Acre farmer is all about teamwork. Because it is crucial that the crops

be harvested before rot sets in, the community works together to harvest each plot; the men wielding machetes to harvest the stalks and the women and children following behind to husk the cobs. The wild fluctuations in maize prices throughout the season are a constant headache for the farmers. They put forward some solutions. Pamela Wangila, a One Acre Farmer says, 'We wish the government could come and buy from us at a higher price rather than importing [maize] from other countries and paying transport costs as well as the cost of maize. Here we have a surplus, and this maize is grown in Kenya, so the Kenyans who eat it will enjoy it' (p. 189-90). George Masinde, a local county councilor also summarizes the issue and puts forward a possible solution, 'When farmers go to the government shops to buy government-imported fertilizer at planting time, the price is so high. Now, at the time of harvest, when the farmers can make some money, the government brings in maize and drives down prices. If the government can come and buy with a reasonable price, our farmers can go on and prosper. The government should give our farmers first priority. And if there still isn't enough food to feed the country, then they can import' (p. 190).

Discussion starters: How did the farmers maximize their harvest? What did and didn't work? Did the One Acre farmers suggest ways to fix the problem of low prices during the harvest?

4. Closing Prayer

A Grace at Meals

BCP 835

*Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

5. Homework: Read Chapters 6 & 7

Week 5 – Celebration

As she prepared her Christmas celebration a few months after the harvest, Zipporah shared with me a blueprint of her family's future. It was a sketch of the new house she and her husband Sanet were planning to build. They had outlined the rooms and plotted dimensions. The best thing, Zipporah said, was that the house would be built with real bricks and would have a metal roof. No longer would the rain pour in through the roof or dissolve the mud-caked walls.

The improved harvests brought choice to the farmers. The greatest Christmas gift for them were three little letters: A-N-D. "And," that most common of conjunctions that is rarely found in the lives of smallholder farmers. "And" strings together priorities and desires. We so often take our "ands" for granted, assuming that we can have everything we want: feed my family and educate my children and improve my house and take a vacation and, and, and.

For poor smallholder farmers, the best they can hope for is the word "or." Feed my family or educate my children. In most cases, though, what they face is neither nor.

That was the experience of Zipporah, Leonida, Rasoa and Francis -- until they were able to increase their corn harvests two-, three-, ten-fold and then use some of the extra income to plant a second season of vegetables.

With her harvests, Zipporah had enough nutritious food to feed her family and build a new house. Leonida could decide to keep some of her food for family use and sell some of it pay for emergency health care for two children and buy a new dairy cow. Rasoa could save for her sons' education and diversify her farm. Francis could plant more fruits and vegetables and improve the nutrition of his family and begin to dream of building a greenhouse.

Leonida cooked up a storm for the Christmas feast. The year before, her family shared a holiday meal of boiled bananas. But now she cooked up a rare treat of meat -- a whole chicken and some pieces of beef. There were beans and tomatoes and kale and flatbread. And there were bananas -- this time for dessert rather than the main course. This, she thought, is what the land of milk and honey would be like. The exodus from the misery of the hunger season had begun.

Gideon, Leonida's son who was home from high school, recovering after a severe illness, knew his family suffered because his mother decided to sell the corn to pay his school fees. There was no "and feed the family" possibility. But now, with the joyous Christmas feast his mother had prepared, he could see the "and" appearing in their life.

"Rejoice in the Lord always," he said, smiling relentlessly, "and again I say, Rejoice."



1. Opening Prayer

A Prayer for Joy In God's Creation

BCP p. 814, #1

O heavenly Father, who hast filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works; that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, we may learn to serve thee with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. Video #4--Celebration

3. Discussion

A. What changes did the community encounter after the harvest and before the second planting season?

The issue: Storing food so that it stays safe, dry and free of pests and mold is a big challenge for the farmers of Lutacho. Designing and building effective storage facilities is a difficult task for a single farmer. Sanet built a storage bin designed to keep moisture out, only to discover that cobs were spoiling because the bin kept moisture in. Staying healthy is also a challenge. Despite the mosquito nets brought in to protect the people from malaria, the disease still wreaks havoc. Drinking contaminated water causes typhoid. A shortage of medicine caused the tragic death of Rasoa's nephew. Looking forward to the coming year, the farmers dream of being able feed their families AND send their kids to school AND afford health care, instead of having to choose between their goals. AND instead of OR... what a difference those three letters make!

Discussion starters: Have you ever had to choose between your goals? What would be top priority for you?

B. What biblical principles apply? Why do the scripture readings below speak to these issues?

Relevant Scripture: Philippians 4:4, Proverbs 14:34, Isaiah 58:6-7, Proverbs 24:3-4, Mark 10:27

C. What are some possible prescriptions for these issues?

- What can we do as individuals?
- What can and can't be done by institutions?
- What can and can't be done through government policy?

Some solutions: The farmers of Lutacho each made plans that drew upon the lessons they had learned throughout the past year. Zipporah planted a vegetable garden in her old maize plot to increase the nutritional diversity of her family's diet and to soften the ground after the harsh demands of the maize. Zipporah hoped that this would provide her family with a steady stream of income as the crops ripen at different times during the season. Sanet hoped to use some of the extra cash to re-start his animal trading business and maybe start a poultry business. He also planned to rebuild the storage bin using

eucalyptus branches instead of maize stalks for better ventilation. They also drew up blueprints for their dream house. Leonida decided to plant sweet potatoes and beans to compliment her maize. She also joined an informal savings club and considered joining the formal sector for the first time by getting a microloan to go into business as a maize trader. Her son Gideon, who saw clearly the importance of science and technology to his family, decided to focus on agricultural studies in school. Francis planted beans, onions, sukuma wiki and tomatoes and considered buying organic pesticides to protect his children from chemicals that might harm. He bought a solar lantern so that his children can do their homework after dark in better light and began talking about building a greenhouse. Rasoa also planted beans provided by One Acre. After their calf had died mysteriously, she and Cyrus decide to invest in a bull. They hoped it would also help them get into the plowing business during next year's harvest.

In March 2011, Tony Hall, former US ambassador to the UN food agencies in Rome and now head of the Alliance to End Hunger, began a month-long fast to protest the proposed cuts to programs targeting agricultural development and hunger, including Feed the Future and the Global Agriculture Food Security Program. While he didn't succeed in completely shielding the programs from budget cuts, he did soften the blow to them. At the ground level, much progress is being made by the Kenyan government, NGOs and private companies. Initiatives to provide better family planning services have helped alleviate the stress of putting large families through school. Gains are also being made in storage technologies designed for smallholder farmers.

If these farmers succeed, so might we all.

Discussion starters: How did the community address these challenges? What did and didn't work? How do you plan for the future?

4. Closing Prayer

A Collect for Thanksgiving Day

BCP p. 194

Almighty and gracious Father, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we beseech thee, faithful stewards of thy great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

5. Homework

Bring your best game-face and a dish made out of sweet potatoes!

Final Week!

Thank you for staying on this journey of change. Hopefully by now you've seen the major difference support for agricultural development and nutrition programs can make in people's lives. Farmers such as Leonida, Rasoa, Francis and Zipporah have begun their exodus. They have shortened their hunger seasons, and seen a chance for a better future for their families. A life where they are not struggling with hunger, and watching their children suffer from malnourishment. Most importantly, they have moved to a life of, as Roger Thurow has eloquently put it, ands. They can purchase food and pay for schooling. Buy a new cow or build new storage and pay for needed medicines.

Programs such as One Acre Fund are one part of the solution. One Acre Fund works with Feed the Future, a United States program that supports nutrition and agricultural development initiatives across the African continent. Our senators and representatives need to hear from us that these programs are important. Agricultural development and nutrition programs save lives. And more importantly, they change lives. Rather than being a one-time delivery of food, these programs give farmers the tools they need to feed themselves.

For this week, we will continue our prayers and discussions, sharing how we have been impacted by these changes. But more importantly, we will share these with other members of the community. Let's join together to demand support for Feed the Future and agricultural development programs. Make this truly the Last Hunger Season.

Opening Prayer

A Prayer For the Right Use of God's Gifts

BCP p. 827, #38

Almighty God, whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Sharing

MARK 4:27 - "He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how."

GALATIANS 6:7-10: "A man reaps what he sows...Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

HOSEA 11:4: "I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them."

Look at our action guide to get ideas for what you can do as a community to celebrate the last hunger season! Make sure you contact your senators and representative to let them know you support funding Feed the Future and long-term investments in agriculture. And send us pictures of what you've done at faith@one.org, or tweet us @faith_at_one, #recipe4change.