

INTERNATIONAL  
Day  for  
**STREET  
CHILDREN**

2022



**MILELE DEVOTIONAL**

2022

# INTRODUCTION

This resource is prepared with love, to help those who express interest in the mission of Milele, to reflect on the complexities of caring for vulnerable communities, especially street children in Kenya. No matter what corner of the Kingdom you feel called to care about and serve, our prayer is that this short tool will help you better understand the needs of others.

As you engage the words below, our goal is for you to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances that exist when we serve vulnerable populations. In order to answer the Great Commission well, we must become humble, lifelong learners of our neighbors.

Throughout this devotional, you will read from the collective hearts below. As we began praying about a reflective resource of this sort to celebrate IDSC, we knew it was crucial to amplify the voice of a former street child who used to live in Kitale.

## *Derek Hamer*

Derek was adopted from Kitale, Kenya at the age of 6 after living alone on the streets for two years. He was raised in a multiracial family and feels strongly about helping adoptive parents meet the needs of their children who have been adopted from other countries and cultures.

He has a heart for justice, especially for students. He is dedicated to following God's call on his life.

Derek is currently a senior at Eastern University In Pennsylvania. In May 2022 Derek will graduate with a bachelor's in social work and wants to help children impacted by trauma.



## *Taylor Johnson*

Taylor has had the unique opportunity of uplifting ministry leaders around the globe to advocate for their causes through meaningful relationships and advance their innovative programs through philanthropy. She has worked in international development particularly in Kenya with Milele. She is most passionate about working with organizations pursuing dignifying orphan care and prevention, youth empowerment, and healthy foster care.

She has a combined passion for people and processes which dedicates her to high-quality work because of the core belief of the intrinsic worth of the people being served. She is a lifelong learner of social impact to answer the question, "How can we do good, but do it better?"



## *Cassie Furnari*

Cassie is the Founder and Executive Director of Milele International. She is passionate about sustainable development and long-term empowerment. While growing up around youth ministry she has been passionate about making sure teenagers feel loved and cared for. Her experience in Kenya combined with the stark lack of resources for teenagers led her to open Milele Home alongside an incredible local pastor and social worker, Joel & Margaret.

She is passionate about providing dignifying services and access to opportunity for the people who others say are "too far gone."



# DAY 1 – A RADICALLY EMPATHETIC GOD

The greatest display of empathy in the history of our universe is when God put on human flesh. In the person of Jesus, God walked among us. He came away from his heavenly throne to sit knee to knee with us... possibly in uncomfortable chairs and even the ground. He felt pain and sorrow alongside his closest friends. He even got sleepy and hungry. Fully human.

Now that we know what we have—Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God—let’s not let it slip through our fingers. We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.

## HEBREWS 4: 14-16 MSG

In the NIV translation verse 15 begins like this, “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses...*” We serve a God who understands our humanness because he experienced our humanness firsthand.

We know how the story ends, with a risen Savior, we can now be in a forever restored relationship with God. This is the good news, but don’t miss the radical empathy of our God. He didn’t meet us halfway, he came all the way, right to us. John 3:16, we see that God loved the world so deeply, that he sent Jesus to die and rise for us so that we could have eternal life with him.

But he also came to earth to be near us. To laugh with us. To hear us. To cry with us. To break bread with us. To embrace us.

To know us and for us to know Him.

Empathy is seeing the world through the eyes of others and feeling what they feel. While we won’t ever do this as perfectly as Jesus, aren’t we supposed to try?

While any two people can have wildly different perspectives, empathy allows us to see the world with our neighbors. Feel with our neighbors, not for our neighbors. Fix with our neighbors, not prescribe for our neighbors.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

## JOHN 13:34-35 NIV

Empathy paves a way for us to become lifelong learners of our neighbors, whether they are across the street or across the Atlantic Ocean.

Empathy enables us to love one another well.



My personal experience has been that when I have gone through challenging things in my life, I end up with a unique and powerful perspective.

Thinking about the boys at Milele, I see myself in them.

I share in their experience of having lived on the streets. The primary difference between me and the Milele boys is the fact that our teenage years looked so different. I am not actually sure that I would've made it to adolescence had I not been adopted. That's why when I see and hear the work being done at Milele I realize just how important it is for those children on the street—they receive the power of community because of Milele.

The community around me has made it so that I can look at the hard parts of life as just hard parts and not something that has kept me down. I can approach life with empathy for people because of the community support I have had.

At Milele, we listen. Our US leadership team listens to the local Kenyan leadership team of Joel and Margaret as they intimately understand Kitale and street youth. We hear the boys from the trenches of their lives, their immediate needs and their whispered hopes. We even weave in the unlikely voices of street leaders who know the inner workings of the streets, as this is their home.

## TODAY'S REFLECTION

Song: Reckless Love by Cory Asbury.  
Get Song [Here](#)

In what ways have you felt God's radical empathy? Has there been a moment you can point back to when you felt so loved by a path paved or maybe you realized later you were protected from a closed door? Sometimes his empathy is painted in the sky while other times it's as subtle as a windchill.

Is there a person or group of people that this message of empathy would be hard for you to practice? How can you build a bridge to them with empathy?

# DAY 2 – THE POWER OF DIGNITY

This year especially for International Day for Street Children, one of the concepts we are focusing on is agency.

Agency is an individual's capacity to independently choose, and to affect change. We deeply believe that the youth on the street in Kitale have an incredible capacity to affect change in their community.

Each boy on the streets in Kitale has God-given worth, which is why we pursue programs with excellence and edification. In his book, Toxic Charity, Robert D. Lupton speaks about “service with dignity.” He has catalyzed a movement of charity that is charged by those being served rather than by outside do-gooders, no matter how well-meaning. He ends his book with this powerful sentence

“...the poor, no matter how destitute, have enormous untapped capacity, find it, be inspired by it, build upon it.”



**I was fortunate that in most of the aspects of my adoption story, my dignity was preserved. My family, and those closest to me, gave me the space to tell the hard parts of my story on my own terms. Countless people were always ready to support me. I was welcomed in and treated like a valued person from the moment I met my forever parents in Kitale.**

**My dignity was often most chipped away by the people not deeply connected to my story, essentially by strangers.**

**“But who’s your real family?”  
“Do you know your real mom?”**

**Questions like these, although seemingly harmless, do little to help preserve my dignity. They put a discount on my priceless story.**



While powerful potential is ready to outflow from boys in the streets, their circumstances have stripped them of security, choice, and opportunity.

Because of that, Milele offers boys a chance for their souls to take a sigh of relief through some of the comforts of a loving, stable home. We help them uncover and build on those passions and skills that already exist within them.

In eternal endeavors, there are no quick fixes. Whether in Kitale, or in another street of the world you feel drawn to may you pursue solutions that outlive you.

And the “least of these” does not mean a person is of lesser value, this less valuable person doesn’t exist to God. The “least of these” is manmade. Each one of us has God-breathed value, gifts, and dreams. May you find ways to amplify the voice of the poor.

May you uplift vulnerable people to fulfill their purpose. May you be hospitable to those pushed out by society. May you fervently pursue better for your neighbor.

## PSALM 17

Hear me, Lord, my plea is just;  
listen to my cry.

Hear my prayer—  
it does not rise from deceitful lips.

2 Let my vindication come from you;  
may your eyes see what is right.

3 Though you probe my heart,  
though you examine me at night and test  
me,

you will find that I have planned no evil;  
my mouth has not transgressed.

4 Though people tried to bribe me,  
I have kept myself from the ways of the  
violent

through what your lips have commanded.

5 My steps have held to your paths;  
my feet have not stumbled.

6 I call on you, my God, for you will answer  
me;

turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

7 Show me the wonders of your great love,  
you who save by your right hand  
those who take refuge in you from their  
foes.

8 Keep me as the apple of your eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings

9 from the wicked who are out to destroy  
me,  
from my mortal enemies who surround me.

10 They close up their callous hearts,  
and their mouths speak with arrogance.

11 They have tracked me down, they now  
surround me,  
with eyes alert, to throw me to the ground.

12 They are like a lion hungry for prey,  
like a fierce lion crouching in cover.

13 Rise up, Lord, confront them, bring them  
down;  
with your sword rescue me from the  
wicked.

14 By your hand save me from such people,  
Lord,  
from those of this world whose reward is in  
this life.

May what you have stored up for the wicked  
fill their bellies;

may their children gorge themselves on it,  
and may there be leftovers for their little  
ones.

15 As for me, I will be vindicated and will see  
your face;  
when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing  
your likeness.

## TODAY'S REFLECTION

Song: O Come to the Altar by Elevation Worship.  
Get Song [Here](#)



Think about the organizations you serve with through your time or generosity. Do you know if they are creating and providing solutions that will outlive us? Are they serving with dignity? Do their services empower or enable?

What are your values and passions that direct how you give of your time, talents, and treasures to a cause?

# DAY 3 – THE POWER OF VOICE

The verses below may be familiar to you. They incite an important commission for all believers.

They incite an important commission for all believers. At Milele, we are passionately advocating for street youth in Kitale.

Our prayer is for justice to rush over the community like a raging river as poetically depicted in Amos 5. We pray that the boys who come through Milele become the answers to our prayers.

## PROVERBS 31:8-9

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves;  
ensure justice for those being crushed.  
Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless,  
and see that they get justice.”



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Being able to have a platform to share my story has been so impactful for me. Only I can be the expert of my story. Through therapy and support from loved ones, I worked through my personal story.

Through sharing my story, I have had the opportunity to help adoptive parents and adoptees as they navigate the challenging world of adoption. This platform helps me get my message out to a wider group of people.

I feel honored when I get to share my story because I know that my story is just one tool God has gifted me with as I try to serve and help people.

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Milele brings justice to boys through discipleship, education, and opportunity. Milele’s heart is to equip and empower them to become change-agents in their communities. They will become fathers and leaders in their communities. These boys have the power to impact generations to come.

I want to set up camp with you in the first half of verse 8. “Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.” We’ve heard this before, be a voice to the voiceless. But we want to be very

careful here. The boys we work with, along with all other vulnerable populations, have incredible voices and powerful stories, just like Derek. This verse doesn't command us to give them our voices, but to amplify their own voices. Help them find their voice. Remove whatever is crushing their vocal cords.

## TODAY'S REFLECTION

Song: I Belong - Tim Timmons  
Get Song [Here](#)



Can you recall a time you felt like you found your voice, discovered your passion, or felt the most like you?

How can you use these discoveries to glorify God?

Whose voice is not heard? What vulnerable people group or person does the Spirit bring to the surface of your heart at this moment? How can you amplify their voice?



# DAY 4 - THE POWER OF STORY

Take a moment to watch John's story below.



We sometimes wish life were like a movie because no matter how fast our heart races during the action-packed scene, wondering if the protagonist is going to make it, we know an ending resolution is on its way shortly.

But life doesn't always get to be that way.

Like many teenage boys on the streets in Kenya, John was pushed to the margins of the margins of society. He scraped by with what little money he could earn, honorably or otherwise. Sniffing glue and drinking alcohol became the only accessible refuge from the pain of the cold nights, sleeping on the ground, having nowhere to go.

John's life ended too abruptly with a violent encounter with the police. He laid unclaimed in the morgue for a week until a friend was finally notified of his death.

Derek laments that, "John's peace didn't come until the other side of heaven." John's humanity wasn't celebrated on a large scale until his funeral.

This feels unfair.

We love to hear stories like Derek's. He sought hopeless refuge in the streets of Kitale, stumbled upon Jesus, met his forever family, and has dedicated his life to serving vulnerable teens thru the foster care system. He is a powerful story of resilience and redemption. We must celebrate overcomers like Derek. We must learn from them.

But God is the same God, even in John's story.

There is no coincidence that this devotional lands in the middle of the Lenten season. In this season of the church calendar, we attune ourselves with the tension that hope is over the horizon, but it is not yet ours to hold.

Lent provides us a chance to wholly show up in our suffering and in the suffering of others. It keeps us from distracting ourselves away from the hurt. We do away with our modes of coping, so we can sit elbow to elbow with our friend Jesus. So we can beat on God's chest. So we can untangle the mess around us.

Erin Moon, in her 2022 Lent resource titled *Mercy Seat*, describes this tension so poetically:

*Something powerful and deep and holy emerges from Lent, a thread that binds us to God, a rope that fastens us to the Anchor. We are tethered and held, as God works to fulfill the promise He's made to us: I am with you. The reality of Lent is that we're not meant to live lives of ease. Death, war, famine, plague, sickness, loneliness, grief: it comes for every single person. But God has promised: I am with you. I am the rope. I am the vine. I am with you. You are not alone.*

## TODAY'S REFLECTION

Song: I Am Not Alone by Kari Jobe  
Get Song [Here](#)



Read Psalm 61.

What, in your life or on behalf of your neighbors' lives, are you still waiting for God to tie up in a pretty bow? What are you mourning? What makes you angry? Sit with what rises up to the surface of your heart, they're in you for a reason. And even more, God will be there with you as you let yourself sit in this tension. He is not too fragile for you to beat on his chest.