

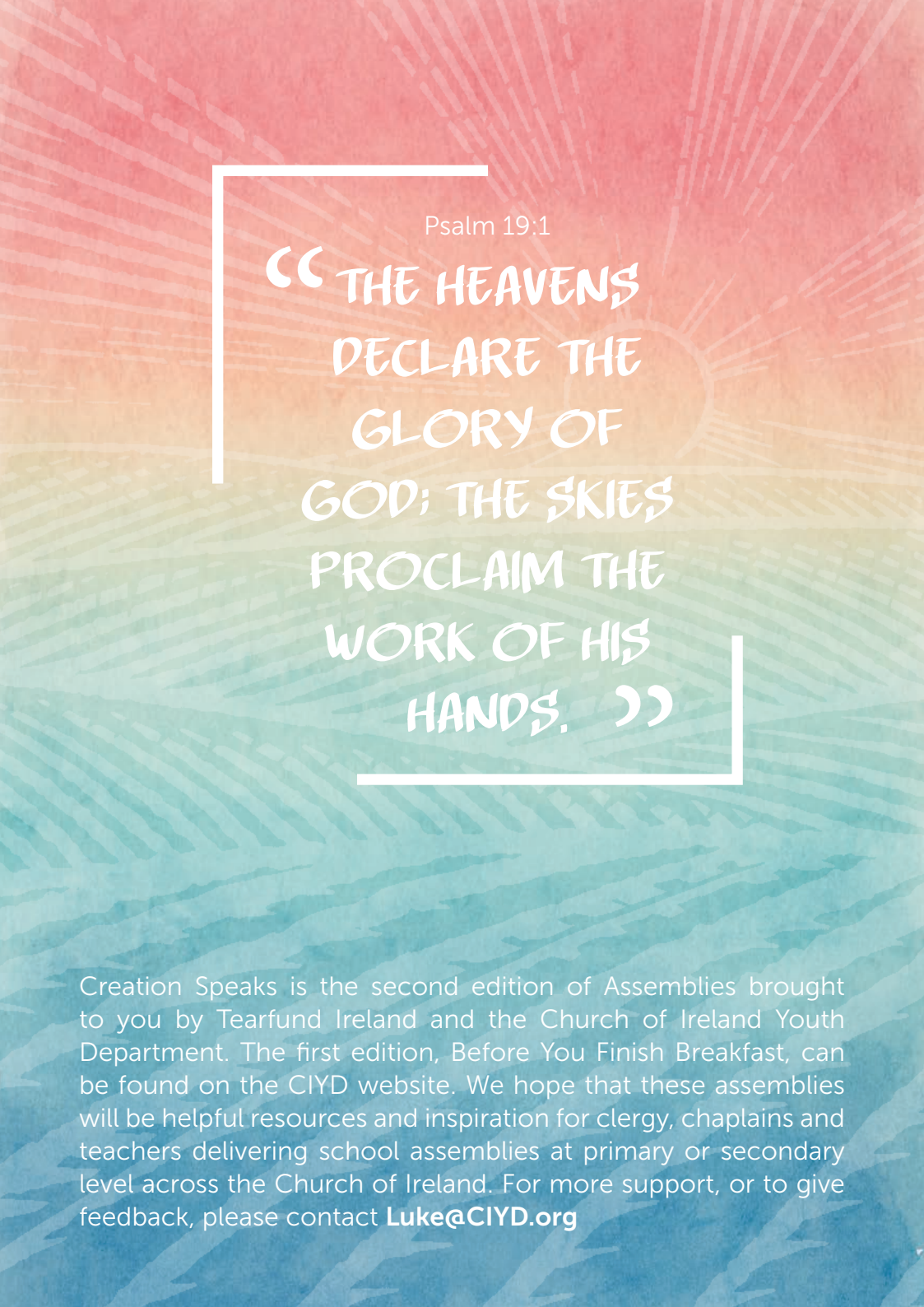


CIYD



CREATION SPEAKS

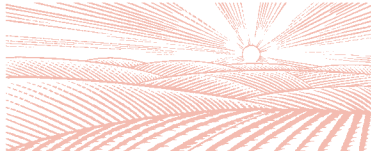




Psalm 19:1

“THE HEAVENS
DECLARE THE
GLORY OF
GOD; THE SKIES
PROCLAIM THE
WORK OF HIS
HANDS.”

Creation Speaks is the second edition of Assemblies brought to you by Tearfund Ireland and the Church of Ireland Youth Department. The first edition, Before You Finish Breakfast, can be found on the CIYD website. We hope that these assemblies will be helpful resources and inspiration for clergy, chaplains and teachers delivering school assemblies at primary or secondary level across the Church of Ireland. For more support, or to give feedback, please contact Luke@CIYD.org



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AN UNLIKELY BUILDER

 **Aim** To encourage the group that by working together much can be accomplished to overcome poverty and solve problems in our own community

 **Bible passage** Book of Nehemiah

 **Materials suggested** builder's hard hat, a hammer, building materials

 **Optional watch** Meker Church <https://vimeo.com/143125180?fl=pl&fe=cm>

 **Further resource** <https://pip.worldbank.org/poverty-calculator>

 **Talk** Nehemiah was living a comfortable life in the King's courts in Babylon. His life was good and he could not have asked for a more trusted position than cup bearer to the King.

But his heart was not there. Hearing about the distress and the defencelessness of 'his people' who were living in Jerusalem, Nehemiah was overcome with grief. Their vulnerability was mainly due to state of the wall around Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by fire and was in ruins (Nehemiah 1:3-4). The wall was supposed to be their defence, a protection against their enemies and those that would hurt and oppress them.

Nehemiah prayed in his heart to God and had an audacious 'ask' for the King! To be given permission and resources to take time off to go and work with others to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah left the comfort of the King's courts and travelled to Jerusalem, but when he saw the true state of things his heart was broken.

But he was determined to do something about it. He challenged the local people, although they were poor, unskilled and discouraged, that they were the right people to help him rebuild the wall. He was a great influencer! The people responded by saying, "Let us rise up and build." Then they got started. (*Neh. 2: 18*).

It was an enormous task to rebuild the wall, which was about 2.5 kilometres long, 2.4 metres thick and 12 metres high!

Lots of different people got involved goldsmiths, perfumers, priests and many other people not accustomed to building work. Working together in unity, with God's help and each one doing his part in single-minded determination, the wall was completed in only 52 days! (*Nehemiah 6:15*)

Just like rebuilding the wall in Nehemiah's time, tackling issues like poverty around the world can seem an overwhelming task.

But did you know?

- Data from the World Bank suggests that extreme poverty declined by at least 30% between 1981 and 2024¹
- Over 1.5 million people have been lifted out of poverty in Ethiopia through Tearfund's self-help group work since 2002

Supported by Tearfund Ireland's local partners, churches and communities in Ethiopia are being trained to work together, using local resources to identify and to solve the issues they

1 <https://pip.worldbank.org/poverty-calculator>

face. Meker church is just one example (show the video here). Having been trained, rather than waiting for someone to come from outside, members of Meker church set about working with the community to solve local issues themselves.

Where there was once little work available for women, Meker Church has started women's self-help groups, encouraging women to begin their own businesses. There was no local primary school, so they have started a school in the church building. And they are seeing their community thrive.

❖ **Reflection** A huge amount has been done, but there is more to do, and it takes all of us.

- What can we do to help build our community?
- What skills do we have, what can we bring to make it happen?
- What can we do to support work in Ethiopia to help communities work together to solve their own problems?

✚ **Prayer**

O God, our Creator,
 who gave us all we are and have;
 release us from self-love
 to be able to share
 what we are
 what we know
 what we have
 with one another
 and in the rich world which you love.
 In the name of Christ, who makes this a possibility. **Amen**
Christian Conference of Asia

CREATION SPEAKS

 **Aim** To learn from God's creation and what it has to teach us about caring for others, being team players and putting others first.

 **Bible Passage** Psalm 19:1-4 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.'

 **Materials needed** images of bees, image of Shabura Baraka



Shabura Baraka photo courtesy of MKC Ethiopia.

 **Ask** Have you ever thought about the natural world 'speaking' to you?

The popularity of programmes about the natural world indicate that people are fascinated by the wonder of nature. This is nothing new. The Psalms, in the Bible, written 3,000 years ago are full of amazement at the beauty and majesty of the world around us. Did you know that the natural world has a lot to teach us about God and ourselves?

 **Talk** The humble honeybee can teach a lot about what a flourishing community looks like.

Just as we are all unique, there are many types of bees. Different bees collect pollen and nectar from different flowers – short-tongued bees like open flowers like daisies and long tongued bees like deep flowers like foxgloves.

So, what can honeybees teach us?

1. Caring for our neighbour

Apparently, honeybees spend most of their time feeding other bees in the hive, rather than themselves. This helps them to strengthen their relationships with each other and live in harmony. Jesus said that people will know his followers by the care that we have for each other (John 13:34–35).

2. Being a team player

In a hive, there are different types of bees, but each one has a key role. The queen lays the eggs; the drones fertilise the eggs and the workers collect nectar and make honey. Together, the bees manage their time and resources in a way that helps their whole hive to stay safe and thrive.

The Lord has placed every bee in the hive for a reason: to fulfil its purpose. He places each of us in our families, schools, churches and communities for the same reason (1 Corinthians 12). And whatever role we have, it is important.

3. Others first

When a honeybee finds nectar, she goes back to the hive and does a waggle dance to tell the other bees where it is so they can go and collect nectar there too.

Honeybees are committed! If you add up all the journeys made by the many bees needed to produce a jar of honey, it totals over 40,000 miles. That's nearly twice round the world!

God wants us to put the needs of other people first. This includes sharing what we have like members of the early Christian church did (Acts 4:32–35) and showing kindness and love to those around us (Mark 12:31; Luke 10:25–37).

And honeybees are bringing transformation to the lives of families in rural Ethiopia too.

Shabura Baraka farms a small piece of land in Southern Ethiopia where the impact of climate change has been making it harder for farmers to grow enough to eat. Through Tearfund Ireland partners, Shabura got the opportunity to join a group, (called a self-help group), where a bit like honeybees, members are dedicated to working together to improve their lives.

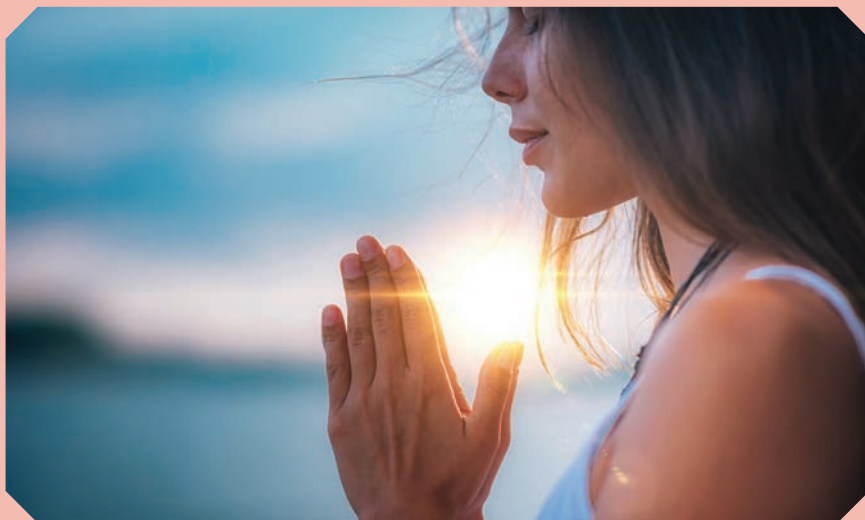
Shabura received training on how to manage bees through the group. He was then able to take out a small business loan from his group to buy new hives. Today Shabura owns 34 beehives each producing 40kg of honey, enough for the whole family to live on. Shabura has a big dream to further scale up his honey

production. He says, "if people work hard [even] on a small piece of land ... they can get a lot of production...It is as simple as that".

❖ **Reflection** Think about simple honeybees working together to produce honey and sustain the hive. The Lord has placed every bee in the hive for a reason: to fulfil its purpose. He places each of us in our families, schools, churches and communities for the same reason. And whatever role we have, it is important. What can you do today to make your community and your local environment a better place?

✝ **Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you for all that we can learn from your creation. Forgive us where we have failed to be good team players. Give us the courage to think beyond our own lives; to live and consume responsibly so that our near and far neighbours can experience their full dignity, and that we can help restore and admire the beauty of our communities and of this earth. **Amen**



HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?



Aim To consider how much is enough and encourage gratitude for what we have



Bible Passage 1 Timothy 6 v 6-10 and Philippians 4 v 11 - 13
Materials needed Images of company logos and well known adverts



Optional watch If the world were One Hundred People
<https://youtu.be/D5j5Fen-4mo?t=3>



Optional activity Find a range of well-known company logos to turn into a quiz. You could either put them on a screen or cut them out from magazines and stick them around the room. Ask the group to identify the logos. With a smaller group it could be turned into a competitive quiz.



Talk

Invite the group to think about what they'd like for Christmas, their birthday or, if it isn't near either, a shopping spree. Give them a minute.

When they've finished, ask them how many things they might have on their list? Is it long? Is there anyone who has nothing on their list? Is there anyone who has been able to say "It's ok, I have enough, I don't want anything more."

Rockerfeller, one of the richest men who ever lived in America, was once asked "How much is enough?" He answered, "Just a little bit more." We are programmed to be discontent with what we have.



Ask the group why they think this is.

Put an advert or two up on a big screen – point out the fact that we are constantly surrounded (on our phones, on social media) by messages telling us that what we have isn't enough and we should want more. Adverts exist to make us discontent with what we have.

Ask the young people what kinds of lies they think adverts tell us. eg. If you smell like this you'll attract all the girls, you should be embarrassed of your phone and you need a new one etc. Our consumer culture wants us to want – and to want more, more and then some more.

The verses in 1 Timothy have a serious warning in them – that if we're not careful our desire for more can have serious consequences. Greed has the potential to crush the life out of our desire for God. Arthur Simon in his book *How Much is Enough?* says "The problem is not that we've tried faith and found it wanting, but that we've tried mammon (wealth) and found it addictive, and as a result find following Christ inconvenient."

We maybe don't think of ourselves as having a desire to be wealthy, but most of us have a desire for what wealth can bring us – fashionable clothes, music, nice food, the latest gadget, holidays – the list could go on and on. The problem for the rest of the world is that the more we consume the more natural resources we use. This has an effect on the planet and people, especially those living in areas of poverty. Something needs to change.



Reflection How can we guard against the dangers of wanting more? In Philippians, what does Paul say is his secret of

contentment? All we have comes from God. Maybe if we spent more time thanking God for what we have rather than listening to the world telling us what we “need” we’d also learn the secret of contentment.

🎯 **Action** Earlier you thought about things you might want for Christmas or your birthday. Now take a minute to think about things you are thankful for. Being thankful for what we already have is a key to being content.

The challenge to you today is to spend the rest of the week being thankful.

✝ **Prayer**

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you. Grant us purity of heart and strength of purpose, so that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, and no weakness hinder us from doing it; but that in your light may we see light, and in your service find our perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**



CROSSING THE SEA

– ON DRY LAND?



Aim To consider what is involved in the journeys undertaken by refugees across the Mediterranean Sea and to encourage deeper understanding and empathy for refugees.



Materials needed a piece of rope or masking tape to mark out an area of 5ft x 2.5ft on the floor; image of the Red Sea parting; image of refugees in a small boat in the Mediterranean;



Preparation Create a layout in the space you are working in that represents the size of a boat that many refugees would travel in on the journey across the sea. An example would be a 12 metre rubber boat used by many refugees. In the past the Irish Navy saved 123 people from such a boat in the Med. If you scale down according to group size, a group of 30 would need a marked out space of 10ft length and 2.5ft width; a group of 15 would need a space of 5ft x 2.5ft.



Optional watch 'Your phone is now a refugee's phone' <https://youtu.be/m1BLsySgsHM>



Bible Passage Exodus 14:10-22



Talk At one time the Children of Israel lived in slavery in Egypt. As their suffering overwhelmed them and continued to get worse, God stepped in and sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Shortly after the Children of Israel fled on foot from Egypt they arrived at the Red Sea. When they realised

that Pharoah and the Egyptians were pursuing them, they were terrified, hemmed in by the sea on one side and an aggressive army on the other.

The Bible tells us that ‘They told Moses, “Weren’t the cemeteries large enough in Egypt so that you had to take us out here in the wilderness to die? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt? Back in Egypt didn’t we tell you this would happen? Didn’t we tell you, ‘Leave us alone here in Egypt—we’re better off as slaves in Egypt than as corpses in the wilderness.’” (*Exodus 14:11-12*)

Then God did something incredible, he instructed Moses to lift his staff above the water of the Red Sea and the water started to separate. The Red Sea parted and the Children of Israel were able to cross over to the other side in safety on the dry sea-bed, escaping from the Egyptians for good.

Many refugees fleeing war, persecution and conflict today find themselves on a seashore, hoping for a way to get across to a safer life in other countries. However, the sea doesn’t part for them. Many take enormous risks, paying huge amounts of money to smugglers to travel in small, unsafe boats.



Ask for 15 volunteers. Invite the volunteers to get inside the dimensions as you have laid them out on the floor (see Preparation section above). Tell them that this is a refugee boat and that they would travel in such a boat across the sea.

To help set the scene you can explain that it’s a rubber dinghy and ask if anyone has been in one before? You might ask if anyone has been on a bigger boat and contrast that this one

has no facilities, no staff, no safety equipment and possibly no life-vest.

❖ Reflection

Ask those sitting in the 'boat' how they feel, how would they manage on a dangerous boat journey like this?

Encourage the group to take a moment in silence to pray for refugees and the dangerous journeys they may face.

✚ Prayer

God of love,
 You are the God who takes the side of the oppressed.
 You are the God who is close to the brokenhearted.
 You are the God who raises high the humble.
 We pray for refugees around the world.
 May they be welcomed with open arms.
 May their needs for food, shelter, clothing and love be met.
 May their wounds – emotional and physical – be healed.
 We pray that the world will hear their plight.
 We pray that the world will have compassion.
 We pray that the world will take action on their behalf.
 In Jesus' name, **amen.**

Tearfund

Further resources Tearfund Ireland's work with refugees
 International Programmes | Tearfund Ireland

Youth activities exploring refugees and migration
<https://developmenteducation.ie/resource/global-rights-noble-goals-refugees-migration-the-sustainable-development-goals-and-youth/>

MYTH OR FACT?



Aim To challenge common misconceptions about refugees and migrants and consider the Biblical mandate to welcome those who come to Ireland from other countries.



Bible verse "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."
Leviticus 19:34



Materials needed Statistics on refugees¹



Invite the group to join a Myth or Fact quiz about refugees and migrants. Here are some examples of questions.

1. By the end of June 2025, 50 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide because of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. Myth or fact?

Answer: *Myth. It was more than 117 million people. That equals filling Croke Park 1,421.6 times.*

2. Of those fleeing, most will leave their home country. Myth or fact?

Answer: *Myth. Most will not leave their country but are internally displaced. In 2026 73.5 million people were internally displaced within their own countries and 36.4 million were forced to leave their country for a new one in search of safety.*

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>

3. Ireland hosts the most refugees per capita in the world. Myth or fact?

Answer: *Myth, Lebanon hosts the most refugees per capita. 1 in 3 people in Lebanon is a refugee.*

4. 71% of the world's refugees are hosted in high income countries.

Answer: *Myth, Low and middle-income countries host 71% of the world's refugees. Least Developed Countries provided asylum to 25% of the total.*



Ask Do any of these statistics surprise you?



Biblical reflection The Bible verse tells us the Children of Israel were 'strangers' or 'foreigners' living in Egypt. Does anyone know why they first went there? Because of acute famine. Failed harvests and drought meant that they couldn't feed their families and were at risk of starvation, so they sought refuge in Egypt where stocks of food were available. This is still happening across the world today, people on the move not just because of conflict and war but also because of climate change and hunger.

Then in later years the Children of Israel were persecuted so badly in Egypt they were forced into slavery. Eventually they fled the country and became refugees once more. Because of their own lived experience God expected them to welcome others who came to live among them for similar reasons.

Jesus took it further in the New Testament, Jesus said to his

followers that next to loving God, loving our neighbour was the most important thing we should be doing. In the time of Jesus many people tried to find excuses not to care about people who weren't like themselves. But Jesus challenged the religious leaders on many occasions about loving others (see *Luke 11*).

- ❖ **Reflection** Ask the young people to reflect on the command from the Bible to love the foreigner living among us. Is it what you are hearing on social media, from your friends, from people in your community? Why do you think that is? What can you do today to make a newcomer in your community feel welcomed today?

✚ **Prayer**

Bless our beautiful land, O Lord,
 With its wonderful variety of people,
 Of races, cultures and languages.
 May we be a nation of laughter and joy,
 Of justice and reconciliation,
 Of peace and unity,
 Of compassion, caring and sharing.
 We pray this prayer for a true patriotism,
 In the powerful name of Jesus our Lord. **Amen**
Archbishop Desmond Tutu



THE UNLIKELY ACTIVIST

 **Aim:** To encourage the group that everyone can be an unlikely activist, making a positive difference to the lives of others in the community.

 **Bible Passage:** 1 Samuel 17

 **Materials needed:** Images of well known activists

 **Invite** the group to think about well-known activists, were any of them unlikely candidates for the role?

 **Bible reflection** In the Bible history, we read of a remarkable King called David. But he didn't start out life as the heir to a throne. David was an Israelite, the youngest of eight brothers and his main role as a boy was to look after his father's herd of sheep.

At that time the Israelites and the Philistines were at war, and every day, Goliath, a giant Philistine warrior, used to come out to challenge and threaten the Israelites.

He mocked them and dared someone to fight him, but the Israelites were terrified and no one volunteered. David happened to be visiting his brothers at the battlefield and heard Goliath's threats. He was outraged by what he heard and volunteered to take on the challenge.

He wasn't a soldier, he was only an insignificant boy, but he had a strong faith in God. Goliath, on the other hand, was a giant warrior from the Philistine army. He was strong, tall, and feared by everyone.

Even though he was small and had no armour, David believed he could win with God's help.

With only the resources he had to hand, a sling and five smooth stones he found on the ground, David stepped out to face Goliath. While the giant laughed at him, David stayed calm and confident.

He slung one stone, hitting Goliath right on the forehead and knocking him down. David showed that even what seems small and insignificant can turn out to be mighty in facing an enormous challenge.

MESERET'S STORY

Meseret Asefa, a mother of two, lives in Ethiopia. Living in a poor area, she had very limited confidence and little awareness about opportunities for women to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Then one day she heard about a new women's group called a Self Help Group being set up to help women save money and start small businesses. Her husband was sceptical about whether participating in such a group would make any difference to their lives.



Meseret Asefa, photo courtesy of COSAP Ethiopia.

Meseret tells us *"I was a shy woman before joining the Self Help Group. I couldn't even express myself or speak in public."*

Despite these challenges, Meseret became involved in the women's group and gradually started participating in meetings, saving activities, and community discussions. Over time Meseret developed leadership qualities and became increasingly involved in advocating for women's rights and representation.

As Meseret's husband observed the positive changes in her confidence, leadership, and economic contribution to the household, his perception gradually changed and he has become a great supporter of her work on behalf of other women.

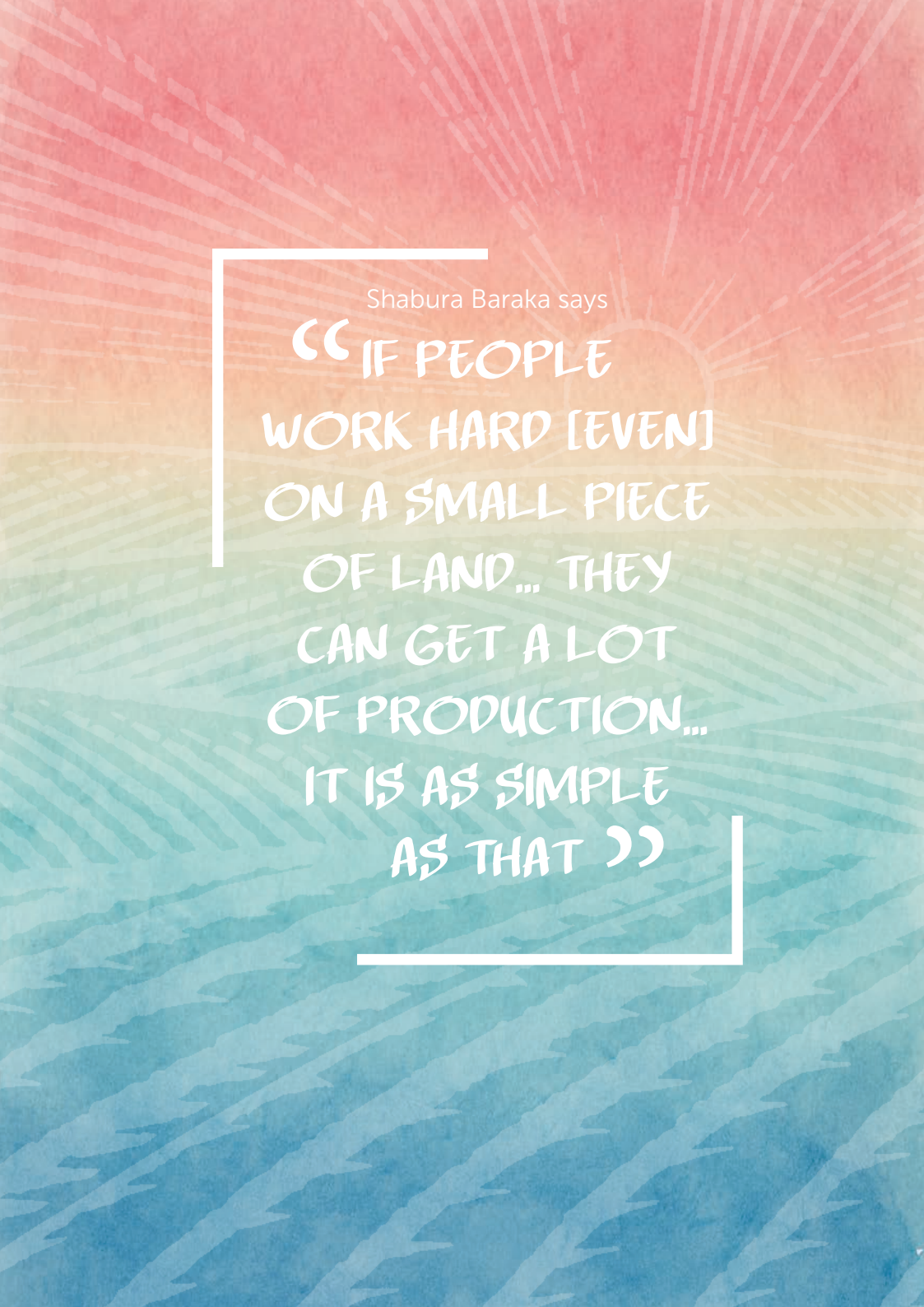
Meseret strongly believes women must not simply remain participants in development programmes but should become leaders and policy influencers capable of shaping national priorities. Her latest ambition is to become a member of parliament! An ambition she shared with Irish Minister Neale Richmond when he visited Ethiopia in 2026.

"I had no expectation or hope for my life. ...Now I want to change my country. I want to be in parliament!" Meseret

❖ **Reflection** David and Meseret are examples of unlikely activists making a difference in their communities. What step of action can you take to help solve the problems in your community?

✝ **Prayer**

Almighty God, help us to see, just as Meseret did, what we can achieve, by growing our capabilities and reaching out beyond ourselves. May we be aware of the needs of others and increase our sense of purpose. Help us to see how we can act for the benefit of others today. **Amen**



Shabura Baraka says

“ IF PEOPLE
WORK HARD [EVEN]
ON A SMALL PIECE
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