



SOMALIA

TEXT BY **OCKIE VAN HEERDEN**
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It was a seemingly ordinary Wednesday morning when I was asked to prepare an audio visual to highlight the plight of the people of Somalia and the 6 tons of aid being sent up by CityHope Disaster Relief. Somalis have faced drought, hunger and a relentless civil war that's ravaged the country for more than twenty years.

The book of Mark tells us to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation..." Yet somehow, in our understanding, "our world" differs greatly from that which is referred to in scripture. "The world" for most of us consists essentially of our comforts, the people we spend the most time with, and maybe in a broader sense, what we read or see on the news. The difficulty for us is when God tells us to go to places that are so radically different to our frame of reference that it immediately instills in us fear, uncertainty... and the words we may not utter verbally – except in our minds – "NO WAYS!" This was my initial response.

I wrestled with God... yet He did not change what He spoke... He kept whispering the word "courage". God encouraged Joshua to "be strong and courageous" (Deut 31:23).

The interesting thing about this text is the word "BE" – it's a 'doing' word – a word that requires a step of action. A friend of mine put it like this: "Courage is knowing the danger, but still doing what needs to get done, despite the danger". God has called us to BE courageous. He has promised that He will go before us, and that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Arriving in Mogadishu, nothing could prepare us for what we experienced in our short two-and-a-half day stay. Leaving the airport with our security detail of 15 soldiers, we knew this was going to be a life-changing trip. We were issued with bulletproof jackets before going to oversee some of the food distribution, followed by a visit to the IDP camps. Hundreds of thousands of Somali's live in these camps where the conditions are appalling at best.

We also visited Madina Hospital where the majority of patients in the hospital had suffered bullet wounds. What was striking is that, due to a lack of skill and resources, the doctors generally don't try to reconstruct bones or fix up injuries – a simple amputation of the wounded limb is done.

A boy of 10 years old who had been wounded in the head by a stray bullet lay unconscious on a bed in the passage of the surgical ward, his dad just holding him. In that moment my heart broke. This child would probably not survive. Fighting back the tears, I knew that God was not only reminding me of the immensely privileged life I get to live, but also opened my eyes to the injustice that is happening in our world. I felt there had been a personal disconnect in my life between worshipping God, and 'being his hands and feet' to those who were living in hardship. Worship and the pursuit of justice go hand in hand, and this is what God reminded me of. We cannot continue singing songs of how good and loving God is, without actually showing up to places where hope has been lost and responding.

Returning home we have battled to adjust back to what we would deem 'normal'. Our friend, Christian Taylor from Arc Solutions, reminded me: just by us showing up, spending time in Mogadishu, hearing the plight of the people and bringing them food we brought more hope than we could ever imagine to a people who have been forgotten by the "world".

In the book of Matthew Jesus says: "What you have done for the least of these, you have done for me also." This is essentially the call of the gospel. We respond in our small way through obedience, and allow God to do what only He can do. It's as simple as being Jesus' "hands and feet" on the ground, loving people - not out of our own ability - but with the love of the Father. What an unbelievable privilege to be invited on this adventure with Jesus. There is still a lot more work to be done!