

Who will lift my burden?

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Women and children laughed as Sarah and Olivia entered the village with water buckets perched on their heads. Cultural immersion is the best form of flattery. It was not quite as funny when we learned that the women usually take this 1km hike around 10-15 times a day, usually with a baby tied to their backs. Amazing.

An International Women's Day reflection based on the experiences of CURE mums in Zambia

I rise up early in the morning—sweeping the yard in the midst of raising dust as it has not rained for sometime due to climate change; later on I prepare breakfast for my husband, so that by the time he wakes up it will be ready—*who will lift my burden?*

As the day progresses—I head to our corn field, weeding, and an hour later my husband joins me but leaves two hours early. It's almost lunch; whilst in the bush, I look for wild vegetables and firewood; I head back home carrying the load on my head. The journey has taken me 30 minutes and I endured the scorching heat—*who will lift my burden?*

By the time I reach our homestead, my husband is fast asleep under the cool shade of the fig tree, but I have not time to rest; lunch has to be prepared, and I still have to go back to the field in the afternoon as there is still much work to be done in the field, otherwise the weeds will outgrow the corn—*who will lift my burden?*

After cooking in the heat of the African sun while enduring the smoke from semi-dry firewood, I serve my husband, whose only words of appreciation for the meal is, "Your food is too salty, and thus I need cold water to drink." I wish I had a child, so I could send her to take water to her dad, but I have been barren for more than 10 years of our marriage—*who will lift the burden?*

After a quick lunch, I head back to the field, where I work till sunset while hubby is having cool afternoon rest at his favorite stop—under the fig tree. As soon as I reach home, I get an empty bucket to draw water at the well. The well is not crowded at that time of the day. I manage to fill my 25 liters bucket and a 10 liter container in no time. I balance the bucket on my head whilst carrying the container in my hand. I need that much water for washing dishes, cooking and for my husband's warm bath—*who will lift my burden?*

A month into this cycle of carrying my routine burden, there is finally good news; I will have a baby! Seemingly answered prayer, till she is born—"twisted legs." My husband and his relatives blame me as the cause of the condition after consulting the local "witch doctor,"—*who will lift my burden?*

A month passes by, and it is time for the baby to be out of the house as per our tradition. I dash to find solace in the church, but I am wrong—I hear loud whispers ... She is a sinner, you can tell by the child's legs; God is punishing her ... Oh, my God, where will I find refuge?—*who will lift my burden?*

I hurry back home, not attending the afternoon service. Maybe my husband, the father of our child, will understand, but I am wrong; our neighbor says he can't stay with me, a barren woman who gives birth to a disabled child, and he says the child is not even his, so he left for his clan's village—*who will lift my burden?*

Where else will I go? I take a two-hour walk to the nearest clinic. "Maybe they will help," I comfort myself. But I was wrong again; the only thing I am told is the name of the condition, "clubfoot," but they can't treat the condition; it can only be done in the capital city far away—*who will lift my burden?*

Life is so unbearable for me and my child—I am unable to work in the field because no one is willing to take care of my child while I am away. Instead they call us all sort of names because of her condition. My church-mates see me as a sinner, and the rest of the village think I am a witch. Sometimes, I contemplate taking my life and that of my child, but then I remember that I have an aging widowed mother to take care—*who will lift my burden?*

In the midst of bad news, this afternoon, a stranger visiting a relative, maybe an angel—who knows?—speaks of people coming all the way from the capital city, looking for disabled children. They will be seeing them at church at the nearest town the following morning, so I go around looking for a bicycle to borrow. But everywhere I go, I am told "You are wasting your time; your child is disabled, just let her be." They say they will not be wasting their bicycles, too—*who will lift my burden?*

What do I do? I start off in the dead of the night with the girl on my back. I don't care whether hyenas or evil men attack me, I would rather die trying—anyway, I don't have a life. After walking for four hours, losing my way many times with no one to ask, as everyone is fast asleep, finally, as the sun starts to rise I meet a woman going to the field who shows me the way and encourages me that I will be there within two hours—*who will lift my burden?*

For sure I arrive at the church, and I am among the first ones to be seen. The CURE doctor assures me that they can treat my child in Lusaka. Oops, my joy is short-lived; how do I get there as I have not transport money, and don't even know how to get there? He points to the far end of the room and said, "Go and talk to the Busa (Pastor)." Oh no, a church man again—*who will lift my burden?*

The Busa welcomes me, tells me about the hospital and also, most importantly, about Christ. He counsels me to let go of my bitterness towards my husband and his family, my church-mates, and the rest of the village. He tells me that they will have outreach in our village to teach about disability, show the *Jesus* film, and train church leadership. As for my transportation, he tells me that it will be provided by Hope 587. Once at the hospital I will be taught how to keep local chicken profitably so that I can have a steady income—*I know who will lift my burden.*

I cannot stop thanking my Lord. My prayers have been answered and my burden lifted. God is working through the Beit CURE Hospital.