



Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode.

Today, Andy Harrington will be interviewed by Lorna Dueck. Andy Harrington is going to stretch our hearts today for a vision for a world without hunger. Andy is the executive director of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and you may have been hearing about his call for food aid to the crisis in South Sudan, which we are going to cover in this podcast.

Over the past 30 plus years, Andy Harrington has spent time in places where the themes we read about in Scripture like justice, care for the vulnerable, and feeding the hungry are in great need. Andy will explain how the call of Christ to care for the hungry is at work in very real and complex ways. Andy left a young career at Lloyd's of London Insurance in England and since then Andy has developed a lifetime of experience in Christian outreach.

Andy has a master's degree in missiology and culture from Sheffield University Cliff College and has invested his life in Christian missions, first at Youth Unlimited, then at Wellspring Foundation, and now at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. He'll share how as well the unexpected death of his 28-year-old son has shaped his life and in hearing Andy's story I think we're going to be reminded of the importance of fueling all of our

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

lives with the gift of daily Bible reading. So here is Andy Harrington in conversation with Lorna Dueck.

Lorna Dueck: Andy Harrington, thank you for joining Scripture Untangled and you're here on a very important topic. I think we're having a hard time believing that world food hunger has not been solved, but you got a lot of headlines for your trip to Sudan recently.

What did you see?

Andy Harrington: Well Lorna, thanks for having me today and thank you for bringing up this incredibly important topic. You're right, I was in Sudan and South Sudan actually just about six weeks ago now. We were there for the third anniversary of the outbreak of the war there, the civil war, and we saw some pretty hard things, I'm not going to lie.

Just to talk about the nature of hunger in the world at the moment, we're currently seeing nine times more people that are in catastrophic hunger than we were a decade ago. That's incredible in this time of plenty that we have.

Lorna Dueck: Here we have great advance in the world and hunger is nine times worse.

Andy Harrington: Yeah, 266 million people according to the World Food Programme were in acute hunger. We work at different levels of hunger, so that would be what we call a level three to level five and those are the worst types of hunger. Those would be people that would be in real severe, missing food, not able to feed family, kind of hunger, up to, absolute famine, people are dying.

In Sudan, we're seeing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. To give you the stats and then to give you the stories, there are 19.5 million people in that one country

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

alone that are in acute hunger. There are 35 million people needing humanitarian assistance.

Canadian Food Grants Bank has 15 members. I visited one of the members' partners. That member was ERDO (Emergency Relief and Development Overseas) and I visited LMI (LM International), the partner there.

They took me to a refugee camp, and in this refugee camp were around 240 families. It wasn't one of the larger ones I've been to, but there were 51 other camps like that in the area. This refugee camp had been basically abandoned by the UN because of all the aid cuts that happened.

The UN just had to pack up and leave because they had to prioritise. To give you an example, as we walked through the door, kids were running up to us and saying, have you bought any food? Have you bought any food? I was meeting with the local committee there who were just trying to organise food supplies to whatever level they could. I met one woman who had escaped from El Fasher where there had been a big attack by the militants.

She'd been badly wounded a few weeks before. Her mother had been killed in front of her eyes. Her brothers had clubbed together their money that they were going to use to escape themselves from El Fasher, to get her out and get her some basic medical treatment.

She was in that camp, still injured, still wounded, lying on the floor of a rough canvas shelter. There was actually somebody else's family who had taken her in. She was unable to digest food, so needed specific food supplements that she couldn't get. She was with a family there that had no food themselves.

It was quite traumatic for me to see. I can't imagine what it's like to be her. She was just one of many, many people that we met there.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

Hunger is getting worse around the world. Aid cuts are causing that hunger to get even more critical.

Lorna Dueck: We're in a time of billionaires, even descriptions of trillionaires.

How come this has moved off the world's agenda?

Andy Harrington: I think there are a number of reasons for that. I'll pick up on two of the key ones, and one you just picked on. I think that in a time where the gap between the wealthy and the poor is massively widening. You just said we've just seen the world's first trillionaire, Elon Musk, who's also the person who slashed all this aid spending in America through his agency, DOGE.

He jumped up on a stage with a chainsaw, and we're going to take a chainsaw to USAID, but it's a major funnel of American aid. He did it. I've met people all over the world in trauma who worked for USAID who were just cut at the moment.

Lorna Dueck: You've also met people who actually ate the food of USAID. And that's gone. That made a huge impact to hunger, did it not?

Andy Harrington: Oh, it did.

And so, when I was in South Sudan a year ago, just after the USAID cuts happened, I stood outside a childhood malnutrition center where they were doing supplements for kids in serious malnutrition. As I stood there, families were coming to me trying to give me their babies because they had just heard that that malnutrition center was going to be cut at 24 hours' notice. And then I found out it was one of 1,200 other malnutrition centers that were going to be cut because of those cuts to USAID.

Just across the road was a food distribution point in this refugee camp of 24,000 people I was in. And I was talking to the director of the food distribution. The last bags of aids were being distributed that day because everything had been cut.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

They'd been told they couldn't even bring the convoys that were halfway through. So that, going back to your original question, that misunderstanding of how we're seeing wealth concentrated in a few thousand individuals, massive wealth, and their absolute distance from what's happening to many, many people in the world. And the way that they're influencing political forces around the world and politicians around the world to make this difference, I think that's critical.

Lorna Dueck: I think it's also a lot closer to my backyard than we think it is because, and in researching our conversation, I saw the report earlier this month from the Globe and Mail on Western countries, not just the US, but all of us are cutting foreign aid.

Canada's levels are the lowest they've been since 1964. And then it quotes The Lancet journal, the great medical journal, saying this will amount to 9 million deaths in four years.

Andy Harrington: Actually, I've got updated figures on that. Lancet recently came out with some new figures that say more like 22.6 million. That's brand-new information.

Lorna Dueck: Oh, my goodness. But Canada has cut.

Canada has cut. We're at the lowest level since 1964. What do we need to do as Canadians? And I love it that the Food Grains Bank works with church denominations.

So, you've got this army of church behind you. Here we are at the Bible Society. We care about hunger. What do we do?

Andy Harrington: Well, it's a great question. And I think there are things we can do. So, the organization I work for, as I mentioned, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which is 15 member agencies affiliated with churches, they're very well supported by those churches.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

But the problem is that we're seeing a kind of level of almost disinformation and delegitimization about the work we do. We're told that a vast amount of Canadian wealth goes towards poverty reduction and hunger, ending hunger around the world. Actually, it's about 0.21 cents in a dollar.

It's a very, very, very small amount that goes out.

Lorna Dueck: Not even a penny.

Andy Harrington: Not even a penny.

It makes a massive amount to millions of people around the world. So, you're right. We did see a cut to Canadian aid.

We saw \$2.7 billion cut over the next four years in the last budget. And so, I think it's really important that Canadians really live up to their values, talk to their MPs, talk to those who are making decisions at the moment. And we have resources on our website at Canadian Foodgrains Bank, where we can actually do that. We'll give you the resources to do that.

And say that Canadians care, because I think Canadians really do care, Lorna. I think the disinformation that's out there that says it's all going to corrupt dictators, which is rubbish, it doesn't.

Most Canadian aid flows through organizations like us, or organizations like WFP (World Food Programme), and goes direct to support the people on the ground. Let's combat that information. Let's Canadians tell their elected representatives, we care, we count.

Lorna Dueck: We're going to put that in our show notes down below. We're going to put that in our show (notes), because it does matter that we write and say this wasn't good that you cut all this aid.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

So how do you think we've lost our way on this? It's such a basic human need. What happened in society that...

Andy Harrington: Yeah, you know, I'm just one person, but I do have an opinion on that, actually. I think the rise of social media and the rise of far-right organizations are very much focused on nationalism, and to a degree that we have not seen in recent years, in recent decades even, has really meant that we can say to those people out there that they don't count. You know, we've seen this through history, Lorna.

We have seen this through history. I lived through a genocide in Bosnia. I was working with refugee aid in Bosnia.

I saw what it looks like when you start to treat people as less than yourself. I spent eight years as a CEO of an organization working in post-genocide Rwanda, where one side was called cockroaches by another. Now, when you give yourself permission to think of other people as less than yourself, as not as human as you, it doesn't really matter if they're hungry.

It doesn't really matter if they don't have the same human rights that you do. And then when you amplify that through some of the media channels that we have available to us now, and when anybody can say anything and it's not taken down off a social media platform because it seemed to be okay to say that because of free speech, we're starting to get back to some of the things we saw in the middle and early of last century. And we're not there yet, but we're on a trajectory.

There is a very clear path between some of the things we're seeing said now, and the genocides that have taken place in the last 50 years. And whilst I would not say we're heading towards that for sure, I would say that our attitude to human beings has changed and is being influenced by some of these agitators and politicians out there. Every human being is a human.

We're all made in the image of God. No one human is less than any other. But when you start to think they are and you start to treat them as objects, it doesn't really

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

matter if they're hungry because they're not you and they're not your family and they're not your community.

They don't count. So, I think that's got a large part of what we're doing.

Lorna Dueck: Okay, so let's talk about putting the Bible into that mix because at the Bible Society, we do try to influence social media flows with information like this with Bible.

Yeah, what does the Bible challenge us with on this global problem?

Andy Harrington: The Bible has numerous references to God's heart for the poor. You see the references to what theologians call the court of the vulnerable, the widow, the poor, the orphan, the refugee. You see in Luke 4, where Jesus is talking about, I've come to set the prisoners free.

If you want to talk about hunger specifically, Matthew 25 really talks about Jesus saying, "what you did for the least of these you did for Me."

And one specific question we're going to be asked around that, because Jesus does specifically refer to this, is "what did you do when I was hungry?" You know, when I was hungry, you fed Me. Well, when did we see that happening? What you did for the least of these you did for Me? I think one of the questions we're going to be asked one day is what did you do when I was hungry?

If we think of every person made in the image of God, which I fully believe they are, if we think of the image in your day, then every person has the right to food and every person has the right to be treated with the same dignity that we want to be treated with ourselves.

So, I think the Bible is very clear on this. And when I, you know, when I see some of the things that are coming out from the more far right Christian nationalist crowd that's out there, that says we only should look after ourselves, there's nothing in here about the poor, you know, and it only works for our political point of view. When I

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

equate Christianity with political influence, that's when I think we come away from this.

The Bible's critically clear. There are over 2000 references to justice in the Bible. And I think so, as we think about that, if we start to read the Bible in that lens, we are absolutely compelled to help those who are hungry and those who are poor.

Lorna Dueck: Andy, this is a wonderful model you've got because church denominations group together and they join in with the food grains. Has that changed in the church scene in Canada? Are churches still as interested in caring for the poor?

Andy Harrington: Oh, that's a great question. I do believe so.

I go to a church myself that is very concerned with caring for the poor. We have a food distribution place. We have work with young mothers who are struggling.

And I'm very familiar with many churches that do that. In a previous life, I worked for Youth Unlimited, Youth for Christ here in Canada, and we were very closely linked with churches that are very engaged in reaching out to the local community.

I'd say there's a wing of the church that is very much around what's in it for our community. We want to be self-focused.

But I also think that here in Canada, we are not exactly where things are perhaps in other parts of the world, shall we say, that aren't a million miles away from us. And the churches still are concerned.

I know of numerous churches that are very engaged in outreach to their local communities as well as globally. Coming back to our organization, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, we have approximately 30 denominations that are represented by those 15 members.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah, it's beautiful.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

Andy Harrington: It is a beautiful model. They run from Pentecostal to Baptist to Alliance to Anglican, Lutheran, even Catholic, Adventist. And so, I think when we come together, it is a massive sign of the unity of the church and of what we should be.

And one of the things that happens in our organization is regularly, one of those members will have some finance that isn't yet committed, and another member might have a need for that finance because they're working in a place the first member can't work in. So, for example, Gaza, where we're very active at the moment, or Afghanistan. And so, the other member who's raised the money for needs, but not specifically for them, might give the needy member some of that finance.

And so, you're literally having members saying, we've got money, you've got need, let's give that to each other. That's denominations, that's churches sharing their resources. So, I do think that there is still a lot of unity in the church, that we are still caring about the poor, about hungry.

I think we need to do more. I think that stretches to our work with indigenous issues here in Canada as well. I think we need to be very, very engaged, because it's very, very clear that the Bible isn't just about our personal relationship with God.

It's about how our personal relationship with God causes us to have a relationship with the world and His creation and the others in it.

Lorna Dueck: You know, there's a lot of farmers who work with you as well, Canadian farmers, who I've had the privilege of living in the prairies, and you'll see fields that are Canadian Food Grain Bank fields. Tell us about the relationship with Canadian farmers.

They care about world hunger, don't they?

Andy Harrington: I have been in this job for; I've been the Executive Director for six years. I have fallen in love with Canadian farmers. I have some relationship with them.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

I live in a rural farming area, but my gosh, I am so impressed with Canadian farmers. So, to answer your question, Lorna, Canadian Foodgrains Bank was actually started by farmers back in the late 70s, who had some, you know, some surplus crops. There was a big cyclone in Bangladesh, and they went to one of our members, MCC, to say, look, let's try and get this food out there.

They did that. It became a thing, and it became too big for one organization. So Canadian Foodgrains Bank was formed first with five members, now 15.

And so, farmers grew food. We had these growing projects, and they grew food all across the prairies, not just the prairies, actually, right across the country. And those crops would be harvested.

We would then create the logistics, you know, railways. We'd go to Churchill. We'd export through ships around the world to places in need.

Now, that's great, but it's not the best way of doing things. So, in 2008, we worked with the government to do a thing called Untying Aid. It was a government policy that aid would benefit our people as well, and it would go out, so farmers were getting the benefit.

Farmers didn't want that. They wanted the best for people out there, and its way better out there to source that food locally, not to undermine local crops, local farmers, and to have culturally appropriate food. So, what we do now is those, all those growing projects still exist.

There's about 200 across the country. But now they have massive celebrations when they harvest, and they take the grain or whatever it might be to the local elevator. The elevator then gives the money to us via those growing projects.

And that equates to anywhere between 8 to 10 million, depending on what the crop is every year. And we then use that to purchase food or sometimes even give cash or

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

vouchers if food is available, to people in the areas that we work in. And the government, the government of Canada, has been a big supporter of us.

So, the government gives us a grant of up to \$25 million a year, where they will match every dollar those farmers or any other donors raise by four more dollars. So that's how we can do the work we do. And that's why Canadian Aid is so important.

It leverages, it brings Canadians together to come alongside the government so that we can end hunger in the world, which is a brilliant thing.

Lorna Dueck: And farmers feel 100%. When you see those fields labelled for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, you know they're caring for international. And of course, they're so efficient.

If it's better to sell it to the elevator and then give the cash to you, to the agency, it's just the delivery of food is so tangible. And you've also done a lot of partnership work with farming technique in these needy places on how to improve. And climate changes have dearly affected those on those most stressed climate zones.

What are you seeing about land reclamation and those kinds of projects that need to be helping farmers grow their own crops in those needy areas?

Andy Harrington: Yeah, that's a great question. So, as well as we talked about emergency food assistance, but we also do long-term programming to build what we call climate-resilient food systems. Climate change is real and it's happening and it's happening in Africa in a massive way.

To give you an example of that, we had around nine, what we call protracted crises around 10 years ago. And so those would be crises that last over five years. And there's a number of things that are driving that, could be conflict, it could be climate, but climate has been a key driver of that.

We had 29 last year, largely because climate change is causing so much devastation, especially across sub-Saharan Africa, all around the world really, but especially across

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

the Eastern sub-Saharan Africa. It really is changing the way farming needs to happen. And so, we've worked to develop, and not just us, we work with other organizations to develop a number of techniques in order to build that.

So, one of those is called conservation agriculture. It's quite simple. What it does is it helps retain moisture in the soil.

It helps retain nutrients in the soil. It helps farmers to make the least soil disturbance possible because every time you kind of till or weed or pull things up, you're disturbing the soil. And we've seen crop yields grow massively as a result of that.

We talk about an average in one year of 30 to 50% crop yield growth, but we have many records where it has been seven to 10 times crop yield growth. I've visited projects where farmers have shown me their produce from a year ago, and literally I had one lady called Jeanette who held some sweet potatoes up in Rwanda. There were three decent sized sweet potatoes from the year before.

And then she had two people come on and hold this massive, it took three of them to hold this massive bunch from the same plant this year. So, we know that works. Another thing we're doing is what we call nature positive solutions to climate change.

So how can we work with nature to heal itself? So, one of the projects we have with nine of our members and 10 local partners is in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Kenya, and Ethiopia. It's kind of a combined project of well over 30,000 hectares. And that's working in areas that were good farming land a few years ago but have been completely destroyed.

The soil has been eroded, or trees have been chopped down 15 miles away and therefore the water is flooding down the mountains. There's lots of different things. And we planted 18 million trees on those mountains in just one project alone.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

We've seen springs coming back that haven't flown for 20 years. We're seeing birds and micro-climates re-happening, re-burgeoning just in a three-year project. The before and after pictures are incredible.

And that means more farmers can grow more nutritious food to feed themselves and their communities. We have hundreds of thousands of people, farmers, on those programs, and it's making a massive difference.

The Bible Course: Before we continue with today's conversation, I want to take a moment to tell you about a resource that can help you better understand the Bible.

Want to understand how the Bible stories, books, and characters all fit together? *The Bible Course* New Edition can help. Across eight engaging sessions, you're going to trace the Bible's big story and gain practical tools for reading and applying it in everyday life. This new edition features refreshed videos, three new presenters, insights from Bible experts, and an eight-week daily reading plan with practical exercises.

And if you're leading a group, new coaching videos will help you host each session with confidence. Whether you're opening the Bible for the first time or have been reading it for years, *The Bible Course* is for you. Watch the first session for free at biblecourse.ca. That's bible course . ca. Now let's return to today's conversation.

Lorna Dueck: And so actually having the Food Grains Bank work with farmers, not just delivering aid, but also how are we going to grow?

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

Andy Harrington: Absolutely. And that's what we want, isn't it? When we're doing emergency aid, we're doing it because there's an emergency that people are going to die. And when we're doing resilient programming, we are often going to places where those emergencies have been or they've been nearby and saying, when that strikes, we want you to be able to feed yourself.

And so, our desire isn't just to keep people alive, it's to help them flourish. It's to help them to go forward into a life where they, their children, their families, their communities can truly grow and truly flourish in a world of change.

Lorna Dueck: I want to go back to Sudan because I know we opened it as the shocking headline that it is.

What can we do, who are listening, for that incredibly dire crisis in Sudan?

Andy Harrington: A couple of things. First of all, again, we do a lot of work around advocacy and policy. So, we're known for our work of feeding people around the world or helping them feed themselves.

But we also do a lot of education work with the Canadian public and we speak to politicians. So, the first thing I would say is make politicians aware that Canadians care. I meet regularly with ministers and with heads at GAC and they continually tell me, we're not hearing this on the doorstep.

I think Canadians do care. So, when they knock on your door, tell them that you care about what's happening in Sudan.

Lorna Dueck: Or write to your politician if they're not knocking on the door.

Yeah.

Andy Harrington: Yeah. And we have, as I say, we have resources on the site to do that.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

The second thing is give, find an organization that you trust. We have, we raised, after that trip I took to Sudan, it did raise a lot of media attention. We raised just under a million dollars from that trip alone.

That money is all going back to the programs that I saw out there or new ones we will establish. So, you can give, and not just to us, but there were great other organizations. World Vision's doing great work there.

Oxfam Save the Children. You may have people you know yourself, but we have capacity here to make a difference and we can do that.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah.

Our dollars are needed right now. Yeah. Our dollars are needed.

Andy Harrington: And pray. Can I also say pray? We talk about give, learn, pray, and advocate. Pray.

We believe that prayer makes a difference. So, if I could just also encourage people to take a moment and just think of those 19 and a half million people in acute hunger, those kids being cut out of malnutrition centers and just ask God's mercy and God's provision on them. We believe in the power of prayer to change things.

Lorna Dueck: Andy, we believe in the power of the Bible to equip workers like you. What is your practice like with the Bible to handle this kind of pressured advocacy work?

Andy Harrington: Well, it's a great question. Like everyone, there have been points in my life where I thought, oh my gosh, am I making a difference? And your practice slips.

But for many, many, many years now, decades, I've had a practice of getting up early in the morning. I actually live in quite a beautiful place in the mountains, just between Chilliwack and Hope in BC. And so, I get up, I have this Bible that a friend gave me in

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

1994, just as I was leaving, me and my family were leaving to move to Bosnia and Croatia.

It's a *Life Application Bible*, NIV version. And it is battered and it's held together with gaffer tape, duct tape. And every morning, I've redone it every morning, I open Psalm or one chapter from whatever letter of the Epistles I'm going through every morning. I have other things I do as well.

But that grounds me. I spend 20 minutes studying that. And then I'll spend another 20 minutes praying into both what I may have read there, but also things I have a prayer list I use with people on and people come on and off it and some people stay on it.

That has been profound for me, Lorna. So that is one thing. Another thing is I'm a big believer in creation and nature and what God does.

And I find God in creation. So, I often hike with a little pocket Bible with me and sometimes I'll stop and pull it out and say, okay, I need to read something here. So, it's a daily practice.

It's a daily practice when I'm not having to get up at five in the morning and run to a refugee camp. But in that case, it's a quick, I need two minutes just to be with you Lord as I run into this situation. But if I don't think I could do this work, if I didn't have that kind of like, not just a relationship with God, but a practical way of grounding that. I also do *Lectio Divina*, if you know what that is, as a way of Scripture. That is a regular practice for me as well.

Lorna Dueck: Yes.

And that grounds you in that. You've had so much professional trauma in what you have all faced. So much, you know, the story you told of the families in Sudan, but you have also as a family faced profound trauma when your 28-year-old son passed away. Tell us about that great loss.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

Andy Harrington: It is a great loss. It's a great loss at the moment in the middle of the World Cup, because he's a major soccer fan.

Lorna Dueck: I think they're watching it in heaven, Andy.

I've got my soccer fan up there too. My husband's watching there. Yeah.

I think they watch there.

Andy Harrington: What was his name?

Lorna Dueck: Verne. And Verne would have been, he would, yeah.

So, I think he's finally going to have all the World Cup tickets he would like.

Andy Harrington: Maybe Verne and Chris are going together.

And I had always, you know, when they announced it, I'd said to Chris, we're going to go, we're going to go to this game.

So, when I went on Saturday, I wore, I took something of his. My daughter was with me. She wore his football scarf. So, it's profound at the moment. You know, Chris died very suddenly. He had a pulmonary embolism.

His wonderful wife found him on the floor. We walked in two hours later when we could get there and saw him lying there.

Lorna Dueck: From an earlier injury, right? Like something that should have been managed.

Andy Harrington: Yeah. A week before he tripped, he was a sound engineer, and he tripped over a box of cables and fractured a small bone in his foot. It was, you know, they put him in a little cast, but unfortunately, he didn't treat it as it should have been and a blood clot broke off in the night.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

So how do I manage that? Well, I'll tell you. It's a constant ongoing thing. You know, when people say time is a healer, there's an element of that, but there's also an element that isn't true.

Time can never heal that loss. I found the first year I was just staring out of the window trying to figure out how life works. We're very close family.

And so, losing him was traumatic for myself and Helen and Sarah, his sister. So, for the first year, and I would pray every day, I would really ask God. And the interesting thing, Lorna, I didn't hear much from Him.

You know, I thought I have a pretty close relationship with God, and it sounded like it had just gone quiet and I couldn't really understand that. But about six months in, I realized that everything I had been working on was just going on track. Things I'd struggled with, whether it was fundraising or whether it was key strategic decisions, things just happened very easily.

And I came to realize that God had built this hedge of protection around us and was just there like a Shepherd with His staff planted, or Gandalf, if you can imagine the Lord of the Rings with his staff planted, keeping all the things away so that we could just grieve. And I read a book, *Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis. I read many books, but C.S. Lewis' *Grief Observed* was the best one.

And he described exactly the same experience of suddenly realizing this silence is so that I can grieve and have healing. And as soon as I realized that, God began to speak to me again. And we've made it a practice to try and reach out to people that we know that are in these situations as well in whatever way we can.

Whether it's just say, can we take you for a coffee? Can we sit? My wife was doing that just yesterday, actually. You know, can we sit? Can we talk to you? Can we help you through this? Because, you know, someone said it is sadly true. Grief is love that has no place left to go.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

And it just leaks out of this. And some days it's big and some days it's like a ball in a box. And the box has an electrical current running through it.

And some days the ball is small and you carry it. For whatever reason, a song comes on or a picture flicks up on Facebook or whatever, and that ball goes and touches all those electrical points, and you feel yourself like that. And so, you have to learn to carry that.

You have to learn to find God in that. And you have to learn to understand that this is a circular thing and it's never going to go away. I'm always, always going to wish that I could pick up the phone and call Chris.

And I still do. It's the weirdest thing. Sometimes I'll pick up the phone seven years and six months and nine days and three hours later.

And I will pick up the phone to call him because I saw something on TV and I'll just go; I can't do that. So, it never goes away long. As you know, my friend, I'm so sorry that you've experienced that as well, but we learn to manage that and to not allow it to break us and to do everything we can.

And this is one of the things we've done. To care for those who are in or in danger of being in the same situation. You know, we decided that a big pit had yawned in front of us.

It just opened up this chasm, and we just decided we're going to flung flowers around the edge of it and create a garden. And we're going to do the best we can not to be scared of this, but to do everything we can to help people flourish as a result of what we've experienced.

Lorna Dueck: And you did not stop caring for the world's greatest crisis of food hunger, of food hunger.

And has it come alongside that work internationally? Have you been a more tender, insightful person for the international food crisis?

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

Andy Harrington: I think I have. I want to be careful at how I express this, but I've been going to, you know, some of the poorer parts of the world now for, for 35 years. And I think I was always a tender person.

I think I always cared. I mean, it's that this was not just about a job. It was about, man, I really want to do something.

But since Chris died, you know, when I go into, and this happened on this recent trip, when I go into a small wooden hut and I see a mother nursing a child that is malnourished, I just want to break down. It is so hard for me to look at that because I know what that mother is going through or that father is going through. The way I channel that is to do everything I can to make sure that we help that person and those like her.

So, I would say it has given me the insight of understanding the pain of what that means that these, this is not a statistic. This is not a, a picture on a webpage. This is a human being going through the loss of a child or the potential loss of a child.

I know that feeling. That feeling then empowers me to ensure that I communicate as well as I can to those we work with, to the stakeholders we have, to government, to supporters, to sector agencies, whatever meeting. This is real.

Okay. This is not just numbers. And so that's why I feel so strongly about the delegitimization, disinformation that's out there about hate.

What we're doing is we're condemning people to death. If we just listen to that stuff and say, we're not going to be engaged when we could actually be making a difference. That's my passion in life, Lorna.

And it's been empowered by the death of my son, that we should stand with the poor. We can do, should do everything we can to stop other parents experiencing what we've had for, we've had to experience for whatever reason. We have the capacity in this country, in the West to end hunger in three years.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

We could do it. It wouldn't take that much money compared to what we're spending on defenses and arms. We choose to do this.

We choose to create billionaires and trillionaires. We can do better and we should do better.

Lorna Dueck: I want that to just hang there for a little bit.

And you, backed us up at the beginning of this interview with the words of Scripture of Jesus saying, what did you do when I was hungry? And He is in the poor; He is in the hunger. And this is our deep responsibility. What better place than the Bible Society's podcast to be sharing the words of Scripture, this is imperative.

I just want to remind the audience what we heard in the beginning. These are the lowest levels of food giving since 1964. And Andy, The Lancet's updated number on people who will die from hunger.

That number again is?

Andy Harrington: 22.6 million. Mothers, daughters, fathers, grandparents, and dying from hunger is a bad way to die. We can stop this.

Lorna Dueck: All right. We have show notes that are right below where you've been listening to the podcast. We're going to put the giving link for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank there.

I hope you're like the ticker just ticks right off there as people listen to this. We need to help you. We so thrilled that, you know, this is a church led agency you lead at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Churches are aware, and they're held by big, you know, it's a big denominational push where they join you. Any other closing words you have for us, Andy?

Andy Harrington: I just want to say thank you, Lorna. I want to say thank you for sharing your story as well there.

Scripture Untangled

Season 14: Episode 1 | Andy Harrington | The Bible's Surprising Challenge on Hunger and Justice

I understand how that, how that feels. I want to thank the people listening because I know many of the people listening would be supporters of food grains bank or other like-minded agencies. I think Canadian Christians by far care about the world.

I think that they're doing amazing work. I want to encourage everyone listening to this to take some time to find out a little bit more about the issues we've talked about and to pray. But I just want us to remember one thing.

There is no other. There's just us, all made in the image of God. There are no people less than you or more than you.

We are one creation of God, and we need to treat each other just as we would want to be treated as ourselves with dignity and with justice and with love.

Lorna Dueck: All right, Andy Harrington, the CEO of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Thank you so much for being with Scripture Untangled today.

Andy Harrington: It's been a privilege, Lorna. Thank you.