

TODAY IS WORLD AIDS DAY.

+ A MESSAGE FROM DAN HASELTINE

Today is World AIDS Day.

6,500 Africans will die today because of AIDS. Next year there will be 4.2 million children orphaned by AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet, surrounded by these statistics, I am reminded that AIDS is a disease that kills one person at a time. It is a disease that destroys the body one blood cell at a time. It destroys families one person at a time. It creates a void, a deep emptiness where hope and health should be one story at a time. The way to solve a problem like this is not to step back, but to press inward. Move toward these people, move in so that we all learn the face and story and need of one person. One person that is a brother or sister, one person that takes on a character and a shape all their own. Today, I am thinking about how I can help one person. How I can love and act, and advocate on behalf of one person. And in the midst of this great and challenging fight, we may one day realize that we have the opportunity to not be able to visualize the millions of stories that have regained their threads of hope, and sustained their health.



Can you think of one person? Can you put yourself in the place of someone wrestling with HIV/AIDS? Do you wonder what their fears might be? Do you wonder what their families might be going through? Do you consider the moment that they have to bring the news of their illness to their family? Is there room in your heart, in my heart to feel what they feel?

What must it be like to find out you have a disease, one without a cure, one that carries not only the weight of physical pain, but the brutal force of stigma and fear? The ripple effects of this disease will be death to their children, to their spouses, and death to their ability to live in community and die with dignity. So how do we process this? What do we do with these stories? And what would it look like to do our best to ensure that those wrestling on this day under the weight of AIDS can make it to the next?

This day is marked for us to be reminded that AIDS is real, that the stories of those who suffer are real, and yet it is a day that can carry hope. Hope - that if enough of us - enough doctors and politicians, teachers and artists, leaders and pastors, students and children, fathers and mothers will care and act, World AIDS Day will become a holiday commemorating the end of this disease.

I believe that God has given us a great privilege to be a part of this act of healing. It is in our hands. It is our ideas, our passion, our willingness to learn, to fail, to search, to love, and to fight that will bring forth the ideas and the designs to beat HIV/AIDS.

It is my hope that we will continue to feel the urgency of this great need. It is my desire that we will continue to open our hearts to the stories of people all around the world who suffer. Please join us in praying, in knowing, in loving, and in serving. There is more work to be done, and we hope your generosity will continue to make this good work possible.

With great hope,

~ Dan Haseltine, Blood:Water Mission & Jars of Clay