

God of The Journey

Discover | Dream | Grow



Salvos

Women

2017



Dear Salvos Women Leaders

I thank God for your leadership to women of all ages in your corps, centre and community.

The resources in this manual have been thoughtfully prepared to assist you to bless, inspire and encourage your women to discover more about the amazing grace and love of God for their journey of life.

I am grateful to Fay Foster for compiling the resources and for the many contributors who have prepared the articles.

Like you, I've been on many trips but one of the most memorable was In June 2016. Mark and I were privileged to take a journey travelling through Turkey and Greece following in the steps of Paul.

We visited the ruins of many New Testament churches like Corinth, Philippi, Athens, Ephesus & Thessaloniki and read the stories of Paul's journeys recorded in Acts and also the letters written to the followers of Christ. It was obvious that God led and strengthened him throughout each of the journeys.

Paul was blinded by the light of Christ on his journey to Damascus and his eyes were opened to the truth, love and salvation of Jesus Christ. So for the rest of his life he continued to travel, walking many miles and sailing across the seas to share the good news of Jesus.

He was determined to help others to discover, dream and grow through their experience of God on their journey through life.

As Salvos Women we also have the privilege of encouraging other women both within our corps, centres and community to seek God as they journey through the joys and challenges of life.

As we meet with women we are privileged to share our stories, provide teaching and assist them to discover, dream and grow in their knowledge and relationship with God.

I pray that our God of the journey will bless you as you continue in your ministry to women.

Julie Campbell

Julie Campbell (Colonel)

Territorial Secretary for Women's Ministries & Training Principal SFOT

The Salvation Army

Australia Eastern Territory

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God Who Sets Us On A Journey

Joy Dine

*God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.*

*Exploration brings new insights,
changes, choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding,
mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings,
find it hard to know what's right,
we regain our true direction
focused on the Jesus light.*

*End our longing for the old days,
grant the vision that we lack –
once we've started on this journey
there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding
excess baggage from our past,
cherish only what's essential,
choosing treasure that will last.*

*When we set up camp and settle
to avoid love's risk and pain,
you disturb complacent comfort,
pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge
you are always at our side;
give us courage for the journey,
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.*

Words: Joy Dine (1937 – 2001) ©
Rev Mervyn Dine. Reproduced with permission.

Discover, Dream And Grow

Major Christine Tamsett

Preface: there are a whole group of ideas in this resource. It is designed to take from it as you like and use what is good for your people

God of the Journey

1. Discover who I am

Poem: All I want to be is me (USB)

What discoveries can I make about me?

Special guest to talk about a new craft

What discoveries have I made in my life?

Special guest from university to speak about discoveries

Special guest to share some insight they discovered about their life

What do I want or need to discover about my childhood?

Special guest from Child Care Centre or teacher - childhood discoveries

What do I want or need to discover about my family now?

Special guest from Department of Communities or Centrelink

What do I want or need to discover about my work?

Special guest from Salvos Employment Plus or employment agency

What do I want or need to discover about my God?

Special guest to speak about discovering God or discovering more with God

2. Dream and set goals for the future

- Set goals, because he who aims at nothing is sure to find it!
- See goal setting sheet using SMART method (USB)
- See Ready Set Plan (USB)
- See Journey of change and discovery affirmations (USB)
- Have I included God in these plans?

3. Grow into what God wants me to be

- Where does God fit in my life?
- Where do I fit into God's purposes?
- Discussion / Bible study

Scripture - Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NIV)

¹¹ *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

¹² *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.*

¹³ *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

¹⁴ *I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity”.*

Song

Lordsong: I know the plans I have for you
(The Haven Quartet)

Lordsong: I know the plans I have for you
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9aJDW8JNFY>

A Time Of Reflection

Nekia Pender

Introduction/Ice Breaker

Buzz Words

This could be used as an icebreaker for the session. Print out the list of buzzwords from the USB, and leave this with the other handouts (USB) on each chair. Have a discussion about some of the words that stand out on the list.

- Perhaps there are a few your group can think of that haven't been written.
- Ask them to share and expand.

There just seems to be so many of them lately.

Keep in mind these don't need to be negative. Certainly feel free to mention one that gets on your nerves perhaps to break

the ice a little further - then pick out some of your favourites and ones that have more of a positive spin.

Some key ones: Emerging, Outsourcing, Seamless Transition, Win-Win.

We are thinking of our God of the Journey. In some ways that word 'Journey' is for me the 'ultimate buzz word'. In life, people are always on some sort of Journey.

Journeys in the Bible

The Bible too is full of Journeys.

Journey upon journey - from Genesis to Revelation. Spend some time reading some of your favourites in preparation. If you are with a small group that know each other even a little, discuss among you what some of your favourites are. If using this as a sermon outline or with a group less comfortable sharing, choose your favourite and spend a few minutes discussing:

- The Journey to Calvary where Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice (Matthew 16:21)
- The Journey across the Red Sea. (Exodus 14 :13-28)
- Noah (Genesis 8: 1-11) It rains for 40 days and 40 nights and drowns everything then the ark floats steadily for 150 days before eventually it is led to dry ground.

Never once on any of these journeys did God ask them to stay in the harshness or the hurt. He always had a higher purpose.

This purpose was revealed by people reflecting on these journeys and by God showing Himself in situations that might appear to be lost.

Main Bible Reference - Philippians 4:6-8, 13

In these verses God plainly says – don't be anxious about anything. He means that about things in the future but also that are from our past.

This is where God has taught me the most about Him and His quiet place on the journey in my life. It is only when I have given things that are worrying me, things that have happened, people and situations that have hurt me to Him that He can do what He needs to do with them for me.

One of the things I love most about our main Bible reference is that we don't need to be anxious, because we can have faith that He has it covered. When we ask Him to heal an area of our life we should do it in a spirit of thankfulness, believing He will heal or show us a new way of looking at the situation.

- **This is one of the most loved verses in the Bible. Ask your group what it means to them and what they love most about it.**

Optional Section

Personal Testimony or Group Sharing time

- Ask someone beforehand to share a 2-3 minute testimony about something that God has done in their life. If using this as a sermon outline, have someone speak earlier in the service.
- Ask someone to share a story about a situation where they have been encouraged by this verse.
- Share something about a situation God has transformed in your own life.
- Share the story in the introduction to this study.

Song Reflection

Colton Dixon - Through All of it – Play Clip

- Ask your group if there is one part that stands out to them?
- What did God say to them through that song?
- Any other questions you feel that will further the discussion.

You might be surprised where the conversation leads. Be open to what God will bring up. The song is a perfect example of how God can show His glory and provide healing out of a terrible situation, and that God never gives us more than we can handle.

Personal Reflection and Response

Philippians 4:6-8 - That's one of the things I love so much about this verse. It clearly says – whatever has happened or whatever will happen – don't be anxious about it because He has it covered.

When you do ask Him to heal certain areas of your life, do it in a spirit of thankfulness believing He will heal or give you a vision or show you a new way of looking at a situation that was once causing you immense pain and hurt.

As you pray thank God believing that He will transform an area of your life or that of someone else that is on your heart.

- When you feel the time is right introduce a time of personal reflection
- Extend people an invitation to write down on the response cards provided (USB) something, someone or a situation that they would like to hand over to God, or a healing or change they would like in their life.

Response Song

Something Beautiful

- Leave an appropriate amount of time for people to reflect at the end and to sit in God's presence.
- Don't be afraid of the silence as God works.
- Ask if there is something that people would like to share, encouraging them that even if they don't feel comfortable, God knows what is in their hearts.

Close in Prayer

Resources

Colton Dixon - Through All of it
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91KliTa1ksY> includes the lyrics)

My Travel Guide Through Life

Major Brenda Stace

Décor

Have set up a display featuring aspects of journeys; e.g. modes of travel, destinations, items needed for a journey, etc.

Welcome & Introduction of Theme

To introduce the theme, have a series of photographs ready that depict random situations. (A great resource is PHOTOLANGUAGE AUSTRALIA – Human Values, available from the Catholic Education Office, Sydney, Australia.)

Ask the ladies to choose one photo from the selection, and get them to imagine that the moment captured in the photo is a part of a journey they have been on. Tell them to think about this because later on in the

meeting they will be asked to tell a short story about that journey, and in particular, the moment captured by the photo.

Alternately, if photos are not available, ask the ladies to be prepared to share later on in the meeting a short excerpt from a journey they have been on; e.g. a funny incident; a difficult situation; a surprise encounter, etc.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we are on a journey called 'Life' – a journey You have planned for us to take. Some of us have had an easy journey. Others have had a difficult road to travel. But You are our Good Father, and You have travelled with us every step of the way. We praise You at the beginning of our Home League for Your protection and Your guidance as You have journeyed with us thus far. We invite You to continue to be our "Travel Guide" as we venture out further on this journey of life. Bless our travelling companions, and all those we will meet along the way. Prayed in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Home League Prayer

(Page 5 in the Home League Song Book.)

Scripture - Psalm 16:11 (NIV)

*You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Song

(New SASB 639 - Tune: 243/254) Father, Lead Me Day by Day.

Or

(New SASB 536 – Tune: 377/384) Heavenly Father, Thou Hast Brought Us

Or

(New SASB 645 – Tune: 14/8) He Leadeth Me!

Announcements/Offering

Share

Four or five ladies to share the story of their journey and the moment captured in the photo;
or to share about an actual journey they have been on.

Scripture - Psalm 107:1 (NIV)

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Song

(New SASB 395 – Tune: 368/381) Thank You, Lord, For All Your Goodness

Share

Four or five ladies to share the story of their journey and the moment captured in the photo;
or to share about an actual journey they have been on.

Reading

[Choose any one of the Max Lucado readings given in the resources below – these are all on the USB.]

- Failing Without Falling
- The Other Side of Death's River
- When the Storm Doesn't Stop
- You'll Get Through This

Share

Four or five ladies to share the story of their journey and the moment captured in the photo; or to share about an actual journey they have been on.

Bible Message

Tell about the challenges and/or blessings of your journey; perhaps about the courage you have needed for this journey, or the ways you have found direction for your path and/or use an example from Scripture of a person who traveled God's journey.

Scripture - Isaiah 41:10-13 (NIV)

¹⁰ So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ¹¹ All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. ¹² Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. ¹³ For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

Song

(New SASB 848 – Tune: 693) I Shall Not Fear

Closing Song

(New SASB 959 – Tune: 433/435) I'll Go in the Strength of the Lord

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, bless us as we go on our way today, and keep us safe in our journey until we reach the "Promised Land." Amen.

Home League Benediction

(p.6 in the Home League Song Book.)

Resources

Scripture Readings

(Quotes are from New International Version (NIV) Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®)

Possible songs

(Those typed in colour have been included in the meeting plan.)

- 1028 (636) God is With Us All the Time (Matthew 1:23) - chorus
- 745 (251/255) Come, My Soul (Matthew 7:7-11) v.5 – line 4
- 655 (278/284) Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me (Matthew 8:24-26) v.1 – line 1, but whole song is good
- 10 (832) Someone Cares (Matthew 11:28) v.1 – line 3
- 25 (130) God's Love to Me is Wonderful (John 3:16) v.2 - line 2
- 352 (784) As Water to the Thirsty (John 4:14) v.3 – line 5
- 794 (821) Unto Thee Will I Cry (John 10:11) v.1 – line 7; v.3 – line 5
- 693 (930) Where He Leads Me (John 10:27) - chorus
- 504 (405/406) Lead us, Heavenly Father (John 14:25-27) v.1 – line 1
- 711 (227/228) In Heavenly Love Abiding (John 15:10) v.2 – lines 1, 2, 7 & 8; v.3 – lines 6 & 8
- 838 (465/468) How Wonderful it is to Walk With God (2 Corinthians 1:3) v.1 – lines 1 & 2
- 749 (348/309/316) Father, Hear the Prayer We Offer (1 John 5:14) v.2 – lines 3 & 4; v.3 – line 2
- 756 (465/468) He Walks With God (1 Peter 2:21) vs.1, 2 & 3 – line 1; v.2 – line 2
- 1041 (435) This, This is the God We Adore (Revelation 1:8) - benediction
- 27 (399/362/397) Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah (Ex 13:21-22) v.1 - line 1; v.2 – line 4; v.3 – line 1
- 826 (552) All Through the Years (1 Samuel 7:12) - chorus
- 45 (775) Now Thank We All Our God (1 Chronicles 16:8-15) v.1 - line 6; v.2 – line 6
- **536 (377/384) Heavenly Father, Thou Hast Brought Us (Psalm 16:11) v.1; v.4; good one**
- **639 (243/254) Father, Lead Me Day by Day (Psalm 16:11) v.1 – lines 1 & 2, all song is good**
- **645 (14/8) He Leadeth Me! (Psalm 16:11) v.1 – line 1, but whole song is good**
- 61 (307/310) The King of Love My Shepherd Is (Psalm 23) v.2 - line 2; v.3 – line 1
- 62 (68) The Lord's My Shepherd (Psalm 23) v.1 - line 3; v.2 – line 2; v.5 – lines 1 & 2

Possible songs cont'd

- 63 (863) The Lord's My Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6) v.1 – lines 2 & 3; v.2 – line 1; v.3 – line 1
- 492 (639) God Will Make a Way (Psalm 23) v.1 – line 1
- 562 (598) Yes, the Lord is My Shepherd (Psalm 23) v.1 – line 2; v.2 – lines 1 & 3
- 669 (335/360) Precious Promise God Hath Given (Psalm 25:4-5) v.1 – lines 1 & 2, but whole song is good
- **959 (433/435) I'll Go in the Strength of the Lord (Psalm 71:16) v.1 – lines 2, 3, 5 & 7, but whole song is good**
- 691 (577/721) When You Feel Weakest (Psalm 91) v.4 – line 1
- 40 (446) Leave God to Order all Your Ways (Psalm 121) v.1 - line 1
- 363 (620) Give Thanks to the Lord, Our God & King (Psalm 136:1-4) v.3 – line 3
- 1038 (464/465) Saviour, Again to Thy Dear Name (Psalm 145:1) v.2 – line 1
- 380 (831) Lord of Creation (Psalm 150:1-2) v.5 – line 2
- **395 (368/381) Thank You, Lord, For All Your Goodness (Psalm 107:1) v.1 – lines 2 & 4; v.2 – lines 1 & 2**
- 59 (191) Summer Suns are Glowing (Ecc. 11:7) v.4 - lines 3 & 4
- **848 (693) I Shall Not Fear (Isaiah 41:10-13) v.2 – line 1**
- 758 (487) Hold Thou My Hand! (Isaiah 42:6) v.1 – line 2; v.2 – line 4
- 490 (656) Don't Assume (Isaiah 43:1-3) v.1 – line 3

(See also the Concordance to the 1986 Song Book (1992) – p.119 journey-ed-ing for more song suggestions)

Trusting Our Guide

Christine Longbottom

Life is certainly a journey - from one day to the next we never know what each day will bring. Although having God in our life brings us a stability that the world cannot offer. It reminds me of the song (in our new song book 536):

*Heavenly Father, thou hast brought us
Safely to this present day,
Gently leading on our footsteps,
Watching o'er us all the way,
Friend and guide through life's long journey,
Grateful hearts to thee we bring;
But for love so true and changeless,
How shall we fit praises sing?*

SASB 536

It's through our journey in life that we discover who we really are and how far our journey has brought us. While going through life we hit many detours, potholes, and U-turns. Some will be small and others will be life changing, for at times the straight and narrow path takes us through long and exceedingly dark tunnels. We can find comfort in God's word:

Psalm 121 says:

I lift up my eyes to the hills – (v1). Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. (v2.)

The palmist's help is not from mountains (hills), or recourse in the mountains; his help is from the one who made the mountains. God's people are not given to our feeble resources alone, for we have help for the rest of our journey.

Yes, life is a journey and sometimes along that journey we are allowed to dream. Dream of what might have been, and also dream of what is to come.

Pascale Honore, who lived at Byron Bay, became a paraplegic after a car accident. After 18 years in a wheelchair watching her surfer sons from the shore, it looked as though her dream of riding a surfboard was over.

But instead Tyron Swan, a friend of Pascale's sons, came up with a way to help Pascale achieve her dream. Strapping Pascale to his back with duct tape, Ty paddled out into the ocean and caught a wave. Pascale told of the exhilaration of seeing the 'great wall of water' that formed the wave, and trying to take in the colour, sound and smell of the ocean. Pascale was hooked. Her trust in Ty, and the young man's commitment to giving her this amazing experience, fulfilled her long-held dream. There was danger in so many ways, but it was worth it for this experience.

Life is like that for the follower of Christ. We live in a dangerous world, filled with unpredictable challenges and unseen perils. Yet, we have joy because we know someone who is strong enough to carry us through the churning waves of life that threaten to overwhelm us. The psalmist wrote, *"Let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You"*. (Psalm 5:11). In the face of life's great dangers and challenges, we can know a joy born out of our trust in God. His strength is more than enough! (Devotion from Our Daily Bread Sept 26th 2014, Bill Crowder.)

The beautifully penned song by Lily Sampson (SASB 531) reminds us of the confidence in which God holds us, and of His everlasting love. She talks about varied ways of life as we journey about the plains and the mountainside, and of those days in our lives

(continues over page)

where there is joy when we hear the birds sing, then a deeper joy comes overflowing us from our Lord's everlasting throne of love.

We have an awesome God who allows us to make our own choices. He is always there to guide and protect us along life's journey. We can dream big dreams because of His love for us and along that journey we do grow as people of God, making a difference in the world, or in the town in which we live and the church in which we choose to

worship. We make a difference because God blessed us with His Son Jesus Christ, never forgetting that he died on the cross for us because He loves us.

Whatever journey we take, whatever dream we dream, remember that God's footsteps are always with us through that journey, wherever we go.

Prayer

Dear Lord thank you for your love and your grace as we gather here this morning. We are very mindful that life is a journey that we take not alone, but with you, with Your care and guidance to help us. Help us to take one step at a time, knowing that you lead us through each and every day. Bless us each in your name we pray. Amen

Décor

Suitcases/ bags, old travel tickets, posters, etc.

Preparation

Ask the ladies to bring along stories about their travel journeys, and funny stories that they might like to share.

Participation

Invite the ladies to prepare themselves for a journey.

Craft/Gift

Make a little suitcase out of cardboard with a decorative paper and ribbon handles, that will cover a packet of tic tacs or something of your choice for their journey. The ladies could make these or you could make them ahead to give them as a gift. You could even place a scripture verse on them.

Activity

Write the letters of the word JOURNEY down the left side of a piece of paper and ask the ladies to write down the things that they would take with them starting with each letter. (This could be quite funny.)

Scripture - Psalm 121 (NIV)

¹ *I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?* ² *My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.* ³ *He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber;* ⁴ *indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

⁵ *The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand;* ⁶ *the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.* ⁷ *The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life;* ⁸ *the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

Songs

SASB 156 Heavenly Father thou hast brought us.

SASB 685 Travel along in the sunshine.

SASB 531 As the varied way of life we journey.

Resources

Pascale Honore's story:
www.theinertia.com/surf

Craft/gift pattern:
www.made2bcreative.com

Travel Plans

Karen Smith

Key Verse

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you: He will neither fail you nor abandon you. Deuteronomy 31:8 (NLT)

Décor

Travel brochures, maps, souvenirs, compasses, GPS, etc.

Key Point

Life is a journey; it's so much better to travel the path God has planned for us!

Poem

H.S.Rice, *How to Find happiness Throughout the Year, and Time is a Gift from God.*

Songs (from new TSA song book)

Travel along	685
The King of Love	61
Teach me to dance	392
Thank you Lord	395
God is our light	834
Once in misery	889

Share

Have someone share a humorous travel adventure they had, someone to share pictures of a holiday, etc. What travel tips can we give to other travellers? Share some 'getting lost' stories.

Activity

- Play Chinese whispers, Simon says, etc. to emphasise that no matter how well we think we are 'hearing' instructions, we can get things wrong. Also ask, when following a street directory or map, who turns the map in the direction they are going?
- Have the ladies try to write down the name of a place for each letter of the alphabet – it has to be real!
- If you have the facilities, you could set up a small indoor treasure hunt where teams have to follow directions. Each team is 'led' to a destination at which they find a Bible verse to be read out and shared. Suggested verses: Psalm 32:8; 37:23 -24; Jeremiah 29:11; Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 139:3; Ephesians 1:11.

Message

Traveling is scary when you have no sense of direction. Even shopping is scary because you know it will take half an hour of wandering around the car park, pressing your car key until you find your car flashing back at you! Negotiating traveling in new areas can be tricky too ... streets that appear to go somewhere turn into dead ends, and not every town is laid out on a nice easy grid pattern so that going around the block will get you back to where you want to be. And as for being in the right lane to turn at major intersections ... ! For the directionally challenged, life is a constant adventure every time we leave the house. One good thing is that we are not scared to ask for help, because we have to do it so often! And we get to have lots of giggles listening to the way Mrs Google Maps pronounces street and place names.

So, how many of you have a GPS?

Anyone who belongs to God has a GPS. Maybe you just haven't used it. If you have acknowledged that you are God's child, then you have GOD's POSITIONING SPIRIT. Jesus said He would give to all His followers the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit would lead us in all truth.

The Holy Spirit is the power of God living and working in us. It is the Holy Spirit who directs our hearts and minds toward God, helps us understand what God is telling us, and helps us hear God above all the other 'voices' clamouring for our attention these days. He does lots of other stuff too.

God has a plan for your life, and as He is your Creator who loves you dearly and wants to make sure you get to spend eternity with Him, it makes sense to follow His plan. The Holy Spirit helps us understand what God wants, and then He helps us do it! We don't travel alone, and for those of us directionally challenged, that's an immense relief.

God speaks to us through His word, the Bible, through the life of Jesus, prayer, creation and even other people. And the Holy Spirit, God's Positioning Spirit, will help us to hear God speak and to understand what He says.

We can plan a trip meticulously, then the airport can lose our luggage and all our plans go out the door. We can try to plan our lives too, but this is a little foolish if we leave God out of those plans.

Whatever plans you've had for your life journey, can I encourage you to hand them over to God and ask His GPS to take control? Journeying with God who loves us makes a whole lot of sense.

Will the trip be rocky and dark and hard sometimes? Yes. But God is there with us and will guide us through if only we will trust Him.

How about asking God to turn on His GPS in your life today? If you are willing to receive from Him, God is actually waiting to give.

Are We There Yet?

Glenda Savage

Preparation

- Have chairs set up to resemble seats in a car.
- Pictures of cars to represent teams
- Dice, paper and pencils
- Prizes

Suggested Songs

God Will Make a Way

Travel Along in the Sunshine

Suggested YouTube Clips

- On the Road Again by Willie Nelson
- I've been everywhere (Australian Version) by Lucky Starr
- Summer Holiday by Cliff Richard and the Shadows
- Travel all over the countryside – Leyland Brothers Theme Song

Meeting Outline

Introduction

Anyone who's taken a long road trip with their family knows how boring this can be for young families, and quite often the dreaded four words are heard: 'Are we there yet?'

Today we are going on a long, long trip in our imaginary cars. I think today we might travel somewhere where it's sunny and there's a soft breeze blowing gently to take away the steamy heat of the day - to make it comfortable for us all. Because we are going on a long trip I thought we might play a few games to keep us amused in our cars.

Prayer

Activity

Nursery rhyme singalong

Each car must think of a nursery rhyme to sing. As soon as the first team finishes, the next team must come in within 3 seconds with a different nursery rhyme. If one is repeated or the team takes longer than 3 seconds - that team is out. Last team left wins.

Racing car sprint

Each team must decide on a car, driver and a navigator. The navigators all come to the front and the drivers line up at the starting line with their replica car. The navigators throw the dice and depending on what is thrown - the driver must take that many paces to get to the finishing line. First team over the line wins.

Offering: Each passenger must pay their share of the petrol bill so let's take up the offering.

I spy with my little eye

Each car (team) plays this game amongst themselves. You can only use objects that can be seen and found in this room. If you guess the object, it's your turn to go next.

Silly travel stories

Give each team a list of approx. 20 words (Come up with some interesting words). Using the words given, have each team write a short story, about 50 words long, using these words. Each car is to read their story at the end of today. The best story wins.

Scripture - Luke 2:41-52

Message

How frustrating it can be to sit in a car and not get to your destination when you want to get there. 'Are we there yet?' is being said over and over and over and over and over. Despite the changing scenery, we all get anxious to get to the end of our journey.

If there is any such thing as a universal question, it may be this question: Are we there yet? Generations of children have asked it. They have then grown into adults who have to answer the same question when their children ask.

The book of Luke tells us about another family taking a trip. They also had destinations to reach; however, this was a familiar one. They could have traveled to Jerusalem for many years to celebrate the Feast of Passover. I'm sure they anticipated seeing many friends and loved ones at the end of the trip. In my mind, I see the young Jesus playing travel games like we have today.

How many camels does He see? How many songs can He sing between landmarks? All things a young boy would do to pass the time. But most of all, I see Jesus anticipating going to the Temple, to His Father's house. Jesus must have yearned to sit in that holy place and feel His Father's presence surrounding Him.

Isn't that what we also yearn for? Don't we all want a close intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father and the feeling of His presence in our daily lives? It's ours if we want it. We, too, must journey to the Temple, spiritually, each and every day. God doesn't want us to come to Him only when we are in crisis. He wants us to come to Him in joyous anticipation and to hear us tell Him how much we love Him. He wants to have an intimate personal relationship with us.

(continues over page)

The words 'Are we there yet?' come up again whenever I read the books of Moses. I wonder how many times he heard that question from the Israelites. Before rescuing them from slavery and leading them out of Egypt, Moses told them that the Lord would lead them to 'a land flowing with milk and honey' (Exodus 3:8). He did, but first they spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. This was no ordinary wandering, however. They were not lost; they were wandering for a purpose. After 400 years of slavery, the children of Israel needed to have their hearts, souls and minds reoriented toward God. This was accomplished in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2, 15-18), but not before an entire generation died because of their disobedience (Numbers 32:13).

In life, it sometimes seems as if we are wandering in circles. We feel lost. We want to ask God, 'Are we there yet? How much longer?' At such times, it helps to remember that the journey, not just the destination, is important to God. He uses it to humble us, to test us, and to show us what is in our hearts.

As we travel this road called life, we are all in different stages in the journey. Some have been travelling for a long time. Some are impatiently trudging on, asking 'Are we there yet?' And some may even be facing a roadblock. No matter how far we are in our journey, no matter where we have reached, we can have the assurance that God is with us.

Closing Prayer

Thank you Lord for being with us here today. We ask that you would guide us each on our own personal journey. There may be some here today who are experiencing difficulties; we pray that You Lord would give them Your peace, that You would enfold them and comfort them on their way. We praise You for the many blessings You give us each and for the triumphs along the way. Help us to remember that it's the journey and not the destination that's important.

AMEN.

Jigsaws Of Life

Karen McIver

Preparation

Come with a small puzzle, or you can purchase blank puzzle pieces and either paint or stick a picture to the pieces and use this for the morning.

When each person comes in, welcome them and ask them to take a piece of the puzzle and hold onto it throughout the morning/afternoon.

Have different puzzles around the room; from the puzzle you do as toddlers through to adults. You can also have a puzzle out for everyone to do together during the session.

Welcome

Opening Song of your Choice

Prayer

Announcements/Offering

History of Jigsaw Puzzles

A jigsaw puzzle is a tiling puzzle that requires the assembly of often oddly shaped interlocking and tessellating pieces. Each piece usually has a small part of a picture on it; when complete, a jigsaw puzzle produces a complete picture. In some cases more advanced types have appeared on the market, such as spherical jigsaws and puzzles showing optical illusions.

Jigsaw puzzles were originally created by painting a picture on a flat, rectangular piece of wood, and then cutting that picture into small pieces with a jigsaw, hence the name. John Spilsbury, a London cartographer and engraver, is credited with commercializing jigsaw puzzles around 1760. Jigsaw puzzles have since come to be made primarily of cardboard.

Typical images found on jigsaw puzzles include scenes from nature, buildings, and repetitive designs. Castles and mountains are two traditional subjects. However, any kind of picture can be used to make a jigsaw puzzle; some companies offer to turn personal photographs into puzzles. Completed puzzles can also be attached to a backing with adhesive to be used as artwork.

During recent years, a range of jigsaw puzzle accessories including boards, cases, frames and roll-up mats has become available that are designed to assist jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts.

Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12

Activity

- You may have a competition – write a poem about a jigsaw puzzle. (Give a puzzle as the prize).
- You can organise an activity where the members piece together different jigsaws, or play other puzzle games including some mind games. You can be very creative in this spot.

As you came in today each person was given a piece of the jigsaw puzzle to hold. Holding these pieces reminds us of the different pieces - each piece could be uneven, each might be a different shape. The colour and size can vary. Each of us is a different part of the puzzle. If a piece is missing then the picture is incomplete.

Can you connect your piece with the one that the person sitting next to you is holding? Take the time now to find someone whose puzzle piece you are able to connect with yours.

- At this point you could have a few questions for each person to ask as a 'getting to know you more' activity.
- Then have each person come together to create the picture.

Message

Just like the individual pieces of the puzzle, we too are individuals who come together to help complete the body of Christ. So every piece of the puzzle is important, and all the pieces count. We all are a part of the picture of God's love; and everyone is unique, wonderful, and amazing in the eyes of God. Remember, we are all created in the image of God.

The body of Christ is important for the church, because we complement and support each other as we are involved together. This helps to complete the overall picture.

Your piece may not complete the picture; also your piece may not connect with that of the person next to you. But possibly your piece may connect with those of two or three other people. There are some people who we connect with straight away, people we get along with, and this is part of the picture. Those people that we don't always connect with have others that they connect with. But eventually all the pieces will connect together to complete the picture.

When we all come together, something happens because of the love of God who is found living within our lives. And this love is displayed by our actions.

It takes a lot of patience to complete a puzzle. There is the organisation, starting when the box is first opened up, sorting out the pieces, matching the colours or design, turning them all over. Doing the border and then filling in the picture piece by piece. There are times when trying to complete a puzzle can be very frustrating. You find that some pieces look alike and think they belong together. Eventually you do find the missing pieces to the puzzle.

When we come together at church, for worship or for an event to which we have invited people, we come as separate parts of the puzzle. We need to encourage each other to use our respective gifts and talents. We look and listen to where each person belongs in the overall picture. We recognise different personalities and different talents. Slowly the picture begins to assemble, connecting one piece at a

time, until in its completion we all come together.

We are all part of the body of the Christ. It takes a lot of work to become one body, in harmony. We all come from different backgrounds, with different values and cultures. Yet we all have a common belonging with or in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Praise God; it is the Lord who is going to fill in the spaces, fit the pieces and assemble us together.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church and He is the one who gives us our spiritual gifts. Together we form the body of Christ, and each one of us has been called to join Jesus, who is the Head of the church, and to follow Him.

Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Closing Song

Resources

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jigsaw_puzzle)

My Heart's Door

Julia Metcher

Décor

A door with a red heart attached; wooden or cardboard cut-out.

Song

Since Jesus Came Into My Heart

Share

Have a selection of cut out and laminated doors (USB) laid out around the room. Invite the ladies to walk around and choose a door that catches their attention. Give them a few minutes to reflect on the door as to how it might represent their own heart's door at the moment. Give time for as many as are comfortable to share their thoughts.

YouTube

Open The Eyes of My Heart - performed by 10 year-old autistic boy Christopher Duffey (Northland Church)

Prayer

Chorus

Swing Wide the Door of My Heart

Scripture - Revelation 3: 14-22 (NLT)

YouTube

Holman Hunt Painting: The Light of the World (Andre Buijs)

(Background: Painting by William Holman Hunt (1851-3). Represents the figure of Jesus preparing to knock on an overgrown and long-closed door. It illustrates Rev 3:20. Hunt believed God commanded him to paint it. The door has no handle, so can only be opened from the inside). Give individual copies if you desire.

Allow some feedback on the painting from the ladies.

Message

Rev 3:20 is such a well-known verse that is most often used to bring a salvation message. However, this verse was written to a Church, the believers in Laodicea!

In 2014 I sat amongst the ruins of this Church in modern day Pamukkale, Turkey. (PowerPoint slides of photos – see USB). As I heard and saw the context of these verses in 14-22, I understood for the first time what Christ was really saying to His followers in this Church. In Roman times, Laodicea was a very wealthy city. It was known for its banking establishments, medical school and textile industry. Laodicea took great pride in its material accomplishments. Christ called them out on this in verses 17-18: instead of looking to their financial wealth, their textile industry, and the eye salve for which they were famous, Christ exhorted them to seek their riches, their clothes of righteousness and their spiritual sight in Him.

In verses 15-16, The Church at Laodicea is accused of being neither 'hot', nor 'cold', but 'lukewarm'. Near Laodicea was Hierapolis with its hot springs. People came to bathe in the springs for their healing powers. People still come from around the world today to swim in the hot waters or explore the thermal springs and pools on the beautiful limestone cliffs at Pamukkale. In the surrounds was Colossae, famous for its cool refreshing springs. Laodicea lacked one thing - a good water supply.

By comparison, their water was smelly and lukewarm. Christ said this represented their spiritual life as a church too: so distasteful that He wanted to spit them out of His mouth!

It is to this spiritually indifferent church that the words of verse 20 are given:

"Look! I stand at the door and knock.

If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." (NLT)

Jesus is exhorting them to see Him afresh; to realize they had shut the door on Him!

He is inviting, longing, for them to re-open the door to Him and He will bring forgiveness, nourishment and friendship.

Remember the Light of the World painting? Remember the weeds around the base of the door, showing that the door had not been opened for a long time? Sometimes we have been hurt or frightened or angry at someone, or God, and we have closed our heart's door to Him ... we rely on ourselves to get us through life, instead of His voice, His love, His grace.

Sitting in a Cathedral a few years ago I wrote a poem about how I had been treating God:

Poem

May my Heart Always Welcome Your Love (USB)

Prayer Space

Quietly give each lady a cut-out copy on cardboard of the door (USB); have coloured pencils and pens available or set out on tables for them. Tell them this is a prayer space for them to pray-in-colour or journal on their door. What do they want to say to Jesus in response to His asking them to open their heart's door to Him?

Don't rush this time and space.

YouTube

My Heart Your Home by Women of Faith (zohighlander)

Closing Prayer

Bookmarks

As ladies leave, give them a Revelation 3:20 bookmark (USB) - laminate, attach key or heart or both with ribbon.

Resources

Open The Eyes of My Heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkgbDu9iDqo>

Holman Hunt Painting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRFOlaJiPSI>

My Heart Your Home

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Of3IVr3G-Bc>

Where To From Here?

Nancy McLaren

Décor Option A

Road Signs, heart shapes with 'God is love'/'love', etc, trees/plants

Décor Option B

Set room up as seating of an aeroplane

Song/choruses (HLSB)

Suggested Songs for use 41, 50, 71 (no order or preference)

Suggested Choruses for use 51, 2, 52, 26 (no order or preference)

Ideas for Option A

Have the ladies talk about places they have been living or been on holidays

Choose one or two older ladies to share something about how they fill their days in as a retired person, as this could give some good ideas to others who may want to do something in the community. (Some ladies may be volunteers at a hospital or Meals on Wheels, etc.)

Ideas for Option B

Maybe have hostess(es), tickets with numbers for seat prizes; hostess could be dressed up as flight stewardess. Conduct meeting as if on a flight with take-off info etc. PowerPoint if possible of places around the world, food like on a flight. Could make it like a cruise as this is very popular at this time.

Can be a lot of fun if set up properly and the ladies encouraged to join in.

Have some fun with competitions using mixed up country names

Set up a maze around the room/ use a blindfolded lady to guide her through the maze. Ask appropriate questions about feelings etc.

Humour Spots

Inexperienced Pilot

A young and foolish pilot wanted to sound cool over the radio. So while approaching the runway during his first night time landing, he said "Guess who?" to the control tower instead of following the official protocol. The controller switched the runway lights off and replied, "Guess where?"

Microsoft

A pilot is flying a small, single-engine charter plane with a couple of really important executives on board into Seattle airport. There is fog so thick that the visibility is only 40 feet, and his instruments have stopped working. He circles looking for a landmark and after an hour, is low on fuel and his passengers are getting very nervous. At last, through a small opening in the fog, he sees a tall building with one guy working alone on the fifth floor. Circling, the pilot banks and shouts through his open window, "Hey, where am I?" The

solitary office worker replies, "You're in an airplane." The pilot immediately executes a swift 275-degree turn and makes a perfect blind landing on the airport's runway five miles away. Just as the plane stops, the engines cough and die as the fuel runs out. The stunned passengers ask the pilot how he did it. "Elementary," replies the pilot, "I asked the guy in that building a simple question. The answer he gave me was 100% correct but absolutely useless; therefore, I knew that he must be from Microsoft's support office. I knew where the airport was in relation to that office, so the landing was a piece of cake!"

Quotes

"What does it mean to pre-board? Do you get on before you get on?"

George Carlin

"Airplane travel is nature's way of making you look like your passport photo."

Al Gore.

Message

Being the wife of a wanderer couldn't have been easy for Sarai (Sarah) and she certainly had many experiences that seemed to have been something that would have been way out of our boundaries, but Sarai was faithful and followed as Abram (Abraham) answered when God told him to leave his homeland and move.

Sarai was an older woman at this time, a time when most of us at that age would either be retired or at least thinking of entering retirement and "putting our feet up" or settling in to our "stay here" house.

- **Either the corps officer or leader of meeting to speak about moving from one home to another sharing some of the joys and struggles of packing up, leaving friends and maybe family. The unknown, the anticipation, the joys, the reaction of children, the hopes, the**

frustration when you thought things were going well.

1. No matter where you are God has a plan for your life. (Exodus 13:21-22) God was with Moses and his people leading them out of Egypt, through the wilderness.

2. No matter who you are you can do God's will Luke 9: 1-6

"Everyone needs to be valued. Everyone has the potential to give something back." - Diana (1961-1997), Princess of Wales

You have been sent to preach the good news of this kingdom. Some of the best sermons are not delivered from a pulpit on Sunday morning. Our lives become the message of God to a lost and suffering world as we reach out our hands to demonstrate His love. Dear Friend Letters, page 1244 NKJV The New Spirit Filled

Bible, Shirley Arnold (Ministries and The Secret Place; Lakeland, FL)

3. No matter where you are, allow God to show you His will. Deuteronomy 10:11

In Matthew 7:13-14 (The Voice) Jesus says, 'There are two paths before you; you may take only one path. One doorway is narrow. And one door is wide. Go through the narrow door. For the wide door leads to a wide path, and the wide path is broad; the wide, broad path is easy, and the wide, broad, easy path has many, many people on it; but the wide, broad, easy, crowded

path leads to death. 14 Now then that narrow door leads to a narrow road that in turn leads to life. It is hard to find that road. Not many people manage it.'

In other words, life presents two roads – the broad and the narrow road. This road leads to a fulfilling life now and eternal life in the future. There's love, joy, peace, and the abiding presence of God. It's a journey worth taking. Life is a Journey.

- By Chris Witts, Monday 14 Mar 2016, Morning Devotions with Chris Witts

Prayer

In The Midst Of Our Circumstances

Joycelyn McIver

Key point

God's best plan is achieved when we display patience and restraint

Scripture - 1 Samuel 25:2-42

Message

Discover

This biblical narrative is set in a period of political upheaval. David and his men are on the run from Saul, who wants to kill David. The group are hiding out in the fields of a Cālebite man called Nabal. Their presence helps protect Nabal's shearers from attack by robbers.

Abigail was Nabal's wife. The biblical narrative informs us that she was beautiful and wise.

Abigail knew her situation; she was not a woman oppressed by her cultural patriarchy; rather she was the leader of a complex, wealthy household and her virtuous character enabled her to gain the respect of those in her household.

Abigail knew the resources that were available to her and she used these to urge David to rethink his plan for vengeance against her husband.

Abigail knew her husband's character and the implications his rudeness could have on their household, and so acted in wisdom when she gathered provisions and set out with some of her servants to meet David.

Abigail knew the political situation and knew who David was, and who the God he served was. She prophesied his future rise to kingship.

(See narrative/drama on USB)

Discussion Questions

- What are the things that you know about your situation?
- How does knowing this help you to manage your situation?
- In what ways do you need to show patience and restraint in your current situation?

Dream

Abigail is one of a small group of women mentioned in the Bible, and her speech to David is one of the longest recorded in Scripture that is given by a woman. This gives us a clue that something important is happening in this story.

When I read this narrative and try to imagine what Abigail's dreams might be, I think immediately of peace. Peace in her own household with her husband and his nature, and peace in the political arena. I also wonder, with her request for David to remember her, and her prophecy of him being King one day, if she also dreamt of being a Queen.

Discussion Questions

- What are the dreams that you have for your circumstances?
- How can you display courage as you are waiting on the fulfilment of God's timing in your circumstances?
- How can you develop restraint from taking matters into your own hands rather than leaving it to God?

Challenge

When we feel frustrated and question our circumstances we need to remember that sometimes it is that part of our journey that will bring us closer to God's plan for our lives.

Prayer

Father God,

Thank you that I do not have to journey life alone. Thank you for your presence in my life.

Grant me the courage I need to face my current circumstances. Help me to seek your wisdom before I act. When I lay my circumstances at your feet, remind me that I can rest peacefully knowing that you are in control and will work all things for my good and your glory. Help me to be patient and to continue to turn to you for comfort and direction. I want to cooperate with your plans for me.

As I wait on You God I will rest in Your Word and the comfort and direction that it gives me.

Amen.

Journey Prayer Box

Julia Metcher

Message

A prayer box is like a prayer room in a box.

It contains creative prayer activities designed to help bring each person deeper into an awareness of God.

- Each box is for individual use in silent solitude, and will require an hour to work through the activities.
- This prayer box is on the theme of journeying. It contains eight different prayer activities, as listed below. All the materials needed for these can be found on the USB.

Footprints in the Sand

Include in each box a Footprints postcard and business card. The postcard has the poem, and the business card has instructions for reflecting on the poem.

My Beautiful Broken Shell

Include a broken shell, a shell-shaped journaling sheet and the 'Beautiful Broken Shell' instruction card.

Grace suitcase

Include two suitcase tags – one blank for writing on, and one with the instructions stuck on it.

Take Off Your Shoes

Include the poem *Take Off Your Shoes*, by Macrina Wederlehr, with these instructions: Take off your shoes before God; this represents both comfort and reverence.

Colour-in Prayer

People who have been important on our journey. Include the blank and part-completed colouring pages, with the following instructions:

Who are the people that have been important on your journey? Write their names on the leaves then colour the vine.

Pray for these people as you decorate their names. Thank God for them and their part in your journey. Include colouring pencils or textas, OR make a colour-in station.

Finger Labyrinth

Include the finger labyrinth maze, which has instructions printed on it.

Prayer Knots

Include a piece of string for each lady, and the following instructions:

Think through your life and tie a knot in the string when you think of an important event in your life. Talk to God about this event. Repeat the process until you have about 6 knots in your string. Wear the string as a bracelet or necklace to remind you of where God has been with you in your story.

The Well is Deep

Include a plastic cup for each lady, and words of the Albert Orsborn song (prayer) – song 351 in the old song book, with the following instructions:

When have you needed a 'draught from the Water of Life' in your journey? Is it right now? Take your cup and go find a tap to fill it with water. Drink the water slowly and allow God to meet you where you are spiritually dry in your life.

Place each item for the individual prayer activities in separate plastic bags. Pack all eight into a noodle box or craft bag, and decorate. Each lady will need a pen for journaling. Allow an hour in silence for this entire prayer activity.

- **Note: The Leader's Resource document does NOT go in the prayer box.**

Feet

Leanne Plon

Décor

If you sit around a table, have a few balloons with feet attached sitting in the middle of the table. When it is time for a lady to make an individual contribution (e.g. hint, chorus, humour), have someone lift one of the balloons to see which activity comes next.

Welcome

Game

Write your name using a pen and your foot – give each lady a sheet of A4 paper to place on the floor.

Hint/Chorus

Game

Animal names for feet

What do we call the feet of each of these animals?

- Horse hooves/h hoof
- Cat paws
- Duck feet
- Pig trotters
- Bear paws
- Bird claws
- Eagle talons
- Lion paws
- Elephant feet

Scripture - Luke 7: 36 - 39, 44 – 50

Activity

Foot words (USB)

Announcements & Word

Activity

Think of as many expressions as you can that mention 'feet', 'shoes' or 'toes'. For example, 'He got off on the wrong foot', or 'walk in someone else's shoes'. (See USB for lots more examples.)

Message

In the Bible the act of foot-washing was a service to those whose feet had become dusty and dirty on the road. Today we still see foot-washing as a symbol of service, and of servant leadership.

Today we have showers and baths and don't need to wash each other's feet. But we still need each other's acts of kindness and service.

What acts of humble service can you do for those you come into contact with in the course of a normal day?

Prayer

Grace

The Galilee Road

Christine Dalziel

Spend some time thinking about a journey or a road where you have physically travelled.

- maybe in Australia
- maybe overseas
- maybe the road where you live
- maybe in a car
- maybe on a bicycle
- maybe on foot.

How did you know the way?

As you consider your road, remember also your feelings of tiredness, or excitement, or wonder, as you journeyed.

We will consider our spiritual journey, but knowing our physical journey may help us find words to express our spiritual journey.

Share the thoughts you have had while thinking about your physical journey.

Scripture - Mark 1:32-39

As I read this part of the gospel story I see that the Galilee Road is the road where people met with Jesus.

The people wanted Jesus: *"Everyone is looking for you"* (verse 17 - NIV).

And Jesus wanted the people (verse 38).

Share times when you have met with Jesus – in a small group, with a friend, in prayer, at a time of worship, as you worked, when you were sick, when you were well, when you were sad, when you were happy.

How was that time significant for you?

Consider that this part of your journey could be called The Galilee Road, when Jesus met with you.

Notice verse 32: It was evening, after sunset, and in Jesus' day that was when those who were sick or mad or disfigured could come out. They were the outcasts of their society. But they came to Jesus on the Galilee Road.

Who are the outcasts in our society?

How can we help them meet Jesus on our Galilee Road?

Maybe, draw the Galilee Road and write in your experiences and the experiences of your friends on that road.

And tomorrow, remember to look for Jesus, as you journey.

Prayer

The Wilderness Road

Christine Dalziel

Recall your thoughts about a physical journey.

Where have you been this week?
How was that for you?

- **Read Exodus 13:17-22**

Share with each other, briefly, the story which preceded this journey.
In Exodus 13:17-22, notice especially verses 21 and 22.

Consider times when you have felt as though you were in a spiritual wilderness – just wandering.

Can you share about those times?

When do you have wilderness times?

- when you are anxious
- when you are angry
- when you are lonely
- when you are too busy

What is it that helps you to notice God?

How does a recognition of God help you on the wilderness road?

Ask yourself: Have I grown spiritually since I was last on the wilderness road?

Pray for yourself. But pray also for people who are in a wilderness journey.

We can't know the spiritual journey for another, but we can recognize a physical journey.

Write a prayer, together, for refugees in our world who don't seem to have a home anywhere and just wander.

The Crowded Road To Bethlehem

Christine Dalziel

- Read Luke 2:1-20

Notice: This is a crowded road. All went (verse 3).

When does your life seem crowded?

When would you rather have many people with you, enjoying the celebration of life?

When do you rather journey alone?

Notice: There is expectation on this road. Mary is expecting a child (verse 5).

What are your expectations as you journey these days?

Do you journey

- expecting joy?
- expecting put down?
- expecting God?
- expecting pain?

Talk about your journey expectations, the reality of them, and how they affect your journey.

- **If one in your group is expecting a child, spend time sharing that special expectation in creation and preparation for the baby.**

Notice: There are angels on this road (verses 8-14) When have you known an angel on your road?

Notice: Mary remembers, ponders in her heart about this journey to Bethlehem (verse 19). What are you pondering these days?

It's a lovely women-thing to do, to remember, ponder, just as Mary did on the Road to Bethlehem.

ponder = mediate = think over

Reflecting On The Journey: Lectio Divina

Jo-Anne Brown

Pondering the Great Journeys...

The Bible is full of journeys.

The journeys of Abraham, Joseph and Moses; the journey into exile and the journey out of exile; the journey of Naomi and Ruth; the journey to Bethlehem; the journey of the disciples as they leave their boats and become fishers of men.

There is the journey to the cross (seen through the perspective of Jesus, as well as the perspective of the disciples and the women who followed Him);

Mary's journey to the tomb; the disciples' journey to Emmaus; and the great journeys of those, filled with the Holy Spirit, who took the good news to the ends of the earth.

These journeys were not just about movement from one place to another, but also about discovering more about God, gaining new insight, growing in maturity and obedience, and deepening intimacy

with the Father. All of these journeys reflect in some way our own journey: the journey into death and exile, into new life, into new hope, into deeper Christlikeness, and into greater freedom.

Choose one of these stories (or any other that comes to mind) and read it through (or part of it). After you have read your chosen passage, choose just a few verses and practice lectio divina on it.

Lectio Divina, (dating back almost 1500 years) is a way of reading Scripture so that the Word gets into our heart and soul and impacts our lives. It is a 5-step process:

Read

Choose a passage of Scripture (no more than 10-12 verses).

Read it through slowly, perhaps even reading it aloud. Pause. Read it through a second time and pay attention to what words or phrases stand out for you.

Pause. Read the words through slowly a final time, again noting which words or phrases seem to draw your attention.

Meditation (reflection)

Recall the words or phrases which drew your attention. Repeat them quietly to yourself. Meditate on them – murmuring them over several times. Picture what these words mean – sit quietly with them.

Pray (response)

Speak to God about what you think He may be saying to you, or showing you. Offer those words or phrases back to Him as a prayer.

Contemplation (rest)

Now rest quietly in His presence. Let your heart be at rest in Him – think about what you have experienced during this time of reading Scripture.

Journal

This is not a usual part of the traditional practice of Lectio Divina – but it can be very helpful to make a note of what you felt God saying to you or revealing to you.

Use this process to reflect on your passage and how it relates to your own journey with God.

Some possible passages relating to the journeys listed above are:

- Genesis 12:1-9 (Abraham sets out to the land God will show him)
- Exodus 3:1-12 (Moses is called to lead God's people out of Egypt)
- Exodus 14:15-27 (Moses crosses the Red Sea)
- Genesis 37:17b – 28 (Joseph's journey to find his brothers)
- Ruth 1:6-18 (Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem)
- Luke 2:1-7 (Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem)
- Luke 5:1-11 (The disciples are called and leave their boats to follow Jesus)
- John 19: 10-19 (Journey to the cross)
- Mark 15: 15-26 (Journey to the cross)
- Matthew 27:27-37 (Journey to the cross)
- Luke 23:26-36 (Journey to the cross)
- Luke 24:1-12 (Journey to the tomb)
- Mark 16:1-8 (Journey to the tomb)
- Matthew 28:1-10 (Journey to the tomb)
- John 20:1-9 (Journey to the tomb)
- Luke 24:13-18; 24-32 (Journey to Emmaus)

It's More Fun In The Philippines!

Robyn Maxwell

Décor

Encourage the ladies to bring a photo of themselves on a holiday or visit to another country.

Dress

Wear national dress from another culture.

Key Point

The desired outcome of this meeting would be to bring understanding as to what it is like to journey into a different culture. To appreciate and celebrate our differences. To be reminded of the Lord's faithfulness in providing all that is needed for the journey that He leads you on!

Food

Serve dishes from different cultures.

Some delicacies from the Philippines are stuffed chicken intestines, chicken hearts, pigs ears, Balut (which is a duck embryo boiled and eaten in the shell, feathers, beak and all), Lechon – roasted pig on the spit (head, trotters, tail and all!!!).

A favourite food is sticky rice. (Photos can be obtained from Google)

Plain rice is served with every meal even at McDonald's and KFC.

Or

Only provide a cup of plain rice to each person explaining that in many countries this is all people have to eat a day, some even less.

Additional Information

25% of the population in the Philippines live under the poverty line.

14 million people (out of a population of 100 million) suffer from malnutrition and half of this number are children. According to the World Health Organization over 60,000 children die every year in the Philippines, more than half from starvation.

Lack of nutrition in the Philippines remains a serious problem. It causes damage to health, physical growth and brain development of children. Stunting in the first two years is often irreversible, impairing them for life and leaving them with lower chances of finishing school.

Welcome Song

This is always sung to welcome guests. While this is being sung, a necklace usually made of beads or shell is given to each guest. This is a lovely tradition to honour them and make them feel welcome. This would be a lovely way to commence the meeting. (Words & music on USB)

Welcome to the family

We're glad that you have come to share
your life with us,

As we grow in love and,

May we always be to you, what God would
have us be,

A family always there,

To be strong and to lean on.

May we learn to love each other

More with each new day.

May words of love be on our lips

In everything we say.

May the Spirit melt our hearts

And teach us how to pray,

That we might be a true family.

Share

“When I journeyed to...”

Sharing briefly about the photo they brought. A funny story or a cultural experience.

Scripture - Matthew 4:18-22

Read in two languages. English/Tagalog. (Or a language familiar to someone. For Tagalog version see USB).

Invite the ladies to imagine what it would be like to sit through a whole worship service and not understand what is being said or sung!

Testimony

From someone who has moved to our country, to share their experiences.

How did they find the welcome, the food, the language and what brought them here?

Consider...

if you are venturing overseas (USB)

Challenges...

experienced living in another culture (USB)

Competition

Guess the language!
(USB – two options)

This could be done by giving everyone a different greeting. Get them to say it and everyone else to guess where it's from (some of the pronunciations could be fun), or give out a prepared hand-out with the challenge to match the greetings with the language!

Scripture - Matthew 4:18-22

Message

The first thing you see when you come in to land in the Philippines is the national slogan on a massive billboard which says, "It's more fun in the Philippines!"

My first thoughts were, "This is great. Bring on the fun!" However, you no sooner leave the airport and you are confronted by the terrible pollution, the horrendous traffic, the oppressive heat, the extreme poverty, and the children begging ... and you wonder, "Who are they trying to kid!!!"

But then...you meet the people and they capture your heart. The Filipino people are so inspiring. They have next to nothing in material possessions and yet they have

a richness in their spirit. They are kind, they are respectful, they are resourceful and they are generous! I have come to understand the words of Jesus in deeper measure through their lives when He said, "I have come that you will have life in all its fullness." (John 10:10) For many in the Philippines, they understand this. It's not about material possessions! What is important to them is their relationship with God and their relationship with each other. It's not material possessions that bring them joy!!!

This season of my journey has been life changing. Things that were once a priority are no longer. Things that were once

taken for granted are now appreciated so much more. Your value system changes. Although there are many things I miss about home ... the provision of electricity and water 24/7, clean drinking water, fresh milk, a bathtub and especially doing everyday life with my family, I wouldn't exchange this season, or any season in my God chosen journey. For me, when it comes to the Will of God it is simply, "Nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else."

For me the journey is all about relationship. Relationship with the Lord and relationship with the people you are sent to lead and serve. The connection is important!!!

When Jesus said to Peter, Andrew, James and John, *"Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,"* (Matt. 4:19), it wasn't their first encounter. Jesus had already met them and they had come to trust Him. (John 1:35-49) There was already a relationship between them. This was not their initial call to faith and salvation; it was a call to discipleship.

There are three things that stand out in their relationship with Jesus.

It was personal

Jesus said, *"Come follow me"*. He spoke to them personally. He met them in their workplace as they went about their daily lives. Our relationship with Jesus is important. It's in the relationship that we learn to trust Him. It's in the relationship that we come to know His voice when He speaks personally to us.

We can trust His call. We can trust Him to take care of the details when He says, *"Come"*.

"God knows, He loves, He cares."

Nothing this truth can dim.

He gives the very best to those

Who leave the choice with Him."

- Author Unknown

It was a priority

Scripture says, "at once they left..." They knew Him so as soon as they heard His voice, they responded immediately. Another version says, "without delay they left."

I love that they didn't delay and made it a priority. Since they were already in relationship with Jesus they trusted His call to them and immediately they left!

Sometimes when we are confronted with a moment in which we need to make an on the spot decision, it's hard to know which way to decide. We can be in "two minds", as they say! How do you cope with making quick decisions? Does it seem unreasonable to you that Jesus would ask them to give up everything and follow Him? The easiest option would have been to stay doing what they had always done – remain in the comfort zone.

If Jesus can trust us to follow, we can trust Him to lead. Following is the priority.

Our relationship with Him is important because we not only recognize His voice, but we also trust His word when he speaks to us. Our trust is knowing that His timing and His plan is perfect for us.

It was productive

"I will make you..." When we choose to follow there will be changes within us especially if we have an obedient heart. When we follow Jesus and His ways we can't help but become more like Him.

We need to be teachable and forever open to learning and growing. Teachability is important. It's also a reminder that it needs to be a growing relationship. John 15:5 says, *"Without me you can do nothing."* For us to grow we need to remain connected to Him. That's when He will make us, stretch us, equip us for all that He requires of us. When we remain in Him, we will be productive. When we remain in Him, we will have the strength to rise up and do all He is calling us to do. It's about relationship!

(continues over page)

Conclusion

For you, the call of God may not be to take you into another culture or country. It may be to make a difference where you are. I love that Jesus called ordinary people to join Him on His mission ... just like you and me! It is He who equips us for the journey and goes before us.

General Linda Bond said, "We all have our own mission field. It may be to one, or it may be to the world."

What is your mission field?

What is it about the way the Lord made you/ gifted you that He can use?

"Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," Jesus said.

"I will make you... a friend to the friendless, a light in the darkness, a powerful prayer warrior, a kind neighbour, a wonderful host. I will make you all you need to be to reach people for me."

The call to *"Come, follow me,"* is different for each one of us. What remains the same is that we each have a willing, trusting, obedient heart and a teachable spirit.

What are your strengths that God can use to make a difference?

By His grace may you be whoever He calls you to be, go wherever He calls you to go, give whatever he compels you to give, and serve whomever He leads you to serve.

May your relationship with the Lord be personal, be a priority, and be progressive.

Journey To My World: Eastern Europe

Wendy Walters

Introduction

We often refer to life as ‘a journey’ – this is true in our everyday life, but also true in our spiritual life – it is a journey. There are plenty of ups and downs – plenty of corners and potholes along the way. Proceed with caution!!

- As part of the introduction, show the following 3 minute clip from YouTube – ‘5 worst roads to travel’.

Would you like to travel on any of those roads? What about if you travelled on them with a guide, someone who knew the road

really well, someone who knew exactly the type of conditions ahead or what lay around the next corner ... would that make you more confident? Would you then feel safe?

The good news about life is that no matter what the conditions, no matter what the surrounding environment, no matter how you might be feeling (physically, emotionally, spiritually) – we have a Guide who knows exactly what lies ahead, exactly what we are facing – and He offers to be on the journey with us. This of course is Almighty God – our guide.

Welcome to my World

I live in Eastern Europe; an area of huge contrasts. As Leaders of The Salvation Army in this part of the world, we find ourselves on many different roads. We currently live in Moldova; throughout Europe they say we have some of the worst road conditions (once you get out into the countryside – even in the city they can be pretty bad). Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe and also the least known. I wonder if you have ever heard of it

... I wonder if you can identify it on a map!

This is my world, and it is because of my calling to be a Salvation Army officer that I find myself in this part of Europe. Our area of Salvation Army ministry covers 4 countries: Romania, Moldova, Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia.

Come visit Europe ... can you find where my country, Moldova, is on the map?

Activity

- Have a map of Europe with countries outlined (USB). Sadly, the republic of Georgia is not shown on this map.

(continues over page)

Can you identify the countries that make up Europe? E.g: France, England, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Greece, Austria, Portugal, Denmark, Netherlands, Poland, Ireland, Russia (there are plenty more if the ladies are well informed about the smaller countries of Europe.)

Can you identify the countries that we are responsible for within The Salvation Army, which make up the Eastern Europe Territory? (Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Georgia)

Moldova

Now that you have a good idea where I am, let me share with you a little about this part of the world ... the journey we are on. (If you have access to the Self Denial clips that were prepared for 2016, Moldova is highlighted. It might be helpful to show this clip as it gives an excellent insight into life in this country and the ministry of The Salvation Army here.)

Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe – this is nothing to boast about, but it is reality. The working conditions are

so difficult within this small, landlocked country that roughly one million Moldovans have left for work in Europe, in Russia and other former Soviet Bloc countries.

By working abroad, they are able to send money home for the family – but sadly, it is the children who are left behind. These children are referred to as ‘social orphans’ – children whose parents have emigrated to another country in search of work. The children are left with grandparents where possible, or otherwise, in orphanages.

Caution – Children at Risk

The left behind Children of Moldova – ABC News has put together a report using photographs by Myriam Meloni. Please take the time to share this information as it will give a good insight into an area of need that The Salvation Army here in Moldova is trying to meet. Committed officers, soldiers and volunteers spend time each week helping children such as these to feel loved and valued. The children are told of the love of Jesus and that he wants to be their guide and friend. He is with them in the journey.

The Salvation Army of Moldova’s “SeeMe” Afterschool Social Impact Programs are located in 7 communities across Moldova. We are a safe haven and program for the specific physical, social, mental and spiritual needs for a holistic approach to the children left behind. One of every five children’s parents have left the country. Please look at this photo journalistic look at a very real issue with summarized content. (Moldova SA Facebook site)

Romania

Another beautiful part of Eastern Europe that makes up our territory is Romania. What do you know about Romania?

(I am sure someone said ... Dracula.) And yes, Transylvania is very real; this is a state of Romania. As you drive through this part of the country you see ‘Bank of Transylvania’, ‘University of Transylvania’, etc. Be honest ... who thought that was just part of a horror story? There is Dracula’s castle to visit if ever you come this way!

Caution – Winding Road Ahead

Romania also has an incredible section of road, shown in the following YouTube clip (6 minutes - could be easily stopped halfway through): *The best road in the world*, Transfagarasan (Romania). This is The Transfăgărășan, also known as Ceaușescu's Folly. It is a paved mountain road crossing the southern section of the Carpathian Mountains of Romania, 90 kilometres of incredible winding roads.

Bends and Turns

Bible application

The story of Joseph in the Old Testament (Genesis 37 – 50) is a story of a man who found himself on a road (life) with plenty of corners, potholes, cautions, soft edges, and construction / under repair times.

A quick recap of the life of Joseph will show a life of ups and downs. But it will also show a life of one who 'journeyed with God'.

He knew God was with him, even during the worst possible times anyone could imagine - betrayed by his own family, left to die, sold into slavery, wrongly accused and thrown into prison. Through all of this, Joseph still knew God was with him. He was given a

promise and this he held onto. He knew that God was with him in his journey – he had a Guide who he could trust. A Guide who knew the conditions that lay ahead.

Life application

Whatever you are facing in your life right now, there may be caution signs and warning lights flashing, there may be signs that say 'proceed with care'; there may be winding roads ahead or you may have just come through an incredibly bumpy section of life ... whatever it is you are facing – know that you have a Guide. God is on the journey with you – you are not alone.

Scripture - Psalm 91

This Psalm reminds us of where we find our rest and safety. It is in the Shelter of the Most High. Our Guide can be trusted,
"For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go."

Resources

5 worst roads to travel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVcODj7iN9o>

Map of Europe

<http://www.worldatlasbook.com/europe/europe-map.html>

Picture: Behind the Absence: The Children of Moldova

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/photos/absence-children-moldova-37460596/image-pictured-lulia-lives-grandmother-mother-works-germany-37460886>

The best road in the world (Romania)

<https://youtu.be/TWNLjg2olcl>

Pondering Our Own Journey

Jo-Anne Brown

The journey of my relationship with God can be compared with the journey of a river.

Below the Surface

At first, deep below the surface of the earth, water is making its way upward, through rocks and soil and obstacles – without any obvious signs of its presence.

God was clearly at work in my life long before I recognised this. I caught glimpses of His presence without really knowing anything about Him or His ways. Whether I knew it or not, He was at work, preparing the way, giving life in ways I did not see, and clearing obstacles.

Bubbling Forth

Then, the water breaks through the surface of the earth into a bubbling spring, effervescent, full of life, and tumbling down the mountain.

This is how it felt when I first came to truly know Jesus: full of life and energy, bubbling over with joy and excitement. I was eager to learn and grow, studying Scripture, discovering how to pray, and learning about my gifts and how to use them in ministry.

Boulders and Obstacles

As the spring tumbles down the mountain and widens into a stream and then a river, it encounters obstacles along the way: boulders, tree roots, other things that could divert the flow of the water. Sometimes the river changes direction, but always eventually heads back to its true direction: towards the ocean, its ultimate destiny.

My early journey of faith was characterised by great exuberance and deep joy mixed with stumbling blocks and difficulties. Each stumbling block had the potential to push me off course, to redirect my focus – occasionally this actually happened - but something always drew me back in the right direction.

Slowing Down and Drying Up

As the river flows toward the sea, and widens out across the land, sometimes it gets silted up and begins to flow sluggishly. Trees send their roots down into the banks of the river, dropping branches and leaves, choking the life of the river till it is slowed to a mere trickle. Sometimes the riverbed seems dried up and the water is no longer to be seen – but deep down there is still a movement of water flowing toward the sea.

I experienced times when it seemed like I was a dried-up river bed, when there seemed no more life-giving water flowing through me. Other times I allowed my worries and concerns to clog the flow of the Spirit until I too felt slow and sluggish in my spirituality. The streams of living water that Jesus talked about seemed so very far away from me.

Nearing the Ocean, a Fertile Floodplain

Frequently as a river draws near to the end it takes on new life, flowing serenely through the landscape, no longer bothered by the occasional tree root or boulder, simply going where it knows it's meant to be going and in doing so, opening out to wide fertile floodplain.

This is where I like to think I am moving – yet I am not always unbothered by obstacles and distractions. There will still be times of dryness and sluggishness, but I can now catch a glimpse of the final destination.

Activity

Consider your own journey – try mapping it out or drawing a picture/diagram.

What would you compare your journey to?

Try drawing it, as you would a map to a favourite destination.

Think about and mark

- the pathways you have followed
- obstacles you've encountered
- places you've stopped to rest
- significant God-moments
- detours you've made
- mountains or deep valleys you've struggled with
- the companions who have been with you
- crossroads, where you've wrestled with a difficult decision
- anything else that comes to mind as being part of your journey

Ask yourself

- Have I noticed anything new in doing this activity?
- Are there any insights to be learned from this?
- Is there any encouragement or challenge for this current or next part of the journey?
- What is God saying to me in this?

You might like to share this map of your journey with a trusted friend.

Tips for the Journey

As I reflect on my journey, I realise I have learned some things:

- I need to know where I am going – if I don't, I could waste a lot of time and stumble around in the darkness.
- I need to travel lightly, holding loosely to the things I think are important for the journey. Sometimes I even need to let go of things (or habits) that are no longer helpful.
- I need to choose my travel companions wisely. Some people can make the journey more arduous or dangerous; others encourage and help me on the way.
- It's important to enjoy the journey. If I simply focus on getting to where I want to be, I will miss out on some beautiful scenery and some wonderful moments.
- I need to know all I can about my destination, and use the guide-book to find my way there. Life is full of mixed messages and bad advice – I need to have a source of true information and trustworthy guidance, and I need to stick with that. Knowing more about where I am going also gives me a sense of delight and anticipation that makes the difficulties of the journey easier to put up with.
- There will always be delays – every journey is bound to encounter some kind of delay or something that doesn't work out as expected. I need to bear with these delays with patience and grace, recognising that sometimes there are blessings to be received when things don't work out the way I have planned.
- Not everyone travels at the same speed – I need to be tolerant and compassionate with others on the journey, recognising we will get there in the end if we support each other.
- I need to be cautious of short-cuts or taking what looks like the “easy way”. Some shortcuts are deceptive and have led me further away from my goal. Sometimes the “easy way” has caused me to stumble greatly and has actually made the journey longer.
- Keep going when you find yourself in a tunnel. It is dangerous to get out of your car in a tunnel. It is the same for us in our spiritual journey – if we stop, or turn back, just because it gets dark we will never reach our destination and it may cause us harm. It is important to keep going in the direction we know the light is – we will eventually emerge from the tunnel of darkness and see that light.
- I have learned to take my time – it is not a race. I need to rest or slow down when necessary.

Lessons Learnt

You too have journeyed long and far – you have had many experiences and have learned much. Look through the points above. Can you relate to these from your own journey?

What tips would you give to someone else on the journey? (Sometimes formulating our own tips allows us to become more aware of the insights we have gained along the way.)

Journey Of Discovery: Learning For Life

Fay Foster

Décor

Books, globe of the world, dictionary, plant in pot, knitting, guitar or recorder, etc.

Welcome/Introduction of Theme

Who can tell us what the very first verse in the Bible says? (In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.)

God is the magnificent Creator of every natural thing on earth, and in our whole universe. So when we want to learn more about God, it can help to learn more about His creation. And that includes the people He made, and the things they do.

There is so much to discover in this world of ours! One way to take our discovery to a new level is to deliberately learn new things. That's what we'll be thinking about today – learning new things, throughout our whole lives.

Prayer

Father God, you are the magnificent Creator of our earth and our universe. You made the plants and animals, and you made people to have relationships with you.

Today we ask that you will help us to love your creation, and to see how we can learn more about it. We want to be the best people we can be, shining your light in this world.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

Home League Prayer

Home League Song Book page 5

Scripture - Proverbs 2: 1-11 (NIV)

¹ My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding — ³ indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, ⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. ⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. ¹¹ Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Chorus

Don't assume that God's dismissed you from His mind (HLSB 16) -
This song talks about God's plan for our whole life. Verse two talks about the future we can explore with Him.

Share

- When you were growing up, what kinds of things did you learn from your family?
- What were your favourite subjects at school?
- What have you learnt since you left school?
- When you look back at everything you have learned, what did you most enjoy learning?
- What has been the most valuable thing you learnt?

Scripture - Psalm 25:1-9

This scripture talks about how God teaches us and guides us.

Share

- In what ways does God teach and guide us?
- Think about the best human teacher you ever had: what was it about them that made them so good?
- If you could learn about anything in the world, what would it be?
- And if you could learn to do anything, what would that be?

Message

God still has plans for us, and maybe those plans include having us learn new things. How could we do that?

e.g. TAFE or university courses, U3A, WEA, craft classes, dance classes, Tai Chi classes, friends or family members who can help us to use the Internet, etc.

As well as learning, we can help to teach each other.

What skills do you have that you could teach someone else? E.g. cooking, knitting, crochet, looking after children, using computers, gardening, reading, making things, repairing things, handling money, looking after sick people.

How could you help other people to learn?

That might be by teaching them, by providing them with the things they need to learn (e.g. books, CD's, knitting needles and wool) or by contributing to the cost of a child's education, sponsoring a child, etc.

How will you start today to learn new things, and/or to help someone else learn?

Song

We have a place in life to fill (HLSB 121)

OR

Share your blessings (HLSB 131)

Closing Prayer

Home League Benediction (HLSB Page 6)

Fun With Feathers

Marsha Watts

Sayings

It's a feather in his cap... Birds of a feather... As light as a feather... Feather weight.

What do you think of when you hear these sayings?

Word search on birds

(USB)

Activity

Feather race: Two people with a feather each and a newspaper, the first one to fan the feather to the finish line is the winner. I divided the room into two teams for this.

Poems (Internet)

Show and Tell

Ask beforehand for ladies to bring something related to feathers.

Activity

Feather blowing: Give each lady a feather and on the count of 3 to blow the feather up in the air to see who can keep it up the longest. (It's a laugh)

Subjects For Discussion

- Indian head dresses
- Grandma's feather bed
- feather flowers
- feather fans/ fan dancers
- white feather
- feather boa
- hat feathers
- quill pens
- dream catchers
- doonas
- dusters
- Pluck a duck/chook
- Tar & feather (Internet)

Scripture - Psalm 91: 1-4a (NKJ)

¹ *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High*

Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

³ *Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler*

And from the perilous pestilence. ⁴ He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

Afternoon Tea

Feather light scones.

Hearts

Jan Cairns

Preparation

A heart-shaped card with the following words on it would be helpful for the women to be given as a reminder of this meeting 'God loves a forgiven, obedient & trusting heart'. (USB)

Message

In Australia we are regularly reminded of the value of organ donation. Every Organ Donation Week we hear and see stories of people who have received the gift of an organ transplant, and in spite of loss and sadness for some families, there is great joy for others when the donor family shares the gift of organ donation.

'The DonateLife' organization defines organ and tissue donation as 'a life-saving and life-transforming medical process where organs and tissues are removed from a donor and transplanted into someone who is very ill or dying from organ failure'.

For further information on organ and tissue transplantation, go to the following website: www.donatelife.gov.au. This organization is happy to provide up-to-date information on organ and tissue transplantation with pamphlets and handouts.

Watch the '*Share your love save a life*' YouTube clip to see an up-to-date story of a family waiting for a heart transplant. (See resources).

Though the heart is basically a muscle, the romantics amongst us have turned it into a symbol of love. You only have to think of St. Valentine's Day to know what I'm talking about – heart-shaped chocolates, heart-shaped cards, flowers in heart-shaped boxes.

Love is a wonderful thing - do you remember when you fell in love? Share some of these memories.

Our heart is something that shows the very essence of who we are. We talk about people who wear their heart on their sleeve - i.e. we know exactly how that person is feeling at a given moment because they allow their thoughts and feelings to be shown to people around them.

We know that our heart can be easily broken and trampled on - we talk about having a broken heart. I'm sure everyone in this room has experienced pain and disappointment at some time in their life which has caused great heartache and often heartbreak.

A Forgiven Heart

The biblical understanding of our heart is that part of us where our thoughts and desires reside, and where all that is to do with our spirituality and understanding of God comes from. The heart is considered as the 'centre of who we are'. Unfortunately

our heart can be so easily tainted by sin - but God in love offers us His forgiveness. He is a gracious God who won't leave us in our sinfulness. As Paul writes in Ephesians 1:7-8, '*God is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood*

of his son and our sins are forgiven'. (NLT) This freedom then allows us to forgive ourselves and offer forgiveness to others.

There's a 20th century novelist named Gabriel Garcia Marquez who has written a novel which demonstrates so well the result of not forgiving others.

In his book 'Love in the Time of Cholera', Marquez portrays a marriage that disintegrates over a bar of soap. It was the wife's job to keep the house in order, including making sure that towels, toilet paper and soap were in the bathroom. One day she forgot to replace the soap, an oversight that her husband mentioned in a very 'over the top' way and which she vigorously denied. Although it turned out that she had forgotten, her pride was at stake and she wouldn't admit this. For the next seven months they slept in separate

bedrooms and ate in silence. 'Even when they were old and placid,' says Marquez, 'they were very careful about bringing up the incident, for the barely healed wounds could begin to bleed again, as if they were inflicted only yesterday'.

This may only be a story within a novel but it illustrates so well how unforgiven sin can cause so much pain and hurt.

The concept of forgiveness is an important foundation of Christianity. Jesus linked the two expressions of forgiveness - forgiveness of my sins by God, and my forgiveness of others who have sinned against me - by declaring, *'If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your father will not forgive you'* (Matthew 6; 14-15 - NIV).

Forgiving Others

A forgiven heart is one that can reach out to others with forgiveness, knowing that 'Forgiveness offers a way out. It doesn't settle all the questions of blame and forgiveness ... but it does allow a relationship to start over, to begin anew'. (Philip Yancey, *What's so Amazing about Grace?*, p.98). Relationships are an integral part of life, and to maintain healthy relationships there must be the willingness to say, 'I'm sorry ... please forgive me'.

I heard of two boys who used to climb out of their upstairs bedroom window to go exploring – all without their parents

knowing. They would climb out the window, shimmy down a tree, and off they'd go. One day their father said he was going to chop down the tree because it wasn't producing any fruit. The boys were a little anxious about losing their escape route so off they went to the shops and bought some apples. They then attached them to the tree so the next morning when their father came outside he found the tree covered in beautiful apples. What his sons hadn't realized was that the tree was a pear tree. I'm sure their father extended love and forgiveness to the boys!

Forgiving Ourselves

Sometimes it's easier to forgive others than to forgive ourselves. Carrying guilt and anger and bitterness won't change the past, but acknowledgment of our behaviour and a repentant spirit before God will bring healing and peace; accepting our weaknesses and limitations can also bring freedom to just be ourselves. Don't let Satan get a foothold by telling you that you cannot forgive yourself – you can, because God has forgiven you. God loves you and wants you to love yourself and that includes forgiving yourself.

Competition

Heart to heart (USB)

A Loving & Obedient Heart

The story of King Saul and David as recorded in 1st Samuel is one of a contest between two men who had very different hearts. The prophet Samuel was asked by God to choose and anoint a new king for Israel. Samuel's first choice was not God's choice, and God reminded Samuel that *"people judge by outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1st Samuel 16:7). To God, the condition of the heart was of more importance than what a person looked like.

Both Saul and David had opportunity to lead the Israelite nation, but Saul walked away from God in disobedience, while David was devoted and obedient. Even though there were times when David was disobedient, he nevertheless had a heart after God and God knew his thoughts and intentions.

The story of Mary and Martha as recorded in Luke 10:38-42 would be familiar to most of us here today. When Jesus dropped into their home for a visit Martha allowed her heart to be consumed by anxiety and activity over the preparation of food for Him. But Mary chose to let her loving heart dictate her behaviour, knowing that Jesus understood her heart, her deepest longings, her fears, her challenges and her joys – she was willing to sit quietly in the presence of her Lord and try to understand what he required of her; i.e. a loving and obedient heart. Luke tells us that Mary 'sat at Jesus' feet and set her listening heart upon Him'.

When we take time to listen to Jesus then we get to know what He wants from us and we are able to live in obedience to His will. Jesus told His disciples, *'If you love me then you will obey me'* (John 14:23). That's very clear!

Competition

Ask women to get into small groups and list as many songs (sacred and secular) as possible that contain the word 'heart' or 'hearts'.

A Trusting Heart

Fear can do strange things to our mind and body. Our upbringing, our personality and various life experiences can cause us to have different fears, fears which are very real and sometimes debilitating.

- I've seen young children afraid of animals without any obvious reason to be so.
- I've known school age children afraid of the dark
- Teenagers afraid of a certain teacher at school
- Adults afraid to fly in an aeroplane
- Others may be afraid to go out in a boat
- Or climb the harbour bridge
- Someone else may be afraid to give a speech
- For another person it's a fear of snakes
- Maybe a fear of being alone or rejected
- Fear of being sick

- We can fear pressure at work
- Maybe a fear of being made redundant
- We may fear for our children or elderly parents

The list is endless. What particular fears do you have? Turn to the person next to you and talk about a fear that you have – what impact does it have on your life? It can be anything from going grey to a fear of spiders!

The writer John in his first letter, chapter 4, verse 18 says: 'Perfect love casts out fear'. Here is an invitation to leave our fears with God who is perfect love. We are then on the way to living with a trusting heart. But when our fears threaten to overwhelm us, or when we feel that our life is falling apart, it is often difficult to trust. It may be helpful to affirm again the following:

T – Thank God that He hasn't changed. This isn't a surprise to Him; he is still the same God and in control.

R – Rely on His Holy Spirit to fill and empower you to make the right decisions.

U – Understand that the choice of whether to trust Him or not is yours.

S – Say it out loud: 'Yes Lord, I will trust you in this situation and in this circumstance; even if it never changes, I will trust you'.

T – Trust Him! He will empower you by His Holy Spirit and he will fill you with joy and peace as you trust in Him. (Doris Beck)

Hudson Taylor was the founder of the China Inland Mission. He spent many years preaching the Gospel to the Chinese people. It is said that in his home hung a plaque with these Hebrew words on it:

EBENEZER meaning: Previously the Lord has helped us.

JEHOVAH JIREH meaning: The Lord will do it, he will provide.

Ebenezer reminds us to 'look back and see how God has provided' while Jehovah Jireh reminds us to 'look forward'. Ebenezer reminds us of God's faithfulness in the past while Jehovah Jireh assures us of God's future provision. What a way to live – it's like two bookends keeping us secure no matter what lies before us. May the Holy Spirit help us to foster a trusting heart.

When we cannot see our way, let us trust and still obey.

He who bids us forward go, cannot fail the way to show.

- Thomas Kelly (1769-1855)

Resources

www.donatelife.gov.au

Share your love save a life:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwCnbhltO9E>

Searching For God On My Road

Christine Dalziel

Scripture - Jeremiah 29:13

Read Jeremiah 29:13 and the first part of verse 14.
In my Bible it says:

“When you search for me, you will find me, when you search wholeheartedly for me, I shall let you find me”. (REV)

- Talk about this verse – the searching and the finding.
- Talk about our searching for God and God searching for us and your experiences in your search for God.

Scripture - Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus was searching for God. Verse 3 (NIV) says: “He was trying to see who Jesus was”.

Scripture - Mark 5:27

Recall, with each other, the story of this woman who wanted to touch Jesus.

Talk about this story, how desperate this woman was for healing, how courageous she was in her search and the joy of her finding as she reached through the crowd.

Ask yourself: Am I searching for God on my Road? How do I know I am really serious in my search for God?

In your search are you:

- willing to sit and ponder on what is of God?
- willing to own your own goodness and desire?
- willing to enjoy creation?

Do you:

- desire a sense of bonding and community with others?
- welcome goodness in others?

What are the deepest longings of your heart? Where do you know God as you journey with these longings?

Prayer Personality

Leisa Humbley

Preparation

- Handouts: Sacred Pathways Survey (USB)
- White board & markers (not essential)
- Senses game: Tray with 7 different objects, tea towel (to cover tray), blindfold(s), something to smell, taste and hold
- Music player and speaker, song for sense game
- Home League Song Book

Welcome and Announcements

YouTube song: Personality – Lloyd Price

Introduction

Our theme for Salvos Women 2017 is 'God of the journey: discover, dream and grow'. We are all so different, and our journeys are different. Those differences affect our relationships with God, the way we connect to God and how we pray.

For many people who have grown up in the church, there is a learned approach to prayer and when we meet with the body of Christ there is a certain way we all pray. It is usually how we have always done it. Someone leads with a list of people, places and events that need our attending; someone opens in prayer; someone else prays, often repeating that same list of prayer requests, and so on until the leader closes with a reference to Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

It is not always this structured, but often this is how it is done. And this appeals to many people because as a group of people we prefer structure. It helps control the chaos ... am I right?

BUT, as individuals we might think that the way we pray corporately, or as the body, is also the way we should pray when we are on our own with God. This is not always how God wants to connect with us. God hears us in the chaos of our lives. God still connects with us individually and wants us to be true to who we are when we pray.

I would really like to take you on a journey of discovery today, if you'll let me.

I hope that today you will discover how to pray YOUR way and have fun in the process.

Let's start this journey by asking God to help us.

Prayer

Scripture - Psalm 139

Will you read with me these verses from Psalm 139 from your handout as our invitation to God, inviting Him on this journey of discovery:

O Eternal One, You have explored my heart and know exactly who I am:

For You shaped me, inside and out.

You knitted me together in my mother's womb, long before I took my first breath.

Explore me, O God, and know the real me.

Dig deeply and discover who I am.

Put me to the test and watch how I handle the strain.

Examine me to see if there is an evil bone in me, and guide me down Your path forever.

(vv. 1, 13, 23-24, The Voice)

Chorus

Teach me how to love thee (HLSB 40)

Survey Introduction

This journey involves asking ourselves some questions that will identify how we best naturally connect to God.

This first leg of our journey focuses on how we feel closest to God.

Have a look at this list on your handout.

Which one or two words stand out as the most definite way you feel closest to God?

Put the number 3 next to that one, or those ones that stand out.

Remember this is your own personal preference.

Be true to who YOU are.

If you are unsure about feeling close to God, then think about times and places when you are at peace and in a place of complete comfort.

Survey Part 1

See Sacred Pathways Survey:

"I feel closest to God when ..."

This survey is by Bill Gaultiere of Soul Shepherding Ministries, (See resources)

Share (Nature & Worship)

While you are considering this, you may remember a moment or a story about when you felt close to God. Those memories can help you now in this discovery.

Is there someone who can share with us a time when you have felt close to God in the outdoors, in His creation, in nature? What that was like for you?

Often we can connect to God through the words of a poem or song, or even simply a piece of music.

Is there anyone here today who has been transformed by a tune or lyrics that they heard, and would like to share that story?

Survey Part 2

See Sacred Pathways Survey:

"To be renewed or re-energised I need to ..."

Game (Learning and Tradition)

Quotes quiz: Try to guess the author.

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." – Gandhi

"Do, or do not. There is not 'try'". – Yoda (in The Empire Strikes Back)

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose." – Dr Seuss

"Love is a battlefield." – Pat Benatar

"Don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow has enough worries of its own." – Jesus (Matthew 6:34)

Survey Part 3 (Handout)

See Sacred Pathways Survey:

"It's especially helpful for me to connect with God through ..."

Activity (Asceticism and Sensation)

Senses Game

- Have a tray of 7 objects. Show each lady the tray with the objects for a few moments then cover the tray.

Invite two volunteers to be blindfolded. Ask them to guess:

SMELL: a container of coffee

TASTE: a spoon full of vegemite / honey / jam

TOUCH / HOLD: a feather

HEAR: the first two bars of a song

Then invite all the ladies to write down as many objects from the tray as they can remember.

Survey Part 4

See Sacred Pathways Survey:

“I benefit greatly from speakers and authors who help me to ...”

Activity (Caregiving and Social Justice)

Missionary Video / Offering

Survey Results & Sharing Time

On a piece of paper, add up the total you have for questions 1, 10, 19 and 28, and write the total on the line next to Nature. Now do the same for each of the other sets of numbers.

Read through the Application paragraphs on the survey handout.

Resources

YouTube song: *Personality* – Lloyd Price

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvOTA-s5rbY>

<http://www.soulshpherd.org/2012/09/sacred-pathways-survey/> .

Rest

Karen Smith

Décor

Try to have the atmosphere as calm as possible, soothing music quietly playing. If you are able, source soft calming pictures to place around the room. Cheap shops often have large paper pompoms in pastel colours which could be placed around. Candle light rather than the usual lights can create a nice ambience if it's practical for you. You can expand this by asking the women to bring a knee rug, nice cushion, etc. If able, offer soothing teas such as camomile.

Key Point

Life gets busy and we need to have pause times where we slow down, take in and replenish. This is so in our spiritual life too. Jesus modelled resting in God.

Key Verse

Psalm 139:3. You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest.(LB)

Activity

Ask people to share what they do in order to relax.

Get ladies to go in pairs and have hand creams available; reasonable creams can be purchased quite cheaply. Whilst soothing music plays, have each lady massage the hand cream into the other's hands, then swap. Ask that they talk softly so as to encourage a calm atmosphere.

Share tips on how to get a good night's sleep.

Have sprigs of lavender if possible to give to each person, or tie dried lavender into the centre of a hanky, finishing off with ribbon. Again, cheap shops often have all these items reasonably priced. Lavender is meant to aid relaxation and sleep.

Do some colouring in; there are free Christian printables online that you can use.

Song (from new TSA song book)

Be still	353	Let thy heart	718
In the secret	766	He walks with God	756
It's all about you	635	God's love	25
For they that wait	701		

Quiz

Relaxation Pursuits

Re_ _ _ ng.	(reading)	_ n_ _ tin_	(knitting)
Sl_ _ p_ _ _	(sleeping)	_ u_ _ _ c	(music)
C _ a_ _ _	(craft)	e_er_ _ se	(exercise)
W _ it_ _ g	(writing)	ou_ d_ _ rs	(outdoors)
M_ ssa_ _ _	(massage)	ga_ _ _ ning	(gardening)

Extra

You can obtain all sorts of interesting information from the library and the Internet about stress and the need for relaxation. You can even cover here such things as foods that help us. Also there is interesting information about different colours and how they actually impact on us. Why do they paint prisons and hospitals the colours they do!?

Poem

Comprehension (a poem by John Gowans)

You do not always speak Lord
When I pray.
To tell the truth
It's sometimes good
That way.

I say my piece,
Expose my deepest need,
And for my trembling brother
Intercede.

Make my thanksgiving,
Praise You and adore,
For after all, that's what
my praying's for.

Peace seeps into my soul then,
I'm serene,
I know You're there
And silence falls between.

Companionable silence,
Mystic stuff,
That wraps me in Your Presence.
It's enough.

(from O Lord!, Salvationist Publishing, 1981
– used with permission)

Silence

Before starting the devotions, acknowledge that for some, slowing down is difficult. Tell the ladies you are going to have a minute's silence ...

Message

Jesus lived a very high profile life for His last 3 years. When we read the gospels we see that He was often surrounded by crowds of people demanding His attention. Luke 5:16 says, 'Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.' (NIV) He knew that in order to be able to give out, He first had to take in from God. Too often we treat God like the drive through at McDonald's; as we hurtle past we shout out our order, expecting it to be delivered at the next window with us hardly having to pause.

We greet God in the morning with our list of demands for the day and off we go, into the melee, hoping He will deliver on time. We all know what would happen to our bodies if we ate only McDonald's. And so we don't do that! Yet we expect our spiritual life to be healthy even if we don't feed our souls by having quality time with God.

There are occasions in our life when circumstances mean that we don't have the ability to pause and rest with God. He knows that. But it should not become normal for us. There is no substitute for quality time with God.

Find a place where you feel comfortable, slow yourself down and come purposefully before God with the intention of not just talking to Him, but hearing Him. For some with extrovert personalities, or addictions to activity, waiting on God is a real act of spiritual discipline and not easy at first. But we need to persevere; our spiritual well-being depends on it. And it will get easier.

Some people journal, some have Christian music to help them, some look at nature or draw pictures ... all these things and more are helpful in focusing us. BUT we really need to have some time with no other distractions at all, and simply ask God to be with us. To wait quietly on Him. Can you picture yourself standing before God on His throne? What sort of attitude will you have as you stand right under His gaze, waiting.

God has so much love to give us but sometimes we are too busy to stop and receive. Does that bruise His heart?

What was that saying: 'If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy'. Waiting quietly before God is an offering of worship. How long is it since you made that offering?

- **NB if you have someone who is a very good reader, the words of song 746 (Come ye yourselves apart), read slowly as a poem, inviting a time of meditation, are very helpful.**

Dream The Life You Really Want

Fay Foster

Welcome/Introduction of Theme

Today we'll be talking about the dreams we have had for our lives, and the dreams we still have for our future.

Prayer

Father God, we have had so many dreams for how we wanted our lives to turn out. Some of them we have followed, and others have been smashed or forgotten as our lives have taken different directions.

We ask today Lord that you will give us the vision and courage to dream again, to dream of all that we can become and all that we can do as your children. We ask you to shape our dreams and shape us as we look to the future, together and individually.

Song

Are you seeking joys that will not fade (HLSB 4; SASB 227) or

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice (HLSB 6; SASB 537)

Scripture - Galatians 5:22-23 (The Voice)

²² *The Holy Spirit produces a different kind of fruit: unconditional love, joy, peace, patience, kindheartedness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, and self-control. You won't find any law opposed to fruit like this.*

Share

When we think about how our life could be, we know that the only way to have the best possible life is to be the best possible people, the kinds of people that God wants us to be and made us to be.

In this passage of Scripture, we see some of the things that God wants for us.

Not only does He want this for us, He is the one who grows these fruits in us.

Let's think for a minute about the ways we need to grow in these areas.

- **Look at your list (USB) of qualities that God wants to grow in us.**

Mark any that you'd like to ask God to help you with. If you're happy to do so, share one of the fruits you've marked, and why you marked this one.

Now let's look at some of the dreams we have had for our lives.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

How did you want your home to be, and your family?

Are these things still important to you?

What are your dreams now, for your home, your family and your life?

Scripture - Psalm 34:1-10

(Home League Song Book page 111)

Share

This passage of scripture tells us that God is kind and will always supply us with the good things we need.

When we think about our dreams, we know that God will never laugh at us or not take us seriously. He knows what is important to us, and He can help us to achieve our dreams, as long as they are in line with His purposes for us.

Which of your dreams is the most important to you right now?

Are you able to make this dream come true?

If so, what will be your first step? When will you take that step?

If you are not able to make this dream come true on your own, whose help will you need? When and how will you ask for that help?

Is your dream an impossible one? Remember that God has said we can do ANYTHING through Christ who strengthens us. And what we can't do, He can.

Message

Sometimes we feel ashamed of our dreams and don't want to share them. We might think, 'Who am I to have such a big dream?' Or we might know that we can't do this alone, and we don't want to ask for help.

But we were made to live life to the fullest – that's why Jesus came!

Here are some ways you can do that.

1. Decide that you will not be ruled by your past. No matter what we've done or not done, what we've achieved or not achieved,

or how good or bad our relationships have been, God promises that we have a hope and a future.

2. Be the best you that you can be. One thing God definitely wants for us, and will help us with, is to grow the fruit of the Spirit in us. These fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) Having these fruits will change the whole quality of our life.

(continues over page)

3. Rediscover your dreams. Are there dreams you gave up on that you should still be pursuing? If so, make some enquiries about how you could get started on these.

4. Dream new possibilities. Maybe you haven't wanted to dream lately. But your life is not over and you are still able to dream new possibilities and follow through to make them come true.

5. Work out your options for pursuing these dreams. What do you need to do to make these a reality?

6. Set goals. Set some goals and share them with someone who will ask you how you're going with them and keep you accountable for doing the necessary work to get there. What can you do in the next week to start bringing your dreams to life? What about in the next month? Or the next year?

7. Take the first step – then keep on going! Keep asking God to show you the next step, and keep taking the steps you need to take. Ask God to show you if you need to change direction.

It could be that you don't have any definite dreams at the moment – and that's O.K. Ask God to give you any dreams that He wants you to have, and the courage and energy to make them happen.

Song

I must have the Saviour with me (HLSB 41; SASB 731) or

I need Thee every hour (HLSB 45; SASB 587) or

I serve a risen Saviour (HLSB 47; SASB 334)

Closing Prayer

Benediction

Psalm 20:4 May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. (NIV)

Dream BIG!

Karen Smith

Key Verse

Joel 2: 28-29. Then after doing all those things, I will pour out My Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out My Spirit even on my servants – men and women alike – and they will prophesy. (See also Acts 2:17 - NLT)

Introduction

We often limit God by bringing Him down to our size in our minds. God is so much bigger than we can comprehend. And this awesome God has a dream for each one of us; to see us crowned as His child and standing with Jesus in heavenly glory. When God wants so much for us, why do we so often settle for so little? Laziness, fear, lack of faith? I'm not talking about earthly wealth but something much more valuable: our spiritual selves. So dream big, you can't out-dream God!

In the verse from Joel, a result of being indwelt by God's Holy Spirit was that the people would have an enlarged vision, that they would see things more from God's perspective. Today, more than ever, we need to be people who look at life with God's vision, not our own. And that also relates to how we see ourselves, not just the world around us.

Song (from new TSA song book)

You can't stop God	72	Have you ever	29
To be holy	287	Happy we who	28
God in you	299	How deep the Father's love for us	32

Décor

You could introduce a fun element if your ladies are game and get them to come in their PJ's and have catering relevant to a slumber party (even though we won't talk about sleep).

Or... as befitting a bevy of princesses, have a high tea complete with lovely china and delicate sandwiches and posies on the tables.

Invite: If you were not one of those little girls with 'princess dreams', will you please just come along for the ride anyway!

Activity

Prepare a page for each lady. Emphasise that it is for their eyes only and they do not have to share with anyone else unless they feel comfortable to do so.

Ask the women to think about the dreams they had as a young girl, maybe even to write them down.

Then in the next space to record if any of those dreams were fulfilled.

Finally, have the women record what dreams for the future they have now. (This can become quite serious if people share deeper things so be prepared.)

Share if people are comfortable to do so.

Now invite the women to lay their dreams before God. To give them to Him and let Him deal with them. Pause, and then pray for the women that God will place His dream for them in their hearts.

One of my big dreams as a young girl was, silly though it might sound, to marry someone with an unusual name. So you can imagine my disappointment when this handsome young man told me his name was Max. And how our romance was very nearly nipped in the bud when he told me his surname was 'Smith'. God definitely has a sense of humour!

Princesses

Many girls at some stage, dream about being a princess. Sarah Young, in her beautiful writing, reminds us that as God's daughters we are all actually princesses! We have a King for our heavenly Father. *"And I will be your Father and you will be my sons and daughters"*, says the Lord Almighty. 2 Corinthians 6:18.

- **Place on each lady's head a crown declaring her to be 'Princess.....' (Reject Shop has great little glittery party favour crowns).**

Have the crowned ladies stand while you read the following over them;

"You are a royal Princess, daughter of the most high God, chosen and cherished by Him and brought to Him through the love of Jesus. You are treasured, the Lord your God has chosen you to be His own special treasure." (Deuteronomy 7:6)

He rejoices over you with joyful songs, and with His love He will calm your fears (Zephaniah 3:17.)

He loves and knows you so well Princess, that He knows the number of hairs on your head! Do you? (Matthew 10:30)

And in heaven He is keeping for you a white stone with a new name engraved upon it. A name that only you and He will understand. This He waits to present to you, Princess (Revelation 2:17)

And He also promises to turn your sadness to joy. He will wipe away every tear (Revelation 21:4)

You are His Princess. This is not something you can earn. It is a gift He bestows upon you in Honour of His Son and in order to bless you.

Don't look to the world for acceptance, but turn always to your heavenly Father whose arms are always open toward you. And do not give up your crown; it was bought with the blood of Jesus and is special indeed.

God bless you Princess.

Quiz

How many different gemstones can you name? (Since princesses often have crowns and jewels.) There are hundreds of gemstones listed online (see resources).

Name as many Disney princesses as you can. Those with grandchildren will have the advantage!

Possible answers: Snow White, Ariel, Cinderella, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, Anna, Elsa, Aurora, Tiana, Fiona, Rapunzel, Merida.

Handout

(also on USB)

Cleopatra was one famous royal lady. She was said to have bathed in milk as a beauty routine. So here is a milky bath recipe.

2 cups of full cream milk powder, ½ cup of corn starch and the same of baking soda. Place in a jar and give the ingredients a good shake to mix. Once thoroughly mixed, add drops of your favourite essential oil. It's up to you which perfume you prefer and how strong you want it. Try 10 to 12 drops. Shake together and then leave to cure for one day. When the mix is ready, run your bath, adding a cup to 2 cups of the mix then lie back and enjoy.

Or if you have left over milk, pour it straight into your bath, add some rose petals or drops of essential oil and soak like a princess! Full cream milk is apparently good for dry skin!

Message

A quote from a man called Michael Angier as cited in Take a Little Time for Yourself , by Kathy Hatch;

"It's something I've learned before, but seem to have to relearn over and over in different circumstances - to help others, you have to take care of yourself."

This quote is not talking about self-indulgence to the exclusion of others, but it is pointing to the reality that, though we are His Princesses, none of us are equal to God. We need to take time to replenish, restore and re-balance ourselves in the Presence of God. We need to take a little princess time where we actually put ourselves first and do something just for us that makes us feel good.

We don't have the same capacities God does, so we can't keep pouring out and disregarding our own needs.

One of the things we also need to take responsibility for is how we perceive ourselves. The world can be cruel and there are lots of negative influences out there telling us we are not quite good enough. Do yourself a favour and don't listen to those negative voices. You have been reminded today already that you are uniquely known and loved by God. You are precious to the King of Kings, and let's face it, it's His opinion that counts.

We all have room for improvement, but when we accept our position as God's Princess, it is the Master Craftsman, God the Creator, who will fashion us into who He

(continues over page)

wants us to be. All those qualities He wants in a worthy Princess, He will grow in us. We may have had dreams about what we wanted from life, but God has dreams for us too. Over and over in His word we are told how much God loves us and wants to spend eternity with us. God dreams big! He sees us sharing the same splendour as His Risen Son.

Regardless of what the world tells you, regardless of the messages from childhood that may be playing in your head, remember God dreamed of you and here you are. He planned for you and has plans for you that will take you into a wonderful eternity. You are His Princess. You can dream all you like, but you can't out-dream God.

He invites you to journey with Him and discover what it means to be His princess. He invites you to receive the blessings He has for you. One day, this little plastic crown will be replaced by a real crown, placed lovingly on your head by the King of Kings.

Let the dream unfold ...

Song

He who began a good work in you - Keith Green (on YouTube)

Resources

Gemstones

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_gemstone_species)

He who began a good work in you - Keith Green

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNjZIHARnEk>

Amazing Space

Deborah Gugala

Used with permission by USA National Headquarters

Introduction

Walking into your house should make you feel good. Clutter and disorganization distracts, demoralizes, drains you of energy and causes stress. A few changes can make all the difference in how you feel about coming home, bringing others into your home and staying at home.

Activity Ideas

The Meeting Room

Ask the women to write down anything they believe would improve the meeting room. Remind them to keep in mind the five senses – sight, sound, scent, touch and taste. What changes in each of these areas could transform the area into a place in which others would feel welcome and look forward to returning to visit again?

Discuss their ideas and come up with a plan to implement at least some of them. Remind the women that they can do this same exercise in looking at their homes.

What's your limit?

Ask the women to bring from home an item of which they have quite a number. For example: books, magazines, teacups, clothing, plastic containers or yarns. Discuss the following:

- How many of these items do you own? Do you feel this is too many?
- Which are your favourites and which could you part with?
- How can you dispose of these extra items? (e.g. Give to someone. Donate to the thrift store. Sell at a future women's ministries meeting to raise funds for World Serve. Throw away.

Craft

To create storage, cover cardboard boxes with fabric using material glue. These can also be used to store blankets, games, or items that you would like to hide and yet have available.

Game

Unscramble the letters to complete these sentences designed to help you reduce the number of possessions you own.

- Less is roem. (more)
- Eliminate and nntaerecocr. (Concentrate)
- Your home is the outward expression of what you ulvae (value)
 - what you yjneo (enjoy) and what is ttimpoinra (important) to you.
- Are you a ltlrcoco (collector) or a drrohae (hoarder)? Does it add to your happiness or take away from it?

Be Careful How You Build

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds” (1 Cor. 3:10)

What you own can say volumes about who you are. In looking around your space, whether your home, car or office, it becomes apparent what you do or don't value. What takes up space in your life?

What Do You See?

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder.” We may not picture ourselves as expert builders: however, every day we are building. We build on our past experiences and on today's challenges. When a negative thought invades our space, we can quickly replace it with something positive. There

are memories that can take away our peace and joy, but God is ever present and ready to blow away the cobwebs of “if only” with the beauty of “I can”. *“I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”*

(Phil. 4:13)

What Do Others See?

“Someone else is building on it.” It's been said that even an introvert influences over 10,000 people in their lifetime. Imagine the impact we have not only on those closest to us, but also those who may only cross our path for a minute. Children especially are impressionable and can be greatly affected by what we say or do.

Remember the song by Louis Armstrong? “I hear babies crying, I watch them grow. They'll learn more than I'll ever know. And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.”

It's a good reminder that we are a living message to children in a time and place we will not visit. A wonderful world can be theirs and ours if we remember to live in a way that is pleasing to God. It would be profitable if we were intentional rather than reckless about how we approach each day and how we relate to each other. Who is building on what you're saying or doing today?

What Does God See?

“But each should be careful how he builds.”
If our desire is to make the best use of our space, then it’s vital to build on God’s Word. Too often we question, “Am I of any use?” Instead we should ask, “Am I of value?”

God’s response is clear as we read through His reassuring promises: *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”* (Heb. 13:5) *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it to the full”* (John 10:10). *“As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.”* (John 15:19) - NIV

May we be like the Apostle Paul who wrote, *“My deep desire and hope is that I shall never fail in my duty, but that at all times, and especially just now, I shall be full of courage, so that with my whole being I shall bring honour to Christ, whether I live or die. For what is life? To me, it is Christ”.* (Phil. 1:20-21, GNV)

Closing Song

Chorus 107, “To Be Like Jesus”, SASB 107.

OTHERS

Belinda Atherton-Nortcott

Introduction/Theme

Reaching out to build relationships.

Begin with the *A note to self video*.

Little Katie Booth was told by her legendary mother, Catherine Booth, “Now, Katie, you are not here in the world for yourself. You have been sent here for OTHERS. The world is waiting for you...”- words which burnt in her heart for most of her 96 years.

What do you think of when you hear the word “OTHERS”? What images or memories does it conjure up for you? (You may encourage the ladies to share their thoughts with the larger group or in pairs) If you have

been around the Salvos for a while you might have picked up that OTHERS is an essential part of who we are, in word and in deed. It is the very DNA of The Salvation Army to love and serve OTHERS in the name of Jesus. Do you know how the word “OTHERS” became cemented as part of our Salvation Army history? The story has been retold many times and many ways. This is how Chick Yuill, former officer and now freelance Christian speaker, told it in his preface to his book, “OTHERS”.

(Give out excerpt from book OTHERS by Chick Yuill - See USB)

Seeking to Connect

Do you feel ill-equipped to speak to people you don't know well, or even people you do not know at all?

If everyone who felt this raised their hand, you would find you are not alone. And yet if we want to live out our Christ-given calling and the mandate of our movement, The Salvation Army, we need to be able to speak with others and to make connections.

Without a simple “hello”, without that first connection, relationships leading to salvation and discipleship are not possible. Without facing this challenge, personally and together as a church community, we will fail to overcome it. We will not see souls saved, saints grown or the suffering humanity of our communities served in the name of Jesus, if we do not do what the scriptures so clearly call us to do.

“Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ”. 1 Peter 5:14 (NIV)

“Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with—even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently”. Romans 14:1 (The Message)

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. 34 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 19:33-34 (NIV)

Question

How would you greet someone who did not speak the same language as you, or had difficulty communicating? (E.g. wave, smile, extend a hand to shake hands)

A great extra resource for teaching how to communicate with others from a Non-English Speaking background is on Wikihow (see resources).

Game

In how many languages do you know how to say hello?

(See USB for “Hello Handout”)

(An extensive list of greetings in different languages, including fictional languages, can be found in resources)

Note: Have fun with these. This is not meant to be a competition which leaves ladies feeling dumb; hopefully it will spark some chatter about the different ways we find to communicate with or without words.

From the other side

Now imagine how it must feel when everyone around you speaks with words you do not understand. To try to experience this you may do a role play where someone is speaking a message in ‘gobbledy-gook’ and the other is trying to understand that message. You could also try earplugs which block out sound and try to listen to the message again, add another person speaking, and another, and another... the more people speaking around you, the harder it is to make out what is being said.

Now, think about someone you know who has difficulty hearing/understanding and how it would feel to live with this communication difficulty. Would they experience - isolation, loneliness, confusion, frustration, sadness, poor self-esteem? What could you do to help overcome these communication obstacles when speaking with them?

Share

The 1937 book by Dale Carnegie, *How to win friends and influence people*, has for nearly eighty years remained a best-seller and is ranked by the American Library of Congress as the 7th most influential book in American history. While our true guide will always remain the Bible, Carnegie’s book, considered the first “self-help” book of its kind and pointed to by many successful secular business people and communicators as their inspiration, has a few points we can utilize in our efforts to connect with people and build relationships.

The book has four parts and names 30 principles in how to make people like you, manage conflict and lead others. Of particular note to us are the principles which encourage us to:

- Give honest and sincere appreciation
- Become genuinely interested in other people
- SMILE

(continues over page)

- Remember a person's name, and use it often
- Listen
- Sincerely make the other person feel important, ask them about themselves, talk about their interests
- Allow and encourage the other person to speak.
- Show respect for the other person's opinions, try to see things from their point of view and be sympathetic to their ideas and dreams

The scriptures have also taught us to "Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves" Romans 12:10 (NIV).

Philippians 2:3 (NLT) *"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves".*

A sincere note of encouragement can be a powerful way of communicating that you value someone.

Let's Do It

Give each lady an Encouragement Card. (See USB for printable version or contact Territorial Salvos Caring team to order professionally printed cards.)

Take a few moments to think about someone who has blessed you and who you want to encourage. Who first comes to your mind? Then take another card to write to someone who might not receive much encouragement. Ask God to give you an encouraging message or a line of scripture which they need to hear.

Luke 6:27 (NIV) says, *"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."*

Luke's words do not just compel us to stop disliking our enemies or those whom we feel are against us. It's not enough to just

not speak unkindly to those we don't agree with, or avoid those we don't get along with. He pushes us further. We must act kindly towards them. We must do something good for someone whom we may not receive anything good from in return.

This is not just a New Testament command since we have been loved and forgiven by Christ. Exodus 23:5 (NLT) says, "If you see that the donkey of someone who hates you has collapsed under its load, do not walk by. Instead, stop and help".

Now, take another encouragement card and write one for someone you do not normally get along with. In the next week find a way to deliver this card to them, even if you do it anonymously! Note: you may do this for as many people as you like.

Serve

In his commentary on Romans 12:10, Bible Scholar Matthew Henry writes, "It is but mock love, which rests in words of kindness, while our brethren need real supplies, and it is in our power to furnish them". (For more on this commentary, see resources.)

They say actions speak louder than words. We are going to take a moment to watch this short Spanish film entitled "Strings".

- (Allow 10mins for this. The video can be found for purchase or limited-time rental at <http://cuerdasshort.com/ventas>. The video is in Spanish but has English subtitles, although the actions speak for themselves and do not necessarily need words.)

- **Note:** This is a very powerful short film. Allow time for the ladies to share and respond as to how it impacted them.

What do you think is the difference between friends and “friendly people”? In his book, *Everybody's normal till you get to know them*, John Ortberg makes this interesting observation.

I am writing these words after just having hung up the phone. The man on the other end of the line called me by my first name; he asked me how my day was going; he spoke in warm and caring tones; he was concerned for me that my long-distance carrier might not be providing the kind of service that a busy person such as I might need.

But when I told him I did not want to spend money with him, I got the clear sense that our relationship was suddenly over. He was a friendly person. But he was not my friend... The relationship may be with a colleague. It may be a cordial, mutually beneficial acquaintance. It's not necessarily a bad thing. But it's not a friendship. A friend is committed to you in a way that a paid service-provider is not.

There is a world of difference between being friendly to someone because they're useful to you and being someone's friend. (See USB for poster of this quote to distribute)

What a challenging thought! Our minds might naturally start thinking about the kind of friends we have ourselves ... but I want to challenge you to think about the kind of friend you are to others.

As we read earlier from Romans 12:10, real love is more than kind words; it includes doing what is within our power to help others. How do we see this reflected in our own lives and actions?

- Use the #ichooseothers brochure (USB) and encourage the group to look at the ideas listed on the ‘wall’ for acts of kindness and ideas of how we can live out the scriptures and demonstrate real love to OTHERS. Or they may have their own thoughts on what they can do; the brochure is just a thought-starter.

Act On It

James 2: selected verses (8-9, 12-13, 14-18, NIV)

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbour as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical

needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

This is a good opportunity to share with each other what we want to do differently or something new we want to do, someone we want to connect with after today. Encourage each other in what each person has decided to do in response to the call to care for OTHERS.

Share Evangeline Booth quote: “There is no reward equal to that of doing the most good to the most people in the most need.” (See USB for handout of this quote.)

Prayer

Resources

A note to self video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSYoC2cxEUI&index=3&list=PLcoDefOo8l6bQajj_LNXfBvKEvfbLjg4L

[http://www.wikihow.com/Communicate-with-a-Non-Native-English-Speaker\)](http://www.wikihow.com/Communicate-with-a-Non-Native-English-Speaker)

[http://www.wikihow.com/Say-Hello-in-Different-Languages\)](http://www.wikihow.com/Say-Hello-in-Different-Languages)

Matthew Henry

<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhc/romans/12.htm>

Walking Together With God!

Glenys Domrow

Décor

Table set up with Globe of the World/Flags of the World/Basket of Wheat, etc.

Preparation

Ask the ladies to read through the book of Ruth before the meeting so they have a good understanding of the story. (Supply a simplified story for those who may need it. There are many of these to be found on the internet.)

Introduction

Today we will focus on a journey that speaks to us of relationships, unity, community, and acceptance.

Scripture

The book of Ruth - focus on Ruth 1:16

Song

Why should life a weary journey seem 910

The Cross for today 103

Sandy Patty *Love in any language*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzNLUaGtaCU>

Prayer

It would be good to have a prayer time specifically for people that are displaced because of world situations.

Share

Invite someone from another country/culture to come and speak on their journey from homeland to their new homeland. Get them to share some of the 'differences' they have encountered or struggled with.

Activity

Have pictures around the room of food from other countries. Also have the names of the countries from which each type of food came. (USB) Get the ladies to walk around the room and try to match the food with the country. (This helps us understand that it is not always easy to label what we think and what really is. What we see or think isn't always reality.)

Background

We look at the story of Ruth as a romantic love story, but is it more than this? Can it speak to us about something different; maybe about people who have suffered rejection and trauma; people from other cultures? Can this story be a help to us today in teaching us the concepts of;

- Building community through right relationships
- The significance that identity and difference can play in building community
- Naming differences in order to bridge right relationships
- Inclusion - critical to a community looking for wholeness and healing

(from "Who are you?" - see Resources)

Telling the story from the book of Ruth can certainly help us learn more about the issues that are still affecting our world so prominently today.

Naomi's Story

Use a narrator as Naomi, to tell the story. This will need a good understanding of the story. Bring out the important insights that are significant if we want to walk together in community.

This could be done as the ladies act it out spontaneously. (A visual can help to get the story across to people from other cultures who have English as a second language.) As the story is told, bring insights into it so that it has relevance for today. Add the questions that will help people become part of the story. (Perhaps there are people here who have had similar experiences). The story can be broken into four short stories throughout the meeting ... Naomi and her family; Naomi and Ruth; Ruth and Boaz; Naomi and God.

Challenge

We can each be encouraged from Naomi and Ruth's story, that walking together in community is very possible. There is no longer "them" or "us" but rather "we" together. We like Ruth can say, "Your people will be my people..." and go on to live this as we walk together with God on our Journey.

Resource

The following is a wonderful resource that will help with your preparation. Adapt to suit your situation.

“Who are you?” Identity and Difference in the book of Ruth.

Ranjini E Wickramaratne-Rebera

https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/stories/_archive/mcm/stories/BibleStudies/mcmruth.pdf

Journey To True Value

Dianne Gluyas

Décor

Table set up with set of scales, makeup, tape measure, mirrors, trophies, placed either side of larger mirror set up higher with IMAGE OF GOD written around it.

If finances permit – a small gift of a compact mirror with verse, “I’m created in the image of God,” given to each lady as they leave.

Introduction

How do we see ourselves when we look in our mirrors? Do we spend most of the time trying to look for things that don’t look right, or thanking God for what he’s done right in our lives?

Today we will be having a look at a personal journey to true value in Jesus Christ and how this has changed a life significantly. There will be an opportunity for us to reflect on how we see ourselves compared with others and the world around us.

We will hear and see together how our value cannot be based on looks, achievements, the things we own and the kind of work or lifestyle we have.

Today is a day we can begin or continue on in our journey to true value that can only be found in Christ Jesus.

Scripture - Psalm 139

Song

How Great is Our God – Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Jesse Reeve c2004

How Great Thou Art – Carl Gustav Boberg (1859 – 1940)

He Knows My Name – Tommy Walker c2000

Who am I – Mark Hall (Casting Crowns) c2004

Game

'THE PRICE IS RIGHT'

Gather different priced items – include some that will be very confusing. Ask the ladies to guess the prices and see who gets the price right!

After the game hold up an unlabeled can of pineapple slices or something else that's sweet and juicy. The can needs to have no labels but must also be bashed around and dented.

For this object lesson, see resources for 'The Price is Right' video.

This is an object lesson using a can to show how we devalue ourselves and others because of what we see on the outside.

Scripture - Galatians 5:1 (The Message)

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.

Play clip – You're worth it by band Cimorelli (see resources)

Personal story – Di Gluyas (Major)

See USB

Activity

Play DVD - Broken Vessels, Hillsong (see resources)

If you have an older group you may also like to sing:

The Well Is Deep – Albert Orsborn (1886-1967) SASB 351

During the playing of this song pass around a gift box and explain to the ladies that inside the box is one of the most Beautiful Gifts God has ever given to this world. As the ladies pass this box to each other ask them not to show the other women because this gift is precious just for them. Make sure they put the lid down before they pass the gift box along.

(Wrap a gift box with a lid that can easily be put up and down. Before wrapping the box glue a mirror to the base of the box. You can get square or rectangle mirrors at most bargain shops in the décor sections).

If your budget can afford it – now would be the time to hand out a small compact mirror with a verse reminding the women they are created in the image of God.

Enjoy being incredible you!!

- Please be aware that this meeting may raise some painful memories or present situation for the ladies. It would be helpful to offer avenues of support, such as Salvos Counselling.

Resources

The price is right

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWbDCrKVMMo>

Cimorelli - You're worth it

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGZq9QdEMOA>

Broken Vessels - Hillsong

<https://youtu.be/fiyYoe678yl>

The Journey Through Disobedience

Nicola Poore

Disobedience has consequences. We learn this from childhood. If you are disobedient, you will reap certain consequences.

Let's look at some scenarios with pretty straight-forward consequences for disobedience:

You are caught for speeding multiple times in a year. What would happen?

You will lose your driver's licence.

You haven't paid your electricity bill that arrived 4 months ago. What would happen?

Your electricity supply will be cut off.

You are hosting a birthday party for your 18-year-old child and his 25 friends. The music is still pumping at 1am. What would happen?

The police might be called to end the party.

Think about your childhood home. What were some of the rules of your house? What was the consequence for someone who broke that rule?

The History of Disobedience

Disobedience has consequences. We see this illustrated time and again throughout the grand narrative of Scripture. In the beginning, God established a good and ordered world – complete with natural wonders and crowned with humans. (See Genesis 1:1-2:3)

Genesis 3 changed the world forever. The first disobedience. Human history forever altered – not so much by a worthless piece of fruit – but by an act of disobedience. Sin entered the world. And the world has never been the same. (Genesis 3:1-19)

At the heart of disobedience is sin. Similarly, at the heart of sin is

disobedience. David got it right when he poured out his heart to God, burdened by the heaviness of his sin: *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."* (Psalm 51:4a).

If we know David's story, we know that he had sinned terribly against another man and his wife through murder and adultery. Though in an ultimate sense, all sin is actually against God.

Perhaps the Bible could be described as the story of God the Father and His disobedient children. Human nature is fallen. We have a tendency to sin; to disobey.

What is God to do? What is a good Parent to do?

Just like the good parents we know, there are consequences for disobedience. As a loving Father who wants the best for us, boundaries are God's gift to us. And most of the time, I think we want to be obedient children.

Think of the children we know, and how enthusiastically they respond to sticker charts, merit certificates, and words of positive affirmation. We want to be good. That's why disobedience is so disappointing and the consequences can be so painful.

Think of a time when you knew that you had done the wrong thing. What were the consequences for you? How did you respond?

How will we journey through disobedience?

We have a choice. Like a sullen teenager convinced that her parents want to make her life miserable, we can spurn God and His loving discipline. We can protest that "life's not fair" as we fold our arms and slam doors.

Yes, the journey through disobedience can be painful. It can be a hard road and the consequences may seem unfair. Yet there is another way.

We can choose to unfold our arms and open the door of our hearts to a Father who loves us. Like David, we can ask for mercy and for the strength to walk in obedience. As Nicky Gumbel so aptly puts it, "Mountain tops inspire us, but valleys mature us." Thanks be to God that he perseveres with us, and in us, as we journey through disobedience.

Prayerfully read through Psalm 51 together.

Still Vital

Roz Edwards

Key Verse

Psalm 92:14

“Even in their senior years they will still bear fruit, they will remain vital and green.”

Décor

You might like to use a mixture of the colours in the logo, scarves/fabric draped across a cross, a chair, a presentation table. You could get some different coloured streamers for head bands (for activity). The different colours represent the different seasons of 'senior years', e.g. early retirement, caring for ageing family, season of travelling/caravanning, grandparenting, cruising, touring as opposed to planning your own way, taking life more quietly, accepting help during health concerns.

Purpose

Seniors On Mission is about celebrating Seniors, their journey to this point, and realizing the best is yet to be! We might not do mission like we used to, but God hasn't finished with any one of us yet. Many Seniors have a story of God's transforming in their own lives. However, through a journey, through Senior Programs or through our community, some Seniors come to this journey and discover Christ more fully. It's our Seniors that do the mentoring and journey to faith with unsaved Seniors.

Warm Up

(This is where you hand out and wear streamer head bands)

Standing or Sitting Exercise: YouTube: Today is the day – Lincoln Brewster

Song

HLSB 40 How I love to sing

HLSB 48 I stand alone in the presence

SASB 852 This is what the Lord has done

SASB 819 O church arise

Scripture - Psalm 92: 1-5

Share

- Where have I seen God in my week?
- How was I encouraged by God this week?
- What blessing have I received this week?
- The compelling love of God looks/feels like?

Chorus

'Hold On!' (See words and music on USB)

This little chorus from the Caribbean Territory speaks of 'holding on to Jesus Christ'

William Booth's Vision of the Lost

This clip (see resources) reminds us that there are people out in the world searching for the meaning of life. It's William Booth's vision that we be there 'holding on' to the hands of these people, helping them to Discover God's love for them, Dream with them, and Grow them into the Kingdom.

Introduction to "I dreamed a dream" –

Les Miserables

The story is set in the year 1823. It is sung by Fantine after she's left alone, unemployed and destitute. Fantine had her hair cut and 2 teeth pulled out for money to take care of her daughter. During this song, Fantine thinks back to happier days and wonders about all that has gone wrong in her life.

About 22 years later in 1865 William Booth was compelled by the love of Christ to make

a difference in the world. To love 'others', others like Fantine. Although this story is fiction, sadly her life is not unlike our reality of the world today.

William Booth wrote,

"While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight
While little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight
While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight
While there is a drunkard left,
While there is a poor girl lost upon the streets
While there remains one dark soul without the light of God
I'll fight – I'll fight to the very end!"

- Play the clip "I'll Fight" (see resources)

Mission Stories

Ask someone to share their most recent Mission Story. What are they currently involved in? Where is God using them for Kingdom outcomes?

e.g. Norma & her husband Lew, retired officers, are leading a home group in their home one morning a week. They love doing the journey of life with people from their Corps. Norma loves to be a mentor in people's lives.

e.g. Lydia came to a Corps Seniors Program; she was asked to attend by a Salvationist neighbour. Lydia saw the opportunity to be involved in the Army's mission and now greets people as they come to the Corps for appointments.

Devotional Outline

Psalm 92 - Discover Dream Grow

Verses 1-5 These are verses of high praise to our most high God. An opportunity to sing about His love and faithfulness.

Verses 8-11 These verses speak of Gods protection over us during times of trial and attack. The strength He gives is likened to the wild ox, a brutal picture, and yet the second half of verse 10 speaks of us being anointed with fine oil. Don't we all like 'fine' things; we are anointed with 'fine oil'.

Verses 12-15 This is the declaration of our growth in Christ. When we are compelled by his love, when we see our dreams fulfilled, we are transported to His courts. All our days, into our Senior years, we have purpose in these promises, to bear fruit, remain vital and green, and continue to declare that God is our Rock!

Chorus

The world is needing us - SASB 934

Seniors On Mission Purpose

To connect with Senior Generations throughout the Territory and our community. Our intention is to connect through friendship, faith & hospitality, by creating a gathering place for sharing & teaching.

Find us on Facebook –

Seniors On Mission - and 'Like' us please

Contact by email –

seniorsonmission@aue.salvationarmy.org

Bookmark/Hold On Chorus Handout & Sheet Music (USB)

Resources

William Booths' Vision of the Lost

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzGLWy7b9yQ>

I'll Fight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYjjXw03X5o>

Risen From The Ashes

Beatrice Kay

God of the Journey

Discover, dream and grow.

This Home League is not a sombre time but
a time to give God the glory.

Décor

Photos, flowers, promise box

Welcome

We all go through different journeys in our life, but we never go through them alone.

Song

“I’ve discovered the way of gladness” (YouTube) or

Song 115 There shall be showers Tune 653

Share

Life discoveries and God’s promises

Prayer

Scripture - Jeremiah 29:11

Funny Medical Definitions

- Artery Study of paintings
- Bacteria Back door of the cafeteria
- Benign What you will be after you be eight
- Bowels Letters Like A E I O or U
- Cat Scan A search for kitty
- Colic A sheep dog
- Fibula A small lie
- Labour pain Getting hurt at work
- Outpatient A person who has fainted
- Seizure A Roman emperor

Song

Dream Dream Dream by The Everly Brothers (YouTube)

Music and words on Web

Poem

Footprints in the Sand

Song

114 HLSB By The pathway of Duty (Tune 790)

Message: To God Be the Glory

This is my personal story, which took me on a journey of discovering my dreams and spiritual growth.

My beautiful beginning came when I met a tall and handsome man, who had olive skin, the most beautiful smile that would melt anyone's heart, and a personality that swept me off my feet. After 12 months of getting to know this man we fell in love and married. During the next few years we had four boys, and our call to officership.

Then we had our beautiful little girl.

Life was great doing our journey with God, and loving the ministry God had called us both to. We were serving in a large corps appointment when my husband suddenly felt unwell.

Through several tests it was discovered that he had a brain tumour. This was the first of many, actually 46 over a period of 16 Years.

When more appeared in 2006 my husband was told he had six months to live.

(continues over page)

During this time there was no doubt that God was with us. We never felt alone or deserted. This was a journey we would have preferred not to have been on, but how God has used this for His Glory.

This journey strengthened us each day in a remarkable way.

We dreamed of a wonderful retirement one day, spending time with our family who were everything to us. But this was not to be, as in February 2007 Noel was taken to his heavenly home.

Through Noel's journey hundreds of people came to know the Lord.

For me, I have continued in my officership, in which I am never alone as He is my strength and fortress, and in Him I trust.

I could not have been on this journey as a single woman if it was not for the prayers and support of my wonderful family and friends. I have an amazing God who loves me just as I am, who cares for me and protects me every day.

All of us experience God through our journeys in different ways, but we all have the same God who is there for us all and gives us strength for the road ahead. Take Him at His word, and give Him all the glory.

My story reminds me of a man named Job in the Bible. (Job 1)

Job had felt so blessed; he had all he wanted in life. He feared God and stayed away from evil.

He had sons and three daughters. He had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen and 500 female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was the richest man in that entire area.

God even said he was the finest man on earth! In this story Job lost all his family and possessions but he continued to trust God in all things.

(This story may be elaborated on.)

For some of us we go through many challenges in life, we may feel God is not listening to our prayer requests. But He never leaves us; He is there with us on our journey. Many times he carries us when we can't walk alone.

We may feel helpless and deserted, but He is our strength, our all in all.

"God is Good all the Time and all the Time God is good".

Song

HLSB 119 To God be the Glory (Tune 686)

Journey Through Abuse

Belinda Davis

"I am not a victim of abuse. I am not a victim of abuse. I am not a victim of abuse!"

That thought keeps running through my head as I sit in the interview room at the court building, listening to the lawyer define what constitutes family violence in Australia. A realisation is crashing in on me in such an unwelcome and unhelpful way. I can't think about this now, I need to focus. I need to be present. I feel my pulse quicken and my breathing shorten. I can't think about this now. Stop!

I look at the lawyer as she finishes her list and speaks softly to the other lady sitting in the interview room. I hear about the next steps in the court process and what she, as the legal representative, will do. I hear the options and possible outcomes presented—and then all eyes turn to me.

As a Salvation Army officer, I'm present to support someone in the middle of getting a family violence intervention order, to offer some words of comfort and advice. With every ounce of control I can muster, I force my thoughts aside and try to speak grace and wisdom.

That moment was the first hint I had that I was a victim of abuse. Words have power. They hurt. Their bruises take longer to heal than broken bones. Emotional abuse is abuse just as is physical abuse. The revelation was so very shocking to me that it took months to crystallize fully.

The description of Family Violence that was shared with me was that it is violent or threatening behavior that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful. Such behavior may include but is not limited to: physical violence; sexual assault; economic abuse; emotional abuse; stalking; deprivation of

liberty; damage to property, irrespective of whether the victim owns the property; and behavior by the person using the violence that causes a child to be exposed to this behavior.

I had never suffered physical violence, but I lived in constant fear of his actions and reactions. My every word was chosen to keep the peace. My every action was calculated so I would not incur his wrath. I made choices based on what he may or may not read into them. Although this behavior was present in our marriage, it somehow got worse in the years after our separation and divorce.

I soon found myself on the other side of the interview room, with the lawyer speaking to me. The police were taking out a family violence intervention order on my behalf. They believed there was more than enough evidence to support my claim that abuse was present and ongoing, despite being divorced for many years.

Even though the order was granted there was no acceptance of responsibility. I was still seen as the antagonist in his world and he is still the victim.

How much shame did I feel about finding myself in this situation? How much do I still feel? I am a reasonably well-adjusted, capable and confident woman. How could I be a statistic? How did I allow such a situation to fester?

I had a simplistic view of what abused women looked like and I did not fit that image. However, family violence is not confined to a particular stereotype. It can be found across all ages and demographics. I also believed that this would not be evident in Christian relationships, but this is a fallacy as well.

I have spent much time reflecting on this journey, how it has shaped me, how it has affected my faith. All the way through this relationship there were choices that I made to stay with this person, even when there were hints that this type of behavior may be present. I believed that if I demonstrated more love and grace then the situation would not escalate. I was wrong. I believed that if I had more faith in God to fix the situation then all would be well. The fact is, God has given everyone free will, even him, and so he needed to choose to live under God's rule. I couldn't choose for him.

The verses that have spoken the loudest to me in this circumstance are ones that refer to God being my refuge and strength, my protector in times of trouble. My absolute favorite verse is Psalm 3 verse 3: 'But you are a shield around me, O Lord; You bestow glory on me and lift my head high.' The concept of God lifting my head so I can look to the bigger picture of the horizon, rather than at my feet and my current circumstances always fills me with hope and helps me see clearer and with His perspective.

Family violence is complex and messy. It takes a significant amount of courage to stand up. It is not as simple as packing up everything and pretending the relationship never existed.

Usually an article such as this contains asterisks and footnotes to say that names have been changed to protect the identities of those mentioned. I do not want that to be the case here, because that helps perpetuate the belief that I have done something I should be ashamed of. I have received permission from my children to write openly and honestly—to shine a light on an unacceptable situation and to perhaps help others find a voice to speak out.

Women's Ministries Departments, internationally and territorially, have committed to seek ways to highlight, educate and speak out against family violence. We need to be working closely with other departments, compiling resources to help corps address this subject within their local contexts. We can make a difference, but only when people know what constitutes family violence. Conversations need to be initiated about what it is and how it can manifest, otherwise it will become another issue in which the church is 'out of step' with the wider community.

This has been the most difficult thing for me to write, but I know that if it can happen to me, it can happen, and is happening, to others—in our community, in our churches and in our families. If it is part of your journey too, please be courageous enough to tell someone. Sharing the burden can be of immense benefit and relief. If someone shares a story such as this with you, please take it seriously and seek the appropriate resources to assist and support.

I am an affected family member of violence. My children are affected family members of violence. I can choose to hide away, stay silent and feel shame or I can choose to stand up and say, 'No. Violence is not okay. In any form. Ever.'

National Hotlines

- 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732): 24 hour, National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.
- Lifeline has a national number which can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your State **131 114** (24 hours)
- Police or Ambulance – **000** in an emergency for police or ambulance
- Translating and Interpreting Service. Phone to gain access to an interpreter in your own language (free) **131 450**
- Mensline Australia. Supports men and boys who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. **1300 78 99 78**
- Kids Help Line. Telephone counselling for children and young people. Freecall: **1800 551 800**
- E-mail and web counselling www.kidshelp.com.au

Journey Through Scripture

Karan Ross

These verses which concentrate on life as a journey can be used for personal devotions or as a group, over 8 days or a longer period.
Try to complete the prayer for each session.

S.O.A.P

This is one of many ways to examine scripture and apply it to ourselves. It is not complicated and doesn't need to take a lot of time but is personal and effective. I hope you enjoy it.

Scripture

The verses chosen for the next few days are speaking about journeys, both physical and spiritual.

Observation

What is God saying/showing me today?

Application

How does this affect my life today?

Prayer

Respond to God in prayer.

Session 1

Contemplate the words of the song '*God Who Sets Us on a Journey*' (see Journey Study – USB) and see what God is saying to you.

Thought

"Adventure is worthwhile." - Aesop

Session 2

Scripture - Genesis 12:3 (The Voice)

I will also bless those who bless you and further you in your journey, and I'll trip up those who try to trip you along the way. Through your descendants, all of the families of the earth will find their blessing in you.

Scripture - Matthew 3:3 (The Voice)

John's proclamation fulfilled a promise made by the ancient prophet Isaiah, who had said, "There will be a voice calling from the desert, saying, Prepare the road for the Eternal One's journey; repair and straighten out every mile of our God's highway".

Prayer

Thank you Lord for the opportunities we have to enjoy each others' company and make new memories. I am very grateful for ...

Thought

"A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles." – Tim Cahill

Session 3

Scripture - Psalm 37:23 (The Voice)

If you are right with God, He strengthens you for the journey; the Eternal will be pleased with your life.

Scripture - Proverbs 6:21-22 (The Voice)

Keep their teachings close to your heart; engrave them on a pendant, and hang it around your neck. Their instruction will guide you along your journey, guard you when you sleep, and address you when you wake in the morning.

Prayer

I'm grateful for the thought that occurred to me today, which was ...

Thought

"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page." - Saint Augustine

Session 4

Scripture - Psalm 17:4-5 (The Voice)

Your ways and Your voice now guide my journey. I will press on - moving steadfastly forward along Your path. I will not look back. I will not stumble.

Scripture - Psalm 146:9-10 (The Voice)

The Eternal looks after those who journey in a land not their own; He takes care of the orphan and the widow, but He frustrates the wicked along their way. The Eternal will reign today, tomorrow, and forever. People of Zion, your God will rule forever over all generations. Praise the Eternal!

Prayer

Today, Lord I am grateful that I can feel...

Thought

Not all those who wander are lost." – J.R.R. Tolkien

Session 5

Scripture - Psalm 26:3 (The Voice)

Your unfailing love is always before me; I have journeyed down Your path of truth.

Scripture - Psalm 122:2 (The Voice)

We have made the journey, and now we are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Prayer

Thank you Lord, for the tastes we have been able to experience, especially ...

Thought

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” – Helen Keller

Session 6

Scripture - Psalm 119:54-56 (The Voice)

As I journey through this life, Your statutes are my song. O Eternal One, through the night, I stop to recall Your name. That's how I live according to Your teachings. This has become my practice: to keep Your ordinances.

Scripture - Psalm 119:54-56 (CEV)

No matter where I am, your teachings fill me with songs. Even in the night I think about you, LORD, and I obey your Law. You have blessed me because I have always followed your teachings.

Prayer

On my wanderings today, I am grateful God for hearing ...

Thought

“Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind.” - Seneca

Session 7

Scripture - Psalm 56:8 (CEV)

You have kept record of my days of wandering.

You have stored my tears in your bottle and counted each of them.

Scripture - Psalm 89:15-16 (The Voice)

How happy are those who have learned how to praise You; those who journey through life by the light of Your face. Every hour of the day, they rejoice at the sound of Your name. They are lifted up and encouraged by Your righteousness.

Prayer

I am grateful Lord, that today I saw ...

Thought

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.” – Mark Twain

Session 8

Scripture - Jeremiah 29:11 (The Voice)

For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Eternal, “plans for peace, not evil, to give you a future and hope - never forget that.

Scripture - 1 Peter 1:18 (The Message)

Your life is a journey you must travel with a deep consciousness of God.

Prayer

I’m grateful God for the experiences of these days. Thank you God for ...

Thought

“Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.” - Winston Churchill

Oh, the Places You'll Go!

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes

You can steer yourself

Any direction you choose.

You're on your own. And you know what you know.

And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

- Dr. Seuss

AND THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

You, Lord, are all I have and you give me all I need;

My future is in your hands.

Psalm 16:5 (GNT)

N.B. This study is also available as a booklet [USB]

Excess Baggage

Karen Smith

Key Verses

Philippians 4: 6-7

Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace which exceeds anything we can understand.

Peter 5:7

Cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you. (MEV)

Key Point

God does not want us to carry excess baggage on our journey with Him. We need to leave it all with Him, whether it be unconfessed sin, worries, hurts or unforgiveness. Excess baggage is anything that hinders our journey and that God really does not want us to carry.

Décor

All different sorts of luggage. If you want to be adventurous, set the room up as an airplane cabin with seats in rows.

Handout

As ladies arrive, give each one a Bible verse printed on a luggage label.

Share

To get ladies 'warmed up', have them share what item they could not do without if travelling or stranded on a desert island.

The Bible verses can be read out at various times during the gathering.

Have someone share a humorous travel story – if possible, something related to luggage.

Song (from new TSA song book)

The Lord is near	793	In Thee O LORD do I put my trust	594
What a friend	795	He is able	836
Sing and make music	390		

Poem

H.S.Rice, A new Year Brings a New Beginning (see resources)

Prayer

Near the start of the meeting, centre a prayer time on thankfulness using Song 795, then after the devotion allow the women to think about their own excess baggage and to pray about that while one of the other songs plays.

Extras

Google is a good source of humorous poems and funny quotes.

Message

If you have been travelling and charged for excess baggage, you will know it is very expensive. It's actually the same in the spiritual world. Carrying excess baggage slows us down in our journey with God and can even halt us altogether. It can impede our ability to hear God and to journey where and how He wants to take us.

Excess baggage can be a number of things. (At this point you may want to have a suitcase and in it have written on cards the various things about which you will speak. Or if you are very creative, you may have items to bring out one at a time that represent the excess baggage.) One form of excess baggage that really weighs us down is unforgiveness, and often this comes with the matching hand luggage of past hurts. Only God can help us with these things as we come to Him and confess them to Him. Nothing is impossible with

God (Mark 10:27) and He can do all sorts of wonderful miracles. But in order for us to be truly healed He has made it that we need to come to Him, we need to ask His help and invite Him into the situation.

Another very heavy item of excess baggage is unconfessed anti-God actions, feelings and thoughts – we call this 'sin'. This is very dangerous and can only be handled by Jesus on the cross. There is no other effective way of dealing with this other than telling God about it and asking for His forgiveness given through Jesus. This form of excess baggage can stop us journeying ... full stop.

If your heart is full of excess baggage, it can't receive the blessings God wants to put there. If your 'hands' are full, hanging on tight to resentments, the pain of unfulfilled dreams or hurts, then they cannot

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receive the blessings of peace, hope and joy that God waits to give you. It really is up to you; do you keep hold of your excess baggage and pay the ever-increasing price, which could eventually be your very soul, or do you relinquish it all to God and receive all that He has for you?

This handing over the excess baggage is an all-of-life process. God will make us aware of things we need to deal with and let go of. As we deal with one, He will then

take us to the next step. As life goes on, we can accumulate more excess baggage to replace what we have given to God. But don't be discouraged. All you have to do is trust Him and keep talking to Him and listening to Him. God will show you what you need to do.

He has a wonderful journey planned for you. Are you willing to take it, are you willing to let go of all your excess baggage?

Prayer and Reflection

Competitions

1. Have items in pillow cases and people have to guess what they are by feeling them.
2. Packing race – have 2 suitcases and two piles of similar items, see who can pack the most items in a certain time – but the clothing has to be folded or rolled.
3. Luggage quiz – unjumble these names for different types of luggage. (See USB for quiz sheet without answers)

SEPRU	purse
GHBADNA	handbag
SCITSEAU	suitcase
KABCKAP	backpack
GASHOBREW	showerbag
YELLORT	trolley
CHETATA	attaché
LESTCHA	satchel

Resources

H.S.Rice, A new Year Brings a New Beginning

http://www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal_individual.asp?blog_id=3863645

The Inside Out Project: Prison Gate Ministry

Megan Dale

In 2012, The Salvation Army Collingwood Corps established a now thriving 'Prison-Gate Ministry', very dear to my heart, whereby we have attempted to assist women just released from prison to integrate back into society. Owing to the success of our endeavours, we have received (and continue to receive) numerous referrals from our local Magistrate, lawyers, other agencies and also Corrections Victoria.

This ministry revolves around a Home League-based mentoring programme, linking our women into various support groups, including counselling. It involves sourcing work and appropriate housing, and perhaps more importantly, just being part of the whole vitally necessary debrief for these broken and hurting women - none of whom come out of there better - by allowing them the opportunity to tell their stories in a safe environment. In this way we uphold the TSA values of human dignity, justice, hope, compassion and community. Because everyone has a story and every woman is somebody's daughter!

In partnership with the wonderful Mary Anderson Family Violence Service, (under the banner of TSA Crossroads Youth & Family Services network), we have set about establishing a substantial link between the unacceptably over-represented population of pre & post incarcerated women and the 95% of those in prison who have come out of backgrounds of significant family violence. It is an ongoing initiative which serves to meaningfully contribute to the integrated mission and evangelistic work currently being undertaken by The Salvation Army, here in inner-city Collingwood. And in so doing, contributing to the development

of relevant referral pathways, in order to build trust, participation and access for incarcerated women to the MAFV service. This is one component of support services available for the particular purpose of working together to assist with a reduction in family violence.

The reality is that the vast majority of incarcerated women have simply come from one cruel, abusive environment into another, and then go out again into another – and people wonder why these folk continue to go to prison “in and out...in and out!” It is important to recognise that in the pre-release phase of a woman's sentence, there is a narrow window of opportunity whereby folk still have ‘hope, plans and a future’ for a new life, ‘not just the old one patched up’ – before dreams are completely obliterated by an archaic, inhumane, abhorrent and unjust system that consistently sets women up to fail.

We have the potential to empower these most vulnerable and dispossessed women (and their children) to truly believe that they're not just continually condemned to destructive, poisonous and abusive relationships because they feel that's all they deserve. So, out of a little seed, this project took root. The opportunities for us to be involved in ‘transforming lives, caring for people, making disciples and reforming society’ are potentially endless ... and this is but a starting point!

We have put together a select prisoner advisory and review group designed to oversee the production of a user-friendly ‘family violence’ resource and engagement

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card, that we have distributed throughout the maximum security women's prison, via specialist counselling services, run in conjunction with MAFVS & Melbourne City Mission within the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, itself.

TSA Collingwood Corps partnered up with MAFVS, Zonta, Mary Kay, the VCD and the mighty Box Hill Corps, to source an array of gratefully received donations which we used to make up 'exit packs' (i.e. practical back-packs filled with essential toiletries, socks and jocks, our 'Family Violence' info card, food vouchers, Salvo Store vouchers, Myki cards, and Bibles, etc.) that we developed in partnership with Crossroads, and which Major Laurel Campbell (Prison Chaplain) designed and distributed for incarcerated women exiting the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. This is such a great alternative to being released with all their worldly belongings contained in an undignified black plastic garbage bag!

We are consistently endeavouring to create and nurture a loving, kind, compassionate, inclusive community, by simply showing kindness in the name of Jesus, and by continuing to affirm and accept these broken and hurting women as they are. We do our best to listen to their stories with a kind and non-judgmental ear, open our hearts and come alongside them, and inspire them to be the very best that they can be. Through simply encouraging them

to be the person God has made them to be, we have been deeply blessed to have brought a number of our women to Christ, or perhaps more accurately, brought Christ to a number of our women! And in so doing we have discovered, or have had it reinforced, that it is quite possibly only privilege and advantage, or a lack thereof, that separates us all ... because, there but for the grace of God go each of us!

Who will give these people a helping hand? What is to be done with them? Would it not be more merciful to kill them off at once instead of sternly crushing them out of all semblance of honest personhood? Society recoils from such a short cut. Her virtuous scruples remind me of the subterfuge by which English law evaded the veto on torture. Torture was forbidden, but the custom of placing an obstinate witness under a press and slowly crushing them within a hairbreadth of death was legalised and practised. So it is today. When the criminal comes out of gaol the whole world is often but a press whose punishment is sharp and cruel indeed. Nor can the victim escape even if they open their mouths and speak.

One wonders just how much, if at all, things have changed in the past one hundred and thirty years or so, since The Salvation Army's great founder, General William Booth, in his volume "In Darkest England and the Way Out," first penned those words.

For Discussion

1. Share any thoughts that came to you as you read Meg's writing.
2. How would you find out whether there are women about to come out of jail in your local area?
3. Do you know of any women in your area who have recently come out of jail?
4. What services in your local area are available to help these women?
5. What could the women in your corps do to help? This could be by supporting existing services, or starting up new ones.
6. What relationships will you need to build (e.g. with local prisons, employment agencies or landlords) to be able to help in these ways? Who will you speak to?
7. If you think this is a ministry you could get involved in, what will be your first step? When will you take it?

Journey With Hubs

Beth Twivey

If I've learnt one thing from my journey as a Disciple of Jesus Christ and as a Salvation Army Officer it's that you never know what the journey might bring. It really is an adventure ...

Hubs has been one of those things. I think I had always understood that it was good to minister alongside others. In some appointments over the past 28 years it meant that we partnered up with a church down the road to put on an event for our community; in other appointments it's been investing into the life of another Salvation Army service down the road. It was informal in one sense, a bit awkward in another sense, sometimes fruitful, and sometimes challenging and seemingly ineffective.

In January 2012 David and I got in our car with a teenage son and travelled over 2,000 kms into the tropical north of Queensland – the city of Townsville. About a week later we were instructed, along with about 13 other people, to come together with our Divisional leaders. They announced, 'You are a Hub – the Northern Hub - and Beth you will be the Strategic Team Leader'.

So began a journey for me and others – a journey of questions, challenge, hope, joy, tears, dreaming, planning, frustrations, partnering, amazing freedom stories, change and more change, but overall an affirmation that we are better together.

The Northern Hub (QLD) is made up of 26 personnel, representing 19 expressions of The Salvation Army, who meet monthly to network, encourage, plan, share resources and learn more about what we each do in our expressions. 19 expressions that keep finding ways to partner up to see things happen.

The expressions in our Hub are Family Stores, Corps (3), Moneycare, Salvos Stores, Indigenous Engagement, Doorways, Red Shield Defence Services, Recovery Services, Courts & Prisons, Public Relations/Communications & Fundraising, Youth & Children's Ministry and Workplace Health & Safety. 11 of the 26 personnel are Officers, one is a Retired Officer and 14 are employees. It's a diverse group – diverse in giftings, character and strengths.

I do think that the Hub journey can be overanalyzed and thus complicated ... at its core it's about relationship. God has created us for this – created us to do life together in Him. Hubs give us an opportunity to see the Army's mission fulfilled in ways that we couldn't do if we did it by ourselves.

The journey of the Hubs syncs very well with this year's Salvos Women theme: to take a journey where we DISCOVER, DREAM and GROW.

(continues over page)

Discover

Ask questions to discover what exactly the Salvation Army is doing in your geographical area. Discover who is your Hub Strategic Team Leader. Which expressions are represented on the Hub All Expressions team?

Arrange to visit another Salvation Army expression to discover what exactly they do, and how the expression you are connected with (Corps, Centre) could contribute to / resource / encourage and bless this Army expression.

For example, Junior Soldiers at one Corps prepared Prayer Boxes as part of an end of year project for the men and women participants at their local Recovery Centre. The Prayer Boxes were full of promises from the Bible and inspirational quotes. They decorated the Prayer Boxes in their own style. Months later a participant of the Recovery Centre shared in their testimony about their Prayer Box and what it meant to them, and how every morning they prayed for the Junior Soldier who had presented it to them.

Dream

Come together as a group and dream about something God may be calling you to.

Share your dream with your Hub All Expressions Team.

Ask your Hub Strategic Team Leader if your group could visit a Hub meeting to present your dream.

Grow

Talk together about where you believe God wants to see growth in your Hub area.

Grow in

- generosity in sharing resources
- love for one another
- people being saved
- people being disciplined
- transformed marriages, families, relationships
- effective ways to engage with our community.

Suggest other ways ...

Then spend time in prayer.

Journey Of Mission

Grant Sandercock-Brown

Luke 10 is a very helpful story as we think through our central tasks in mission. The prelude in chapter 9 is not great. In fact the disciples have failed again and again! They prayed for healing and failed (9:37); they argued about who among them was the best (46); they wanted to stop people they hadn't approved of doing ministry (49); they wanted to call down fire on Samaritans (51); and they gave three reasons for not following Jesus (57). An unimpressive list! And yet when we turn to chapter 10 there is wild success. Why?

We are missionaries in God's power –

Firstly, this mission trip was an object lesson for them that the real power is Christ's, not theirs; "whoever listens to you listens to me" (v16). It's his power through our work. It is Jesus who sent them ahead (literally 'before his face'). We can't save! But we can be his heralds, his representatives, preparers of the way.

There's also another very important idea regarding the Kingdom. It's within us. It's seen in us, we carry it with us. And this is really, really important! Jesus says in verses 9 and 11 the 'Kingdom of God has come near'. Why? It's not so much us, but rather God in us, the living Christ in us, bringing the reign and rule of God near to people who do not know him. Our presence matters! Our being in the world changes the world whether people accept our mission or not. We're called to be in the world for the world's sake, so that wounded creation can glimpse the creator. It's why it hurts the church so much when there is abuse, anger, hardness of heart, cynicism, and

criticism among us. We are failing at the very thing we're meant to be doing, bringing the kingdom near.

Missioners need to be resilient and persistent – don't give up!

Secondly, while we are bringing peace, offering kingdom peace, in people's lives it will not always be accepted. But the value of the message is not measured by its acceptance – so we go on! Yes, we are lambs among wolves – seemingly weak and powerless in a pretty brutal world, but people's rejection of the message does not affect its truth. We can do it! Each of us. Sidney Cox's very first song was an attempt to encourage people in this very task. "I sang the little melody over and over to myself, I could almost point to this person and that one and another with the thought and hope in my heart that perhaps a little melody of this kind might help them to release the loveliness and beauty of their Christian experience for their own sake and for the benefit of someone else".

You can tell out the sweet story. You, yes you.

Somebody's life will be brighter.

Somebody's care will be lighter.

You can tell out the sweet story. You, yes you.

Well, how do we tell out this sweet story? And here's a biblical basis for our strategy. If we were to summarise the method of this chapter it would be, "Eat what is provided, heal the sick, and announce the kingdom". Or if you like:

(continues over page)

Humbly gather at table, help the hurting, proclaim your King in word and deed.

1. Gather at table. Share a meal with people who need to be encouraged towards the kingdom. Gather for Kingdom conversations, not just invite friends over (although that's good too). It's why Jesus says 'remain in the same house; eat what's set before you'. We don't look for better tables. We gather at tables, break bread together, to bring the kingdom near to people who desperately need to hear the sweet story. This was the great genius of Alpha. It was built around a shared meal and deep conversation that can bring the Kingdom near!

2. Heal the hurting – we're not doctors. In the 21st century physical healing is well taken care of. But we can help the hurting: those wounded in their hearts, in their spirits, who need help and healing. Our job is to offer support - financially, emotionally, physically, spiritually; and so we encourage, we provide. That is the role of every community created by our network of services.

3. Proclaim our King. This is the fundamental task of our worshipping communities. When we meet together we proclaim Jesus before the world. And we take every opportunity to proclaim his kingdom; sharing the kingdom by our actions and loving care, but also ready to tell out that sweet story; to say 'yes, Jesus is my King, I'd like to tell you about him'.

And so we are called to:

Humbly share at table, help the hurting, proclaim our King in word and deed.

But why? Why would we do it? Well, because something amazing happens when we do. We see this in Jesus' response in vv18-20, this image of Satan falling from the sky. You see, when the people of God bear witness to the kingdom, something significant shifts in the world. The wounding of the world is healed, the sin, despair and evil that hurts us so is defeated and diminished by faithful loving Christians living out the kingdom. Something changes in that unseen but powerful world of the spirit.

So don't dismiss! It is the strength of the unseen real, the world of heart and spirit, that binds us and holds us. We know this in the deep unseen connections we have with people we love and care about. As human beings we need them, these unseen ties; they hold us, keep us, name us.

But there is not just love. Too often in the world there is unseen fear, unseen hate, unseen despair. And when we as kingdom people, in whom the light of glory dwells, mirror the love of our king, act with kindness and generosity, the kingdom of darkness is diminished; we defeat those unseen forces that destroy, and corrupt, and hurt, and wound and bind us. It's a big job! So we're going to need a plan!

Our call is to humbly share at table, to help the hurting, and to proclaim our King in word and deed.

Birthday

Leanne Plon

Welcome

Announcements

Birthday Ladies

Read out the names and birthdays of the ladies celebrating their birthdays this month.

Game

Celebrity Heads (See USB for some possible names you can cut out and place on headbands for this game.)

Explain to the ladies that the 'people' whose names they are guessing are not necessarily people – they could also be animals or things.

Chorus

Prayer

Game

Pictionary (See USB for words that can be used for this).

Cut out each word and give each lady one word which she must not show to the others.

If time permits, each lady can have a turn at drawing her interpretation of one of the words, while the other ladies try to guess what she is drawing.

Scripture

Dear child, if you become wise, I'll be one happy parent. My heart will dance and sing to the tuneful truth you'll speak. Proverbs 23:13 (The Message)

A happy heart makes a face look cheerful. But a sad heart produces a broken spirit. Proverbs 15:13 (New International Reader's Version)

Game

Give each of the ladies (not just those with birthdays) three or four numbers, and place ten small wrapped gifts in the middle of the space or table.

Call out a number and the lady with that number chooses any gift and puts it in front of her. When all the presents are gone from the middle, the next person whose number is called "steals" from another person. When the game finishes, whatever gift or gifts is in front of them they get to keep. (This means that not everyone will have a gift – but sharing is allowed!)

Share

Have ladies tell the funniest gift they ever received.

Scripture - Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (The Voice)

Teacher: For everything that happens in life—there is a season, a right time for everything under heaven: ² A time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant, a time to collect the harvest; ³ A time to kill, a time to heal; a time to tear down, a time to build up; ⁴ A time to cry, a time to laugh; a time to mourn, a time to dance; ⁵ A time to scatter stones, a time to pile them up; a time for a warm embrace, a time for keeping your distance; ⁶ A time to search, a time to give up as lost; a time to keep, a time to throw out; ⁷ A time to tear apart, a time to bind together; a time to be quiet, a time to speak up; ⁸ A time to love, a time to hate; a time to go to war, a time to make peace.

Message

These verses remind us that there is a right time for everything – including a right time to be born. The day and time of your birth was no accident.

Like Queen Esther in the Bible, you are here for such a time as this. So every time we have a birthday, we can celebrate this fact – that God started our journey on this earth at exactly the right time.

His plan and purpose for us are for right now, no matter how young or old we are.

Let's celebrate together each life journey represented here today, and let's keep asking God to show us his plans for us so that we can be all He has made us to be and do all He has made us to do.

- Give a present and cake to each of the birthday ladies.

Easter: A Time To Die

Christine Dalziel

All through his life, Jesus was aware that there was a time to die. There are many references to that “time” in John’s gospel.

We will look at two examples in John chapter 7.

- **Read John 7:1-9**

The Jewish festival of Booths (or Tabernacles) was originally a harvest celebration when those celebrating lived in tents or booths around the temple for eight days. Notice, in verse 3, the brothers wanted Jesus to win popularity by showing what he could do.

Do you agree with the brothers?

Talk about that. What do you want Jesus to do to prove He is Lord?

Notice (verse 6) Jesus says: The time for me has not yet come.

- **Read John 7:25-31**

The people tried to arrest Jesus but his time had not yet come.

Consider how the people felt, how Jesus felt.

Share your understanding.

Ecclesiastes speaks of a time for everything.

- **Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.**

What time is it in your life?

How do you welcome that time?

How do you know God with you at this time?

A Time to Die – Autumn

Take time for reflection at this time of autumn when the garden is covered by dry crisp brown leaves and the north wind gathers great bundles of them and whirls them up the street into the gutter.

Autumn speaks to us of a time of dying and for that reason some people don’t like autumn. They don’t wish to consider ‘a time to die’. And yes, as I look at that oak tree that rains down so many autumn leaves in our garden I see already signs of buds. How can it be?

The dying and the new life (rising) so evident in Jesus right before me.

Consider your life at this autumn time.

What are the leaves that you are letting fall so that new life may come?

Maybe your autumn leaves are old desires, old prejudices, old hurts, poor understanding of life and others. It may be helpful to draw yourself as a tree, and write what you are letting fall from your life.

Talk to God about what you are allowing to die in your life, and ask for his new life.

And the new buds are forming. We will call the buds, hope.

How will you name your hope?

For what do you hope?

Express your hope in a prayer which you could share with others.

A Time to Die – Jesus

- Read John chapters 18 and 19.

Pause for discussion and reflection as you read. Some might like to read the line spoken by Pilate or Jesus or Peter or Mary or the soldiers, the girl outside the high priest's courtyard, or the chief priests and officials and consider the action and words of those characters as you read.

Prepare a simple meal together and consider Jesus sharing with his disciples when he said: Do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:14-23).

Share grace and dialogue with Jesus around your Easter meal.

Ask the ladies to find Easter pictures, poems, songs to share with your group next time you meet.

Follow this session with the next study, A Time to Live.

Easter: A Time To Live

Christine Dalziel

- Read Luke 24:1-12

The women go with spices to the tomb of Jesus.

Let us go with them to the tomb with spices.

Maybe your heart is heavy.

Fear is covering your joy.

Fear that says Jesus no longer lives.

Fear that knows about the stone that will block our ever reaching Jesus with the spices we've brought.

What will you name that stone?

And we read in Luke 24:8 that when the women reached the tomb they remembered his words.

And we remember too.

We remember Jesus saying: I am the resurrection and the life.

We remember God in Jesus who loved the world, fed the hungry, healed the sick, set the captive free.

What do you remember?

Jesus is here. He is risen.

Celebrate with your Easter poems, songs, pictures, cooking, flowers, that remind you that Jesus is alive.

The Trip Of A Lifetime: Travelling With The Wise Men

Susanne Cox

Décor

Have a table set with “rich” colours ... cloths in purples, royal blue etc.
Some vases or “eastern” looking pottery.

Around the room, have 3 tables set up in 3 different places. These “stations” are where the message for the day will take place. Linking the tables, on the floor, place large golden stars, as if to indicate a walking track. If possible, invite the ladies to travel on the star track to each table during the message

Table 1: Gold (decorate using gold things ... materials, a crown, metal vases/ornaments)

Table 2: Frankincense (decorate using pastel coloured things ... materials, essential oil bottles, oil burner, etc.)

Table 3: Myrrh (decorate table with medicinal things ... Dettol, burn cream, Betadine, etc.)

Song

Song 122 (HLSB) We three kings

Song 92 (HLSB) Silent Night!

Song 76 (SASB) As with gladness

Activity 1

Have the ladies play the game of, “When I went on holidays, I took ...”

The first lady might say, I took sunscreen, the second lady says, I took sunscreen, & swimmers. The third lady would say, I took sunscreen, swimmers & ... and so on and so forth.

Activity 2

Wrap up a parcel for a “pass the parcel” game, and on each wrap, have some travel questions; e.g. What is the capital of France? Where would you find the Tower of London? Easy questions!

Joke

What if the 3 Wise Men were Women?

What would have happened if it had been three Wise Women instead of three Wise Men? They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts.

But what they would have said when they left ...?

“Did you see the sandals Mary was wearing with that gown?”

“That baby doesn’t look anything like Joseph!”

“Can you believe that they let all of those disgusting animals in the house?”

“I heard that Joseph isn’t even working right now!”

“And that donkey that they are riding has seen better days too!”

“Want to bet on how long it will take until you get your casserole dish back?”

Share

Ask the ladies some questions:

E.g. What was the most memorable trip you have taken and why?

Where was the most exotic destination you have travelled to?

What is your best packing tip?

Share

This trip that the wise men went on was not a spur of the moment thing. It had taken lots of planning, watching the stars, and plotting the course of THE star that would lead them to the Christ Child.

As we’ve already discovered, if you want to go on a trip that is memorable, you need to be organised. Pack well. Organise accommodation, food and transport. Plan your activities for when you arrive at your destination.

That is what the wise men had done – they had prepared themselves for this journey. They didn’t know exactly where they would end up, or what would be waiting for them on their arrival. Part of their planning was that they knew that they would be greeting the King. They knew that when they arrived where the Star was leading them to (Bethlehem), they would see a King, one that they would bow down and worship.

Scripture - Matthew 2: 1-2: 9b-11

Let's go on a trip of a lifetime.
Follow the star.

The wise men brought gifts for the Christ Child.

Table 1: Gold

This was no doubt a gift set for a King.
Gold – beautiful, symbolic of wealth, richness, love (rings & jewellery).

Gold is associated with kings, and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.

Table 2: Frankincense

Frankincense, sometimes referred to as olibanum, is a common type of essential oil used in aromatherapy that can offer a variety of health benefits: helping relieve chronic stress and anxiety, reducing pain and inflammation, and boosting immunity.

It says in the Scripture reading that the wise men bowed down to worship the King. Frankincense is sometimes used in worship in churches. The gift of frankincense was an indication that this child was worthy of being worshipped.

Table 3: Myrrh

Myrrh is the aromatic resin of a number of small, thorny tree species of the genus Commiphora. Myrrh is an essential oil and a natural gum. It has been used throughout history as a perfume, incense and medicine.

Myrrh was the perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell nice. It is said that this gift was symbolic because Christ's destiny was to die. As part of prophecy, His death was acknowledged by the giving of this gift.

So what is the significance for us in this trip of a lifetime for the wise men?

For us, we can acknowledge that Christ has come as the Saviour of the World. He is the King of Kings, and we can honour Him with the best that we have (like the giving of gold from the wise man). The Christ that we celebrate at Christmas time is worthy of our worship. It is important that we stop and remember who Christ is, what He has done for us, and that He is the one who will keep us and never leave us. Never hesitate to bow down and worship Him.

The significance of the gift of myrrh is a reminder to us that we have been forgiven and that Christ has died for us. By accepting that Jesus is the King, a Saviour who is worthy of our worship and has given His life for us, we are free to enter into a relationship with our Father God.

Resources

The M&M Christmas Story – see www.printables4mom.com/2012/11/26-the-mm-christmas-story/

The Symbolic Gifts – see <https://au.pinterest.com/pn/258253359856617604/>

Christmas Joy

Julie Campbell

Hold a Christmas Fair - a variety of stalls, demonstrating ways to simply give and bring joy.

- Gift tag or card making
 - Gift wrapping made simple
 - Inexpensive Gifts in Jars e.g. ingredients for brownies or biscuits. Or homemade suggestions for the jar
 - Easy and simple Christmas dinner ideas
 - No fuss table décor
 - Show & share how the corps assists people in your local community and how the women can be involved
 - Prepare hampers for the corps to distribute. Prior to the event ask the women to bring an item or even a shopping bag of food. With the invitation for the event include a list of food items required for the hamper.
 - Practical suggestions to bring joy to a neighbor or family
 - Invite a member of the SAID team or display gift ideas from SAID office 'Gifts that keep on giving' catalogue.
- **Additional resources for Home League**

Commence with a carol sing-along - the women could choose their favorites.

Sing the carol, Joy to the World and ask the women to share:

- the joys of Christmas
- the challenges
- how Jesus brings joy to their lives.

Compose words to the song 12 Days of Christmas - e.g. On the 1st day of Christmas Jesus gave to me.

About the Carol: 'Joy to the World' (USB)

Quiz: (USB)

Scripture - Luke 2:1-20

Leader: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

Ladies: So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Leader: While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Ladies: And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified

Leader: But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Ladies: This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.'

Leader: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Ladies: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Leader: But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Ladies: The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

10 Commandments for Christmas (USB)

Message

Christmas is advertised as a time of joy, fun and happiness. The reality is that the journey to Christmas is not always a joyful or happy time for everyone. Preparing for Christmas can cause additional and unnecessary stress and pressure: gifts to buy, events to attend, meals to prepare, making arrangements for visitors or to visit family and friends. This time of year can often create fear, uncertainty and concern.

The traditional Christmas card images of Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem on their donkey are usually portrayed as peaceful and joyful. Let's try to imagine what it might have really been like for this young couple. Mary and Joseph had endured many months of surprising and

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unsettling experiences and mixed emotions leading to their journey to Bethlehem. They were young and engaged to be married, so you can imagine the shock of being visited by an angel and told that Mary was going to have a baby, even though she was a virgin. God had chosen them to be the parents of the Saviour of the world. (Matthew 1:18-20, Luke 1:26-38) Can you imagine Mary's thoughts and feelings?

Despite their shock, uncertainty and concern they trusted and believed in the God who had been faithful throughout the history of their people. Mary was even able to say, "How my soul praises the Lord! How my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." (Luke 1:46-47)

While most pregnant women choose to stay fairly close to home around the time of the birthdate, Mary and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the Roman census. This was a 129km, week long, dangerous and difficult trip. Whether they walked or rode a donkey, imagine how difficult this trip was for them: cold weather, the fear and danger of encountering wild animals or bandits, the discomfort of spending nights under the stars and carrying all their food and water, as well as travelling along the long, dusty and winding road.

Imagine their discouragement and dismay to finally arrive in Bethlehem to find there was nowhere to stay except in a smelly stable. It was here that Mary gave birth to her baby.

We can imagine the joy and wonder that Mary and Joseph experienced as they cuddled this long awaited tiny baby, while at the same time wondering what the future would hold for the baby they named Jesus, because the angel had told them he would "save his people from their sins".

The joy of this first Christmas Day also continued with their first visitors. Surprisingly a group of rough and dirty shepherds arrived at the stable, excitedly looking for this special baby. Just like Joseph and Mary, the shepherds had an unexpected midnight visit from angels announcing good news of great joy - the birth of the Saviour and Messiah. They had travelled to Bethlehem to find this baby.

Although the shepherds were afraid and perplexed, they left the stable praising God for all they had seen. Mary treasured and pondered these things in her heart.

Mary and Joseph travelled obediently to Bethlehem and then later to Egypt, despite the uncertainty, fear and confusion, to bring fulfilment to God's promise of good news and great joy.

Like Mary and Joseph we too can experience the joy of the Lord as we journey towards Christmas, and in fact every day as we trust in our faithful and loving God. Through every experience we face - the joy & the challenges - we can experience the good news of great joy that the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus our Saviour gives. Jesus came into our world to demonstrate God's great love and forgiveness.

I pray this Christmas that we will all experience the good news of great joy, share our story and show the joy of God's love and mercy in kind and generous ways.

May the miracle of Christmas fill your heart with joy!

Home League Christmas Break-Up

Leanne Plon

Welcome

Song

Angels From The Realms of Glory, verse 1

Prayer

Grace

Tune 'Edelweiss'

Bless our friends, bless our food,
Come, O Lord and sit with us.
May our talk flow in peace,
Bring your love to surround us.
Friendship and peace,
May it bloom and grow,
Bloom and grow forever.
Bless our friends, bless our food,
Bless each one forever.

Lunch

Placemat: Find the Christmas items

Free printables for this can be found online (see resources)

Song

Silent Night, verses 1 & 3

Message

When I was thinking about the Home League breakup I kept thinking about the journeys that each person took to get to Bethlehem.

Mary when she was pregnant actually took two trips. I wonder if you have ever thought about these. Mary would have been very young and her first trip was to see her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth lived 85 miles away and it would have been about 3 or 4 days travelling over mountainous territory - and Mary was six months pregnant.

Mary's next trip was with Joseph and they travelled to Bethlehem. This trip would have taken 4 or 5 days. I wonder, where did they sleep at night? Can you imagine being close to giving birth and sleeping on the ground? The trip would have also been fraught with bandits, lions and bears that roamed that area.

In a book about Bible customs of the time, it is said that Mary wouldn't have been riding the donkey, that Joseph would have,

as this was the tradition of the time. So Mary walked the whole way. The last leg of the trip would have been the hardest, as from Jericho to Bethlehem is an uphill hike of 3,500 feet. Then in a stable Mary's baby is born.

The shepherds we are told were in a field nearby. So their journey wouldn't have been long. But they still had to go to find the Saviour. Their journey was fast and hurried and a journey of faith.

The journey for the wise men took about two years. I admire their commitment to the journey. Imagine riding a camel for two years. But their dedication led them to the Saviour. We have two more journeys to consider. First, the journey of God to earth. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the busyness of Christmas and think, I know what Christmas is about - but it is important for us to really take time to think about the fact that God Himself came to earth as a baby - human in every way so that He could die on a cross to save our sins.

Dessert & Tea & Coffee

Christmas Devotional – Journeys (see resources)

Game

Left Right Game (see resources) – ask each lady to bring a small gift – maybe up to the value of \$5. Then use this game to work out who gets each gift.

Thank you's

e.g. to those who have led during the year; welcomer; treasurer; person responsible for set-up; those responsible for recognising birthdays, preparing afternoon teas and arranging thank you gifts – and to all ladies who have attended and welcomed new people.

Game

Christmas Song - put song names in story (see resources)

Song

Away In A Manager

Thought

The last journey we have to think about is our journey. Some of us have been on our journey with Christ for a number of years, some of us are just starting out and some of us may have not taken that first step.

Think about your journey with Christ. Was it a short one, because you were privileged to be brought up in a home where Christ was the centre - so you, like the shepherds, didn't have far to go?

Was it a long one like the wise men? You may have taken years to wrestle with God and to work out what to believe.

And if you haven't started this journey we would like to invite you to come on this great journey with Christ. I can assure you that it is like no other and it is always interesting.

Let us pray.

Thought

Father God, When your precious Son became a tiny baby in a stable in Bethlehem in poverty and simplicity, you changed our world. As we imagine those surroundings, we join with the shepherds and the wise men in wonder and praise. We thank you for our material lives, praise you for our spiritual lives, and trust in you for our eternal life. Amen.

Resources

Placemat:

<http://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/family/activities/christmas/find-the-twelve-days-of-christmas1.html>

Christmas Devotional – Journeys

<http://wetpig.com/re-imagining-the-gospels-mary-visits-elizabeth/>

Left Right Game

<http://www.partygamecentral.com/games.php?gnm=863&flagtype=category&category=christmas&offset=30>

Christmas Song

http://home.hiwaay.net/~gkritina/ChristmasGames_Puzzles.html

Appendix: USB Contents

N.B. The number in the first column below refers to the page number of the article for which this document is a resource.

No.	Manual article	Resource on DVD
	God of the Journey Resource Manual	God of the Journey Resource Manual (entire manual as printed)
9	Discover, dream and grow	Certificate for goal setting workshop Goal setting sheet Journey of change Poem: All I want to be is me Ready Set Plan
11	A time of reflection	Buzzwords Journey response cards Introduction & personal story Leaders resources – links – set up The journey – final hand out
14	My travel guide through life	Max Lucado readings
30	My heart's door	Door photos Pamukkale photos Open the door picture Poem: May my heart always welcome your love Revelation 3:20 bookmark
36	In the midst of our circumstances	A journey of self-discovery
38	Journey prayer box	Beautiful broken shell instructions Colouring template Finger labyrinths Footprints business card Footprints postcard Grace suitcase Jesus carrying woman postcard My beautiful broken shell Paying attention leader resource Shell journal Suitcase
39	Feet	Feet expressions Foot words
46	It's more fun in the Philippines!	Competition – guess the language Competition 2 – match the language Scripture reading – Tagalog Things to consider if you're venturing overseas Welcome to the Family

51	Journey to my world: Eastern Europe	Europe print no text Europe print text
60	Fun with feathers	Word search BIRDS
62	Hearts	Heart card Heart to Heart competition with answers Heart to Heart competition without answers
67	Prayer personality	Sacred pathways survey
74	Dream the life you really want	Ways that God wants me to grow
77	Dream BIG!	Milky bath recipe
84	OTHERS	Encouragement card flip on long side Excerpt from book OTHERS by Chick Yuill Hello handout with answers Hello handout without answers I choose others pamphlet Matthew Henry commentary Romans 12 There is a world of difference There is no reward equal
89	Walking together with God	Food from around the world
92	Journey to true value	Personal story: Di Gluyas
97	Still vital: Seniors on Mission	Hold on – chorus handout Hold on – sheet music Resource bookmark
107	Journey through Scripture	20 quotes on journeying Journey through Scripture booklet
112	Excess baggage	Unjumble these names – luggage
121	Birthday	Celebrity heads Pictionary words
131	Christmas joy	10 Commandments for Christmas Background to song Joy to the World Christmas HL program Christmas Quiz

- Please note that the contents of the printed manual can also be found on the Mission Support Team Toolkit, <http://toolkit.salvos.org.au/toolkit/contributors/mission-team/>

IHQ Bible Studies 2017: Transformed into God's Image

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