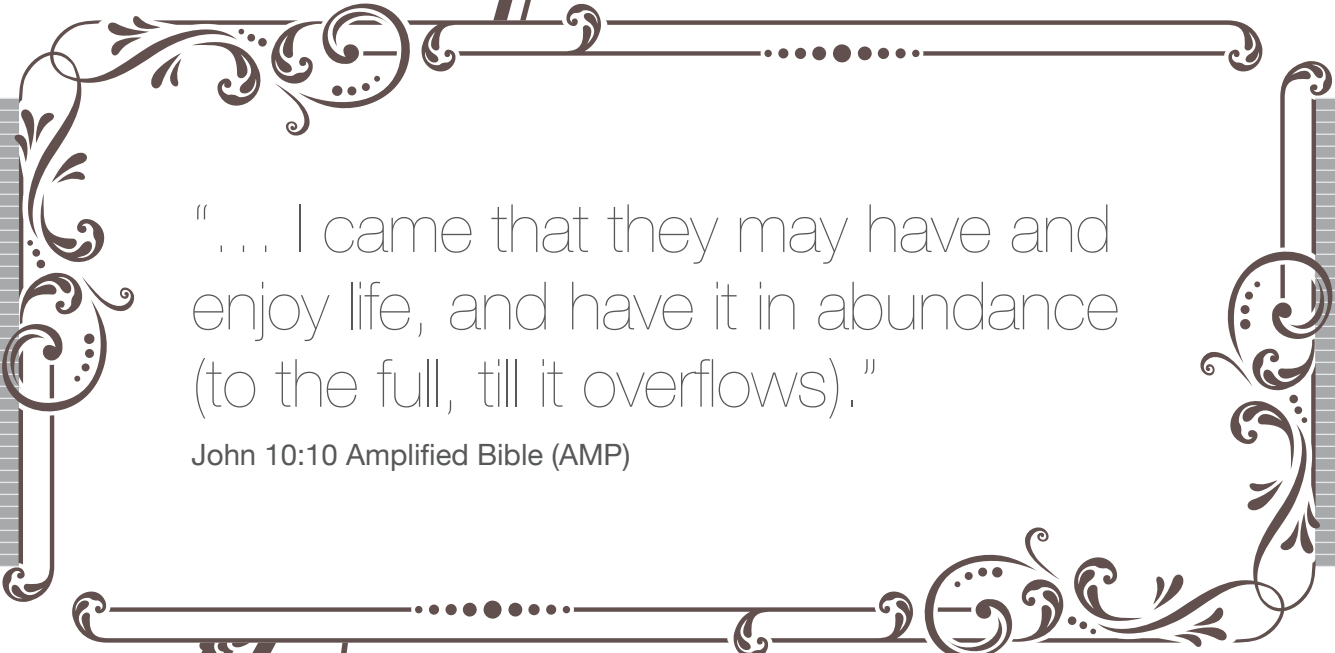




Abundance

2013 WOMEN'S MINISTRIES RESOURCE MANUAL

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark brown color, framing the top and right sides of the page.

“... I came that they may have and
enjoy life, and have it in abundance
(to the full, till it overflows).”

John 10:10 Amplified Bible (AMP)

Abundance is defined in the Webster's dictionary as...an extremely plentiful or oversufficient quantity or supply.

It was Jesus who said, **“I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).”** *John 10:10 Amplified Bible*

We were not created to just merely ‘get by’ each day, but to thrive in the life God has planned for us in knowing Jesus. God's desire is for all of us to live life abundantly.

Our grateful thanks to the women leaders of the Australia Eastern Territory for creatively bringing this truth alive to us through the pages in this manual.

It is our prayer that as you work through these pages with your women, you will experience afresh the blessing of our abundant God.

Joni Eareckson Tada said, **“God specialises in things fresh and first. His plans for you this year may outshine those of the past. He's preparing to fill your days with reasons to give Him praise.”**

That's our abundant God.

May you and those you lead, discover through the resources in this manual, all that God can do when you choose to embrace His abundant life.



Robyn Maxwell
Colonel
Territorial Secretary of Women's
Ministries

Message from Commissioner Jan Condon

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once again it is a pleasure to greet you and endorse our Resource Manual for 2013.

The theme of Abundance suggests plenty or a great amount – fullness or overflowing. You may hear people say there is an abundance of rain, or an abundance of wild flowers in the field, or even an abundance of wealth. In whatever sense the word is used, it indicates that there is plenty or more than enough.

We believe in, and serve, a God of abundance and Jesus himself said He came to give life abundant to those who accept him.

I really like Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 9 verse 8 which says – **“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”** (*New American Standard*)

We are so blessed to be part of God's family – the abundant God who continually lavishes His love, mercy and grace upon us. As you read through the pages of this resource book you will discover just how much God has provided for us in abundant ways.

I am truly grateful for the abundance of God in my life and as you minister to the women in your situation, I pray that the God of abundance will provide you with everything you need to help your women accept God's abundance and share it with others.

Sincere thanks to all who have contributed to this resource in any way. We appreciate your willingness to participate.

Enjoy God's abundance

Jan Condon
Commissioner
Territorial President of Women's Ministries



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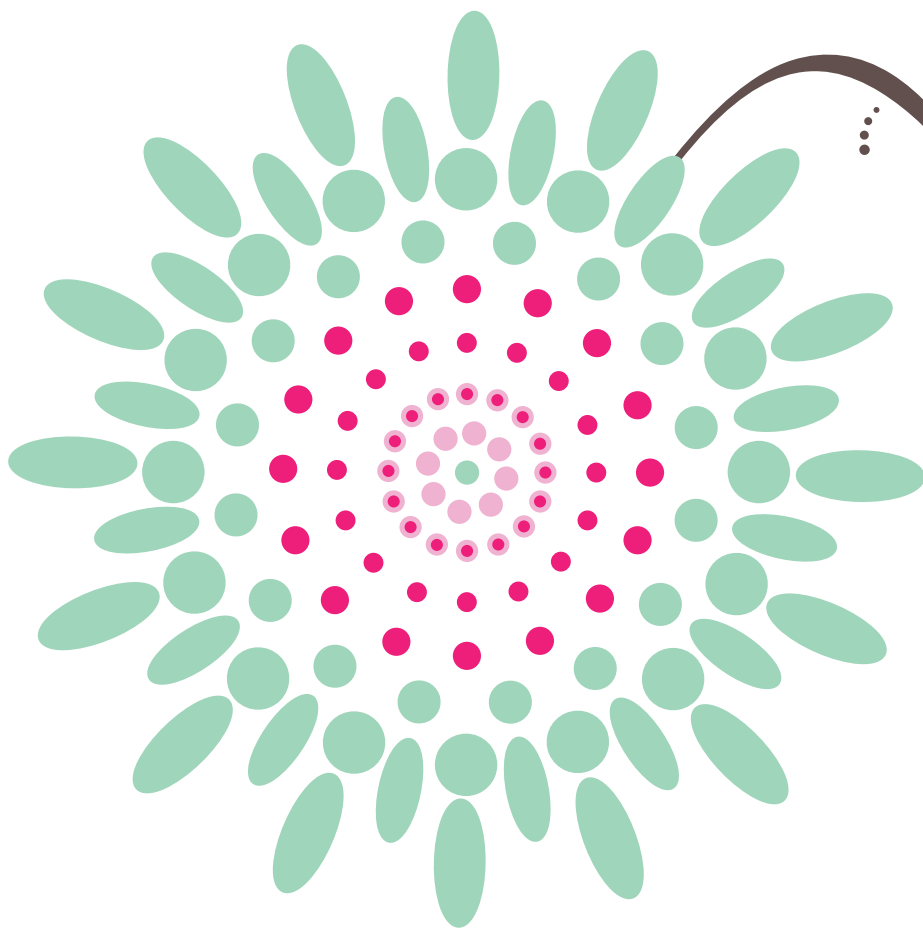
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"Bless the Lord,
O my soul; and
all that is within
me bless His holy
name!"

Psalm 103:1 RSV

Abundant God



Abundant God



Power

Major Ros Walker

Exodus 15:10 'You blew with all your might and the sea covered them. They sank like a lead weight in the majestic waters. Who compares with you among gods, O God? Who compares with your power, in holy majesty, in awesome praises, wonder-working God?'

Introduction

2012 was the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the 'Titanic'...

When anyone thinks of the Titanic we know that there wasn't a real good outcome.' The sinking of the Titanic with its living freight has created a wail of sorrow throughout the civilized world. The idea of 1522 lives being lost through the sinking of one ship is perfectly appalling.' (The Titanic's Last Hero' Ambassador Pub.1998 p.11) There have been movies made, TV shows, documentaries, books published – all giving accounts of stories of peoples' lives, 'heroes', cowards, engineering faults and victories. But, whatever the story –we all know the outcome.

Décor

19th Century Dress (Edwardian) – elaborate bustled dresses – elaborate place settings – Oceanic artefacts – boats – etc. Large posters of Titanic etc.

Menu (See CD)

Ten course meal as served in the 1st class saloon of the RMS Titanic on the 14th April, 1912. Maybe select parts of the menu to share.

Handout (See CD)

Story (See CD)

Competition (see CD)

Show clip of Titanic movie.

The movie 'Titanic' gives an incredible glimpse into that horrible night. The great unknown of the sea – its depths – there is so much unknown. Wealthy men around the world are racing to be the first human to reach the bottom of the sea where it is kilometres deep – there is still so much more to be discovered - so much mystery.

Those people that travelled on the Titanic would have thought they were pretty special. They were! The immense power of the unsinkable '**Titanic**' – the incredible force of the created iceberg – the incredible magnificence of the Creator. Who compares with the power and majesty of God? No one and nothing!

We know the outcome of the 'Titanic' – we will never know each individual story. But, I wonder, do you recognize who God is for yourself? We do not know our 'outcome' in earthly matters. How we will finish up – only the Lord knows!! But, we know that God does and we can know whether we are on the 'Saved' or the 'lost' list. John Harper knew with a certainty that He was God's own – saved by grace – living an abundant life in Him. We too, can know, without a doubt, that we are God's own – that we are on the 'saved' list – Jesus Christ died for you and me – his act of grace – we will never completely understand, but we can understand the Word of promise and future given to us by Christ.

The people that travelled on the Titanic – from 1st to 3rd class, would have recognized that ship was one of abundance. There was an abundance of food, opulent décor and staff – the most marvellous ship ever made. Our lives can be abundantly full without the need for always searching for 'more'. Abundance is found in God who is all powerful; there is nothing that is greater than him. No circumstance, no situation. God's greatest act of power is love.

Abundance - a·bun·dance - definition

1. An extremely plentiful or oversufficient quantity or supply: *an abundance of grain*.
2. Overflowing fullness: *abundance of the heart*.
3. Affluence; wealth: *the enjoyment of abundance*.
4. *Physics, Chemistry* .the number of atoms of one isotope of an element divided by the total number of atoms in a mixture of the isotopes.

Recognising who God is

This is an incredible ask. But we can see Him in Jesus, we can see Him in His creation, we can see Him in others and others can see Him in you.

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Generous God

Captain Di Gluyas

Introduction

What do you think about God's generosity

YouTube clip

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8fwA5lqqJw&feature=youtu_gdata_player

Décor

The colour purple denotes richness and royalty.

On the main table perhaps have a small cross with purple satin wrapped around the cross beam at the top and flowing onto the table or even the floor. You may want to decorate with a larger cross at the front of the room using the same effect. On the material attach words meaning generous in gold lettering such as: Lavish, free, bountiful, abundant, rich, overflowing, full, ample, copious, unselfish, big-hearted

Also on the table you could have a basket overflowing with bread/rolls/Turkish bread.

You could also have pictures of things in life that God lavishly pours onto us scattered throughout the room. For example: nature, family, friends, food, shelter, love, etc.

Copies of the poem could be printed and laminated for each person.

Perhaps serve morning tea: scones with lashings/generous servings of cream!

Scripture

Romans 11:33-36 (MSG)

Having contemplated God's great plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, all Paul could do was sing a song of praise. Only a God as wise as our God could take the fall of Israel and turn it into salvation for the world!

Songs (Praise)

This is my Father's world
Our God is an awesome God

HLSB/117
Richard Mullins
Hillsong United

How great is our God
How great thou art
Indescribable
For all you've done
Count your blessings

Chris Tomlin
HLSB/80
Chris Tomlin
Reuben Morgan Hillsong
HLSB/129



Abundant God

Sharing

What do I think about God's generosity? (ask ladies to share)

God's Generosity by Henri Nouwen
May 5, 2010 in Christian Life, In my Opinion, Inspiration

Henry Nouwen the now deceased Catholic Theologian wrote, "God is a God of abundance, not a god of scarcity. Jesus reveals to us God's abundance when he offers so much bread to the people that there are twelve large baskets with leftover scraps (see John 6:5-15), and when he makes his disciples catch so many fish that their boat nearly sinks (Luke 5:1-7). God doesn't give us just enough. God gives us more than enough: more bread and fish than we can eat, more love than we dared to ask for.

God is a generous giver, but we can only see and enjoy God's generosity when we love God with all of our heart, mind and strength. As long as we say, "I will love you, God, but first show me your generosity," we will remain distant from God and unable to experience what God truly wants to give us, which is life and life in abundance."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3NuzEpcERE&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Play

YouTube Clip - Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir "More than enough."

Guest

Invite a special guest from either a Salvation Army Social Justice Centre/Kairos prison ministry/or other community Social Justice group to speak on what they are doing and ask what your group can do to generously bless the people they are helping. Ask how you can specifically help make a difference.

1. Prepare this gift in advance by having already received ideas from the visiting group.
2. Announce on the day ways in which your group can help make a difference - give them a time frame of when gifts etc need to be brought in.

If you are unable to have a guest come to speak, play this powerful story "Miracle at Franklin."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXkyE_Cgru0&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Scripture

Philemon 1:6-7 (NLT)

Gather some information on a Salvation Army Centre or Service or another community group or service that is making a difference in the lives of others.

Think of a way your group could be generous in blessing others.

Songs

Take my life	HLSB/98
I serve a risen Saviour	HLSB/47
In our Home League Army	HLSB/44
Give thanks	Don Moen
Blessed be your name	NEWSBOYS

Quiz (See CD)

Thought (See CD)

Poem (See CD)

Play

YouTube Clip - Pasadena Songsters "Calvary is the Sea."

Prayer

Final Song

Blessed be the Lord God Almighty
Maranatha Singers

Or play: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RjLEcomNcY&feature=youtube_gdata_player

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A Faithful Friend

Captain Sandy Hogg

Scripture

Deuteronomy 7:9 (NLT)

Décor

Ask ladies to bring photos of themselves with a friend (not spouse or family) and display these around the room or on a table out the front.

Songs

HLSB Song 25	Great is thy faithfulness
HLSB Song 79	O Jesus, I have promised
HLSB Song 125	What a friend we have in Jesus
HLSB Song 72	Now thank we all our God
Forever	Chris Tomlin (CCLI Song Number 3148428)
Draw me Close	Kelly Carpenter (CCLI Song Number 1459484)

Activities

Sharing: Ask the ladies to share about the photos they have brought (See décor), or to share about a childhood friend/school friend.

Competition: Complete the famous duos:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Simon & G_____ | (Garfunkel) |
| 2. Sonny & C____ | (Cher) |
| 3. Ginger Rogers & F____ A_____ | (Fred Astaire) |
| 4. Romeo & J_____ | (Juliet) |
| 5. Tweety Bird & S_____ | (Sylvester) |
| 6. Abbott & C_____ | (Costello) |
| 7. Chip & D____ | (Dale) |
| 8. Mario & L_____ | (Luigi) |
| 9. Kath & K____ | (Kim) |
| 10. George & M_____ | (Mildred) |

Competition

Make as many words of 3 or more letters out of the word 'faithfulness' as you can in a set time (alternatively 'friendship'). Each letter may only be used once per word, and proper nouns are not accepted. Give a prize to the person with the most words.

Alternate competition

The old classic – see who can rip a Mintie wrapper into the longest snake-like piece of paper without ripping it. (Draw on the Minties catch-cry – "It's times like these you need Minties" and relate it to the times you need a good friend).

Devotional

Two men were out hunting in the northern U.S. Suddenly one yelled and the other looked up to see a grizzly charging them. The first started to frantically put on his runners and his friend anxiously asked, "What are you doing? Don't you know you can't outrun a grizzly bear?"

"I don't have to outrun a grizzly. I just have to outrun you!"

In times like these, you find out who your real friends are! A true friend is one who stands by you no matter what – one who is faithful.

Whether you have had one faithful friend your whole life, whether you seem to have friends for a season or if you seem to struggle to make friends, let's remember the one who we can all call friend. A friend who will remain faithful to us no matter what... God himself.

Deuteronomy 7:9 says, "Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands." (NLT)

Who is God? He is the only One who we can be absolutely certain will never let us down. He is the one friend who will absolutely, positively keep His promises to us. He is the one friend who we can count on to love and provide for us no matter what else happens. Why? He is faithful.

He made a promise – a covenant – to Israel that He would lavish His love on those who love Him and obey His commands – and He does! If you want to find a friend who will always be there for you, who will love you no matter what, who will continually support you and who will never fail you, look no further than God Himself – He's the best friend you'll ever have!

Having a friend like this will surely give us a much more abundant life.

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Abundant Grace

Captain Robyn Black

Preparation

Decorate with the 7 colours of the rainbow. Put brightly coloured cloths on the tables, bowls of coloured lollies, like Smarties, jellybeans or M & M's, rainbow coloured cupcakes. Put up pictures of rainbows, rainbow roses, rainbow lorikeets, and encourage the women to wear bright colours. Big rainbow on butcher's paper or on a white board.

Welcome and introduce theme

Today we celebrate the abundant Grace of God.

John 1:14-17 (J B Phillips)

"So the word of God became a human being and lived among us. We saw his splendour (the splendour as of a father's only son), full of grace and truth... Indeed, every one of us has shared in his riches—there is a grace in our lives because of His grace. For while the Law was given by Moses, love and truth came through Jesus Christ".

There is grace in our lives because of His grace. That's fantastic news. Jesus, Emmanuel, lived among us. We rejoice because we have seen the splendour of the King, we have seen His incredible grace and truth.

Songs

SASB 37	How great thou art
HC 157	How great is our God
SASB 579	He giveth more grace
Song	Amazing grace (my chains are gone)
SASB 576	God of comfort and compassion
The Source 329	The Power of Your Love

Prayer

The Many Colours of Grace

There's a reason that we have the colours of the rainbow in this room today. The Apostle Peter wrote to the followers of Jesus, encouraging them in very practical terms about how to live this new life of grace, found in Jesus.

"Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully." (1Peter 4:7-9 The Message).

Then he went on

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God". 1 Peter 4:10 (NKJV)

The word 'Manifold' means 'many colours' or 'various colours'. If you have an email address, you may have been forwarded a picture of the Rainbow Rose (show a picture of a Rainbow Rose). The Rainbow Rose starts off as a white rose, the stem is split at the bottom and each part of the stem is left to sit in different coloured dye. As the rose begins to bloom, the various colours are absorbed up the stem and into the petal. The rainbow roses are intriguing, unique and vivid – although not everyone would say that they are beautiful! Just like this multi coloured rose, Peter says that God's grace is varied and multi- faceted.

The word grace means a blessing, or a kindness or favour. So God's blessing and kindness to us is diverse and fits every situation, circumstance and person. We're all different and God's grace and blessing, is as varied as we are!

Peter also says that we are to minister this grace or blessing, to one another. That is, we are not to be the stopping point of God's grace, but the starting point for others of the grace of God. Today we'll look at just a few areas where we experience the multi-faceted grace of God.

Content (See CD)

Write the thoughts attached in document titled 'Colours of the Rainbow'.

Template for rainbow also on CD

My Beloved (See CD)

Print and present to guests

Prayer and Benediction

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God is Creator

Major Leanne Lock

A. The Creation Story Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Use the senses of sight, touch, smell and hearing, (and taste if appropriate) to get in tune with being a creator and perhaps consider God's thoughts as He created: what does it feel like to be creating something? Consider the potential of the raw materials. What does it feel like to complete the task? Consider the frustrations and adjustments during the process of creating. Could these have been a reality for God too?

Suggestion: for very new Christians in your groups, have a discussion about the various theories on how the world was created and present the Creation Story.

Suggestion: when planning your event/activity, be intentional about using it to build relationships /disciple new Christians/share Jesus with the unsaved/journey with and help more mature Christians grow in their faith.

Activities (See CD)

B. God's recognition of me Psalm 139

In this Psalm, David acknowledges several things about our Creator God:

1. God has intimate knowledge – we have a great Creator who has intricately made us and knows every part of us (body, mind and soul).
2. God is always present – wherever we go, God is there.
3. Nothing is hidden from God's sight – we cannot hide from God.

It is to our benefit that God pays special attention to us. What are those benefits?

Ideas:

Use Psalm 139 as a Devotional at the end of Craft nights/days.

Use Psalm 139 with the Creation theme as a basis for Bible Study, Home League.

C. No Missing Pieces

You will need a large picture/copy of a beautiful scene (like those painted by the French Impressionists or photographed by Ken Duncan). Cut a jigsaw puzzle piece (out of the centre or nearby to make the picture incomplete. Keep the piece to use in the Devotional.



Abundant God

Alternately, provide each attendee with a small individual picture. *Note: for those who are IT savvy it may be possible to use Photoshop or some other application to create a picture with a puzzle piece missing, for use in Power Point.*

You might like to have a few boxes of jigsaw puzzles (scenic pictures) on display.

Genesis 2:15-25

Jigsaw puzzles are a wonderful activity to get engrossed in, if you like that sort of thing. Some people sit for hours and find it quite a relaxing past time. Others like to walk past an incomplete puzzle and add a few pieces now and then. Still others like to complete a puzzle in one sitting.

Once upon a time, we had only the flat puzzles. Today we have 3 dimensional puzzles and puzzles with no flat edges or borders. We also have a wide range of puzzles: children's puzzles, educational puzzles, movie themes, photographic landscapes, copies of famous paintings, world maps.

500, 600, 1000 piece puzzles often call for a group effort with some people working on the borders, others working on the sky, still others working on a particular part such as a house, boat or animal.

There is a feeling of great satisfaction as the last piece is positioned in the puzzle and we stand back and view our handiwork...only to discover a tiny piece missing!

In Genesis 2:7-8 we read that God created the first man and placed him in the garden to live. However it seems there was something missing. God had spent 6 days creating and fashioning a beautiful world full of amazing plants together with an incredible assortment of animals, and yet His creation was not complete. Not complete until He made the first woman!

Dianne Neal Matthews, in her devotional book 'The One Year Women of The Bible', says: *"Eve was the crowning touch to God's perfect creation. Designed and shaped by God's hand, her femininity perfectly complemented everything he had made. Adam took one look at Eve and exclaimed, "At last!" God surveyed his finished work and could now say that it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31).*

Neal Matthews continues: *"God designed women to bring a special kind of beauty to the world. We are created in God's image, and we testify to his glory in a unique way as we embrace feminine traits of nurturing, sensitivity, compassion, and creativity. We are also fashioned to have a close relationship with our Creator. Until we know him*

personally, we are missing the vital piece that completes us, no matter how full our lives may seem. Even if we look as beautiful as Monet painting, without a relationship with our Creator we have an empty space near the centre of our being, right where our heart is."

Ephesians 3:19 says 'You will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.' (New living Translation) and, from The Message...take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! **Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.** (Eph 3:18-19)

Being fashioned to have a close relationship with our Creator means we were meant to live full or abundant lives; lives filled with the abundance of God.

No missing pieces!!

Source for 'No Missing Pieces': *The One Year Women of the Bible, Dianne Neal Matthews, Tyndale House Publishers Inc, Illinois, 2007, page 1 'The Crowning Touch'.*

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Wonder / Miraculous

Lt-Colonel Miriam Gluyas

Decor

Pictures and objects to be placed around the room before the meeting, which would represent beauty, splendour, wonder and miraculous. Pictures, toys, objects.

Songs

The Source 688 SASB 19	Give thanks to the Lord for He is good Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation
HC 157 SASB 37	How great is our God How great Thou art.
The Source 615 SASB 3	Agnes Dei All people that on earth do dwell

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVFzxazTQNM>

Scripture (See CD for Handout of Psalm 111)

Psalm 111 – The Message

1. Give thanks to God with everything I've got
A-Z; words that describe God. Ask the ladies to call out, one after the other, attributes that start with the letter, A, B, C... right through to Z eg A might be "awesome" or "Abba (Father), B might be Beloved etc.

To think through... how might I live a life of praise?

2. God's works are great... splendour and beauty mark his craft

Pictures or objects that speak of beauty and splendour that have been placed around the room. Ask the ladies to choose one, which would represent to them, something of God's splendour and beauty? Ask them to share their thoughts with the group

To think through.....how might beauty mark my life?

3. My God is/does

(Choose ladies before the day, and ask them to share for two minutes each on one of the following, and how God has been this to them, or done something for them, in one of the areas below...or the leader can share on each/or some of these as the talk)

- Generous
- Miracles
- Grace
- Love
- Promises
- Truth
- Justice
- Personal
- Holy
- Worthy of respect

To think through....how might I live a life like that of Jesus?

4. The good life begins in the fear of God... do this and you will know the blessings of God

What does this mean?

Reverence and awe

To take our relationship with Him seriously

To think through....what does it mean to take my relationship with Jesus seriously...a love relationship?

5. Hallelujah!

"A shout or song of praise to God"

Finish with prayers of praise, or as your prayer of praise, quote the verse of a song or chorus, and give thanks to your God

To think through...What is my shout of praise today?

Devotion

God is the God of wonder and the miraculous.

He is above all and over all and is not limited by time and space. He is far beyond our comprehension.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbTMT6SCn3Y>

(Please note this goes for 49 minutes)

Benediction

Read the Psalm again. Whenever there is the word "He", replace it with "My God"

.....



Metaphors of Mercy

Major Marie-Louise Craig

Aim

The aim of this meeting is to show that God's mercy is so abundant and so amazing that it is hard to comprehend and so it is often described using metaphors. Although the metaphors in Psalm 145:8 are in Hebrew, with explanation they can help us to recognize God as the God of mercy.

Décor (See CD)

Song (For suggestions see the resources)

Bible reading

Psalm 145

(This psalm can be read formally, either by one person or responsively by the group. Alternatively, you can give the group time to read it quietly in a time of reflection with appropriate music in the background. Ask what verse particularly appealed to them, then ask them to read that particular verse out loud with the leader when the leader reaches that verse. The leader then reads the Psalm out loud and the ladies read their particular verse or verses with her when she gets to it.)

Prayer

Fun with metaphors

(See the explanation in the Resources. There is also a list of metaphors and ways to have fun with them in the Resources.)

Song

Metaphors of mercy

In the Psalm we read in verse 8 that "the LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." That is from the NRSV. From the Message it says, "God is all mercy and grace—not quick to anger, he is rich in love."

1. God has long nostrils.

Psalm 145:8 can be translated literally from the Hebrew as, "Gracious and compassionate is the Lord; long of nostrils and great of loving kindness." What on earth is the psalmist talking about? Well, you guessed it. We are dealing with a metaphor. It is a metaphor of mercy and when it used to describe God it is nearly always connected to the phrase "and abounding in loving kindness." Only in this psalm is it connected to "and great of loving kindness," which comes to the same thing so most English translations leave it as "abounding in loving kindness."

So what is this metaphor we are dealing with? Well, it started with another metaphor which literally translated is "his nose kindled" or "his nose burned." It means that the person whose nose is burning is angry. When this is used to describe God, it means God, who doesn't have a nose because he is a spirit, is angry and the result is not pretty (see Exodus 32:10; Numbers 11:1, 10, 33; Numbers 12:9-10 as examples).

This led then to another metaphor, "God turned away from his burning nose." So we see in the Exodus story where "God's nose burned against the people" that Moses asks God to "turn away from your burning nose." In Deuteronomy 13:17 it says, "Do not let anything devoted to destruction stick to your hand, so that the LORD may turn away from his burning nose and show you compassion, and in his compassion multiply you, as he swore to your ancestors." The metaphor is usually translated into English as "fierce wrath" or "burning anger" or something like that. So when God turns from his burning nose, he is turning away from his fierce anger, that is, he is choosing not to act on his anger. He is choosing to be merciful and not punish.

In our verse we find a further development of the idea. The word for nose has now become a bound metaphor and so when a Hebrew wants to say that part of God's character is to be long suffering or slow to anger, they use the word "nostrils" which is the dual form of the word nose in Hebrew, and they say that the nostrils are long. So God has long nostrils.

This is the way this psalm describes God, God has long nostrils. God is a long way from his anger. He takes a long time to get angry. When God is angry, punishment follows, but when God is a long way from his anger, mercy is the result.

2. God is womb-like.

There is another metaphor in this verse that is not so easy to see in the English translations. So let me give you another version of the verse: "The Lord is gracious and like a woman's womb; long of nostrils/slow to anger and great of loving kindness."

The adjective that is usually translated "merciful, compassionate" comes from the Hebrew verb meaning "to love and cherish" and the Hebrew noun meaning "womb." The whole idea is connected to the relationship a mother has to her child. How often mothers show mercy to their child, when nobody else does. God is like this. He shows mercy when no one else will. His nature is to be merciful, womb-like.

This interesting Hebrew adjective is only used to describe God, except in one place where it is used to describe a righteous person who fears God and delights in his commandments (Ps 112:4) and so displays God's characteristics in their own lives.

Not only is it mostly used to describe God, but in all but two places it is connected to the adjective "gracious." Graciousness and mercy are connected because grace leads to mercy.

3. *The overall effect of the verse.*

So what we have now is a description of God that goes like this: "The Lord is gracious and womb-like, long of nostril and great in loving kindness." (I haven't gone into the meaning of the words that lead to the translations "gracious" and "loving kindness." They are huge words in Hebrew, full of ideas too big for us. That will have to wait for another time. Today we are focusing on the idea of mercy, which has its foundation in God's graciousness and kindness.) It is important to realize that this description of God became a formula for describing God's mercy. The complete phrase occurs 7 times in the Old Testament, the first part occurs by itself another 4 times and the second part is found by itself once.

Within this verse we have another poetic device happening. It is called parallelism and it works like this. The first half of the verse is restated in the second half of the verse but in the opposite order. So in the first half of the verse we have "gracious and merciful" and in the second half "slow to anger and great in loving kindness." The ideas of "gracious" and "great in loving kindness" are matched, and the ideas of "merciful" and "slow to anger" are matched. In a sense one half of the verse explains the other or elaborates on the other.

So, using the pictures that the metaphors give us, we can say that God's "womb-likeness" leads him to have "long nostrils." Isn't that the kind of God you want? A God who is like a mother in his mercy, who is long suffering and slow to become angry? I pray that you might recognize this God as your God.

"The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in loving kindness."

Affirmation

Ephesians 2:1-10

Song

Benediction

From Psalm 145

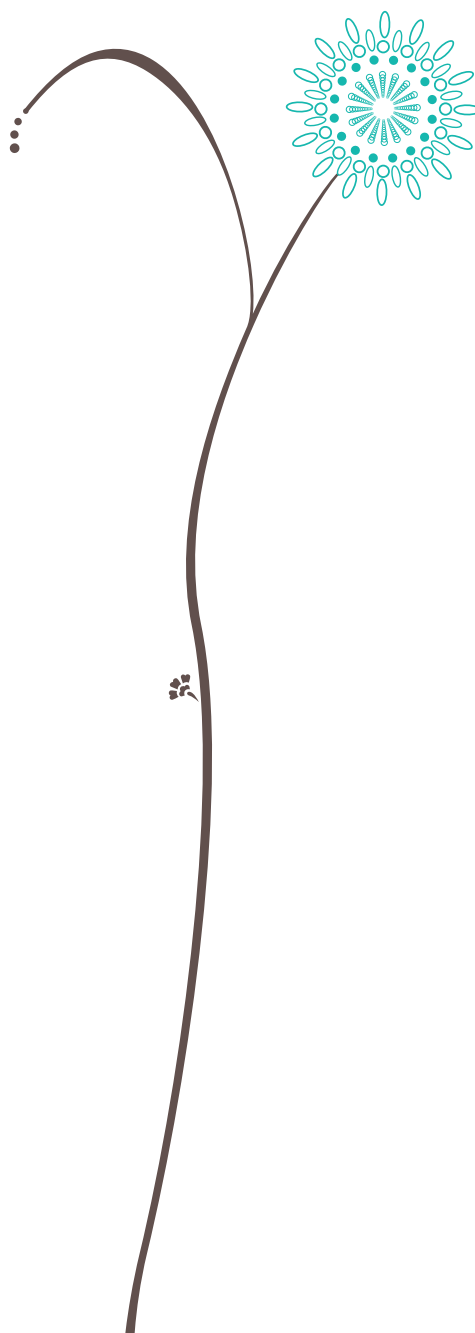
"The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

14 The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down."

Therefore, look to the Lord!

Resources (See CD)

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Forgiveness

Major Karan Ross

Psalm 85:2 'O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help' (NLT)

Décor

Table set up with a simple free standing cross on it. White table cloth and a red cloth, flowing out from under the cross and spreading out across the table.

Introduction

This resource manual is looking at "Abundance" which comes to us when we are forgiven. (see CD first slide of Power point). This outline focuses on stories from areas where The Salvation Army offers sponsorship

Song

- 214 SASB He came to give us life (see CD Power Point slide 2 - 3)
- 380 SASB Praise God for what he's done for me (see CD 7PowerPoint Slides 6 - 7)

The words of Song 274 by General John Gowans combines the two thoughts of God giving us 'life in all its fullness' – living abundantly which is possible when we are forgiven.

Forgiven

To have an abundant life – we need to be forgiven and to forgive

(See CD Power Point slide 4)

God has given us the promise in Psalm 103:3 (see CD Power Point slide 5)

Not being forgiven and/or not being prepared to forgive can leave us with an unease which robs us of being able to live abundantly.

Some of the causes of this unease can be ... being insensitive to others and their circumstances. Being forgiven expands our world and helps us to give.

The active step, which can mean we are the answer to part of these prayers, is that we can assist financially or possibly practically to help educate the women and girls to make them less vulnerable. Schooling is vital to break the cycle of poverty. It gives opportunities for employment and higher education which can lead to positions where they would be able, to be influential in politics and business. Our financial assistance is needed in providing additional programs which teach women and girls about the dangers of human traffickers, HIV/Aids, chemical dependency and addiction, and domestic violence.

Stories from countries where we assist with sponsorship

Malacca (see CD Power Point slide 8)

"Two students, Jeevan (11) and Yamuna (7) both siblings have been attending the Corps community centre since early 2009. The children come from a very poor family and often went hungry. The staff soon found out that the centre meal was their first and only meal for the day. The earnings of the parents were all taken away by loan sharks.

After receiving the care given by the staff, the siblings shared with their parents how they were taught personal care (showering, keeping themselves clean), morals and discipline, good meals provided, safer supervision and what they learnt at Joy hour.

Their parents were very touched by what they heard. There was a time when the mother cried due to the afflictions brought on them by loan sharks. The two children went to her and prayed for her. The mother saw the change in her children's lives and participated in the centre Christmas program and bible study group. Now she is a member of the church and by God's grace, the loan shark now only requires the principal amount per month and not the outrageous interest.

Forgive us for being insensitive to the plight of others. We have the ability to give – prayer and practical support and to financially support the centre

Story Literacy (See CD PowerPoint slide 9)

Forgive us for being insensitive to the plight of others. We have the ability to give – prayer support, practical support and to financially support literacy programs world wide

Story Cordial (See CD PowerPoint slide 10)

Forgive us for being insensitive to the plight of others. We have the ability to give – prayer support and to financially support sponsorship

Poem (See CD PowerPoint Slide 11)

By Major Graeme McClimont from his book Prayers in exile, written while he was living in PNG.

Story Kenya (See CD PowerPoint Slide 12)

Forgive us for being insensitive to the plight of others. We have the ability to give and share selflessly – prayer and financial support.

Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the Gospel of Jesus.

Psalm 85:2 'O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help' (See CD PowerPoint Slide 13)

God Abounding in Love

Christmas Meeting

Major Joanne Slater

Introduction

John 3:16 – 18

God's wonderful plan of Salvation for all mankind was motivated by this abundance of Love that He has for each of us. God knew what had to be done – that is why Jesus was born in a manger and died on a cross so that all mankind would be able to experience a relationship with Him now and for all eternity.

Love – Eternity – Abundance

There is no measure on God's love and a life of eternity with Him that it can bring.

Décor

Manger Scene – This is to be the focal point. "It is all about Jesus". Scatter hay or sugar cane mulch around an old handmade wooden crib. Then place a baby sized doll in a muslin fabric wrap inside the crib. If available, place a spotlight focused on it. Also, if you would like to expand this idea a little further, you may like to recreate the entry into where your group meets as a stable. Place items around the room that would reflect a stable theme for example – old tin bucket, lanterns, hay and a water trough. Table décor could be a little hay with lanterns in the middle. Ensure that there is no naked fire as this could be a severe fire hazard.

Gift Idea

If gifts are being given to your group, you may like to purchase a manger with Jesus in it as an ornament. These can be purchased from the Dollar Shop or Reject Shop for a reasonable price.

Songs

Christina Rossetti, 1885	Love came down at Christmas
SASB 77	Away in a manger
SASB 79	Come, thou long-expected Jesus

What is the origin of the Christmas Crib? (See CD)

Word Jumble (See CD)

Devotional

Ephesians 3:14-21

The theme of abundance brings with it a gentle reminder of how well God has and is providing for us physically but more so spiritually. It brings to mind a lot of words that describe abundance;

Plenty, enough, content, affluent, ample, bounty, thriving, and plethora, wealthy, copious, satisfied, sufficient, and comfortable.

A very large quantity of something. The state or condition of having a copious quantity of something. Plentifulness of the good things of life. The quantity or amount of something present in a particular area.

Think big...

Christmas really isn't about all the gifts, parties, lights, decorations – Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ about 2000 years ago. *It is all about Jesus in abundance!!* God gave abundantly so that we may live abundantly through His Son Jesus. Jesus was born so that He may give us an abundant life.

I like this particular meaning of the word abundant; "extraordinary unusual amount to overflowing". I am now picturing God doing this for you and me.

If we are buying a new home there are many optional extras you can get for the home like the style of the roof, facades, painting of the walls, carpets, tiles, doors, kitchen, bathrooms, theatre rooms, fire place and the list goes on and on and yes, all those extras will come at a cost. The abundant life that Jesus gives comes equipped with all the extras, at no extra cost. Jesus paid the full price to give believers the very best.

Some of the extras that come with an abundant life in Jesus are

The abundant life brings inner happiness, joy and peace. (John 14:27)

The abundant life brings a home in heaven with God our Heavenly Father. (John 14:3)

The abundant life brings a wonderful inheritance in Heaven. (1 Peter 1:4)

The abundant life brings eternal Security. (John 10:28)

The reason we celebrate Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Jesus who was born so that we may have eternal life. That is abundance.

Have you received God's Christmas gift of abundant life? I cannot imagine the cost of God's gift to us in His son Jesus. It came at a cost that is difficult to comprehend but God knew what was needed and we do know it was given with Love. It was a gift given for you, myself and all mankind for eternity.

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Recognising Who God Is

Bible Study

Fay Foster

Although God says He is our friend, we are not like 'mates' who are equal. God is not our equal. He is way beyond our understanding and his character and knowledge are way beyond what we can measure up to. He has power over us and over all creation.

See what the following verses tell us about God:

Isaiah 55:8-9

Job 36:26

Job 37:5

Yet, God says He wants us to know Him!

Jeremiah 24:7

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Ephesians 1:17

2 Peter 1:3

If God is beyond our understanding, yet wants us to know Him, how do we go about that? How can we know enough about Him to really have a relationship with Him?

The Bible gives us lots of statements and other clues to who God really is. Here are some of them:

God is the beginning and the end

Rev. 22:13

Rev. 1:8

Rev. 21:6

What do these verses tell us about God?

How does that make you feel?

What does Revelation 21:6 tell us God will do for us?

Are there ways that you see this happening in your life?

God is the creator of our universe and everything in it

Isaiah 42:5

Isaiah 40:28

It took energy and understanding to make our world and everything in it. What does Isaiah 40:28 tell us about God's energy and understanding?

Genesis 1:31 tells us, 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.' (NIV).

1 Timothy 6:17 adds that God 'richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment' (NIV).

Many of us love to spend time in God's creation. We find it refreshing, energising, beautiful and intriguing.

What attributes or characteristics of God do you see in His creation?

God is love and loving

1 John 4:7-8

Deuteronomy 7:9

Joel 2:13

Zephaniah 3:17

According to these verses, how does God show His love to us?

How do you feel about the fact that God takes delight in you?

Romans 8:39

Ephesians 3:16-19

Why do you think Paul prays that we will 'grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge'?

Who has been the person in your life who has shown you love most like God's love for us?

God is wonderful and amazing

Isaiah 28:29

Psalms 105:2

Exodus 15:11

Psalms 65:8

Job 5:9

Psalms 145:3-7

Psalms 139:14

Daniel 4:2

Joshua 3:5

Ephesians 3:20-21

Do you think God still does amazing things?

Have you experienced anything amazing from God?

What does it mean for you to 'consecrate yourself', so that you're ready when God does amazing things in your presence?

Have you ever thought of yourself as one of God's wonders? (Psalm 139:14)

God is faithful and righteous

Deuteronomy 32:4

Psalms 36:5

Psalms 89:14

Psalms 111:7

1 Corinthians 1:9

2 Thessalonians 3:3

1 Corinthians 10:13

1 John 1:9

These verses tell us so many ways that God is faithful to us!

He is faithful to his character – He does no wrong and all He does is perfect.

He is faithful in His love – it never fails.

We can rely on His faithfulness to us – he will never desert us.

Everything he says is true, and all his precepts can be trusted, (A precept is a command or direction on how we should act.)

He is faithful in calling us into fellowship with His son Jesus – this is a permanent relationship - He won't change His mind about this.

He is faithful in caring for us, strengthening us and protecting us from satan.

He is faithful in not allowing us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, and in making a way out for us.

He is faithful to forgive our sins and make us clean.

We can have huge security in the faithfulness of our God.

God is our defender, our guide and our refuge

Psalm 68:5
Deuteronomy 10:18
Deuteronomy 33:27
Psalm 9:9
Psalm 31:19
Psalm 59:16
Psalm 119:114
Psalm 25:9
Psalm 31:3
Isaiah 42:16

What does it mean to say that God is our refuge?
Have you ever consciously taken refuge in God?
How does God guide us?

God is kind and merciful

Psalm 145:8-9
Jeremiah 9:24
Jeremiah 31:3
Psalm 138:6
Luke 6:35
Ephesians 2:4-7
Isaiah 42:3

According to these verses, who is God kind to?
When have you been especially aware of God's kindness?

God is God, Unchanging and Forever

Daniel 4:3
Psalm 146:6
Lamentations 3:22-23.
Psalm 48:14
Psalm 73:24

When you think about 'forever', what comes to mind?
How do you feel about spending 'forever' with God?
'Forever' doesn't just apply to life after death – our eternal life with God has already started. What does that mean for you?

Getting to know God

Our main tool for knowing God, and knowing about Him, is His Word, the Bible. What other characteristics of God do you know about from reading his Word?

Other ways we might learn about God, and get to know Him better, are by:

Living in relationship with Him and being aware of the times He makes his attributes known to us;

Expecting to hear from Him, and taking notice when He does speak to us;

Enjoying His creation;

Meditating on His Word;

Worshipping Him – through song, prayer, praise, obedience and reflection;

Acting in ways that please Him; it is surprising how close to God we can feel when we know we are acting as He would want us to;

Serving others;

Being a friend to those who need one.

Which of these ways do you find help you get to know God more?

Can you think of other ways?

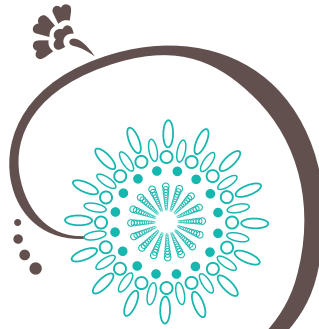
Will you make it part of your life's ambition to get to know God more?

Prayer

Our wonderful God, you are amazing. You are our creator, our guide, our refuge and defender. You are loving, kind and merciful to every person. You are alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, and you will never change.

Thank you that we find our security in you, and that with you we have eternal life, now and forever. Help us please God to not be afraid to delve deeper into your Word and into life with you. We thank you that your plans for us are good and right, and you will keep us forever in your love. Amen.

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"For we are His
workmanship, created
in Christ Jesus for good
works, which God has
prepared beforehand so
that we would walk in
them."

Ephesians 2:10 NASB

Abundant Identity

Made in the Image of God

Major Joanne Slater

Introduction

What does it mean that we are made in the image of God? Genesis 1:26-28 says we are created uniquely among all of God's creation as we have a physical body and a spiritual body. Having an "image or likeness" of God means, that we were created to resemble God. Adam did not resemble God as human. Scripture says that God is Spirit (John 4:24) and exists without a body. Adam did image the life of God as he was created in perfect health and was not subject to death. The image of God refers to the spiritual side of man. It is what sets us apart from the animal world. It is what allows us to relate with our Creator – we are created to resemble God. We are created in the image of God. That means that we are unlike anything else in all creation. (Let us embrace that thought with all of our heart.) We alone were given the capacity to know God and to love Him and to have Him know and love us in return.

Décor

Simple and elegant – white table cloth, fluffed pastel coloured organza, vase of flowers, tea lights and word cut outs of love, joy, peace, patience.

Recommended reading

Created in God's Image by Anthony Hoekema
Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren

Songs

SASB 389 There's a song that's ringing in my heart
SASB 512 My life must be Christ's broken bread
SASB 549 Once I thought I walked with Jesus

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-27
Galatians 5:22-23

Handout (See CD)

Clip

Chris Tomlin – Indescribable
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PTvr755V8s>

Devotional

What does it mean for us to be created in the Image of God? (Allow time for discussion as this will give you an understanding of your ladies thoughts and understanding of "Created in the image of God.")

It has been and still is God's desire for us to have a God fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into our conduct as God accurately reproduces His character in us (Ephesians 4:22).

The process of God creating us in His image through His son will take a lifetime to bring about. It won't happen overnight and at times we may feel discouraged and think "I am not growing – I am not maturing fast enough." Remember God created us and He will never give up on us. *"God who began a good work in us will bring it to the day of completion."* Philippians 1:6.

A wonderful example of the image of God is shown through Jesus and the fruit of the Spirit. Remembering God's image is not physical, it is spiritual (Galatians 5:22-23.). Many different things will happen throughout our lives to help us develop into the image of God. Let us look at a few...

Love: It is easy to love lovely people – God teaches us real love when we experience unlovely people –it really takes no effort to love people who are lovely and loving to you. Let us take a moment to think of someone who we may be struggling to love. Let us seek the Love we need to love that person the way God would have us - 1 John 3:18

Joy: Joy is something totally different to happiness. Happiness is something that we experience as a result of external circumstances. Joy is something we experience from within – internally. Joy is often internal despite our life circumstances. God teaches us real Joy when we learn to turn to and rely on Him in times when our faith is being tested - James 1:2-3

Peace: It is right there! You know that huge storm that has just hit – you know the one where everything seems to be going wrong and it does not appear to be getting any easier. It is right in the middle of these difficult times that we can learn peace. You may like to share a personal experience of this time and then allow a short time for your ladies to reflect on a time they experienced that sense of peace quietly - Isaiah 43:2

Patience: It's all about God's plan for our lives. Patience is something that can be very difficult to exercise. God does make us wait at times. We can often be in a hurry and God is not. God's timing is always perfect and He would like us to learn to trust Him. If we don't then we may miss part of the journey God had intended for us personally - James 1:3-4

Other fruit of the spirit are: kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. All of these qualities reflect the image of Jesus. Jesus is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These qualities will help us reflect the image of God.

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The Family of God

Major Christine Ivers

Introduction

It doesn't matter how old we are – from the tiniest baby to the oldest person here – we belong to a family. Families all have their peculiarities – large, small, functional, dysfunctional, close, distant, loving, can't stand each other, growing, dying off, adoptive, special needs, multicultural, singular with pets, multiple with pets, extended, related, not related. The list is extensive yet inclusive.

Secondary Idea

You might like to ask someone from your corps who is interested in genealogy to come and talk about family trees and the interesting connections and historical information which can arise from searching for your genealogy.

Décor

Photos of your families displayed as a gallery or on a table. Maybe purchase a few family decals, which are normally seen on car rear windows, from the newsagent. These could be used on cards, as an illustration of who constitutes a family, they could be enlarged and used on posters, cards etc.

These can be Google Image searched (link below).

http://www.google.com.au/search?tbm=isch&hl=en&source=hp&biw=1272&bih=819&q=family+decals&gbv=2&oq=family+decals&aq=f&aqi=g5g-m5&aql=&gs_l=img.3..0I5j0i5I5.1797.10641.0.11454.17.16.0.0.0.781.2421.3-1j0j1j2.4.0...0.0.sE67cSbyJkc

Scripture

Romans 8:16 (NIV)

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (See CD)

Songs

SASB 349	Now I belong to Jesus
Gaither	The family of God
HC 13	Majesty
HC 68	Just let me say
HC 89	Knowing You
HC 103	Blessed assurance

Competition (See CD)

Sharing

Share an interesting insight into your family. Perhaps you might like to show photos of them. Also fascinating to see who looks alike as well as sharing various character traits passed down through family members eg who is left handed, who has similar tastes in food, etc.

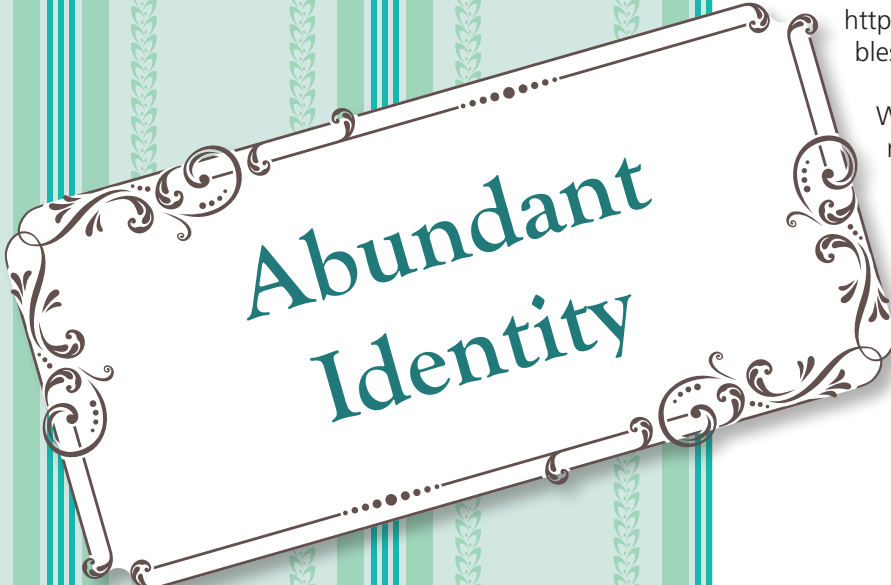
A Time to Reflect

What does your family look like? Take time to contemplate your family of origin.

Write down the members of your family and reflect on your position in the family. This may be a helpful exercise, it also maybe a painful exercise. Take a moment to think of each family member and pray for them. Take a moment and pray for yourself and where you fit in the family. Is there a special need within the family? Has there been a rift in the family? Are your family members scattered? Are they away from the Lord? Do they experience the wonder of belonging to the Family of God? Whatever the circumstance or need – bring it to the Lord.

To assist in this time of reflection perhaps there could be a bowl or box where the ladies could place their pieces of paper for intentional prayer. Perhaps a flat plate with tea lights could be made available so that the women could light a candle for their families or particular family members. By the end of this exercise the women could see that they belong to a wider family.





Devotional

As we have contemplated our families today whether this has been helpful or painful, we have an idea of what our families look like and our place within the family. The sad reality is that one day a valued family member will pass away and we are left with some beautiful and invaluable memories. However, society today dictates that when family members pass away, it is prudent to read the will and see what we have inherited. All too often this causes great stress within the family structure as one person has been left out of the will or someone else has been given more than was expected.

This is what happens within human families. Within the Family of God things change.

J.C Ryle has said:
The sons of God have got something within their hearts which tells them there is a relationship between themselves and God. They feel something which tells them that old things have passed away and all things have become new: that guilt is gone, that peace is restored, that heaven's door is open, and hell's door is shut. They have, in short, what the children of the world have not—a felt, positive, and reasonable hope. They have what Paul calls the "seal" and "deposit" of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13) <http://www.biblebb.com/files/ryle/pr18.htm>

Isn't that a great relationship to have? A relationship, which firstly says that we belong and secondly, gives us hope. Theodore L. Cuyler (1822-1909), American Pastor and Author said this:

You may not be able to leave your children a great inheritance, but day by day, you may be weaving coats for them which they will wear for all eternity.

http://www.bibleinsong.com/Promises/Temporal_blessings/Inheritance/Inheritance.htm

What a great legacy we can leave behind as members of the Family of God.

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Loved

Major Kelly Mulligan

Scripture

John 3:16

16 For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (NLT)

Décor

Pink hearts around the room and cards with words on them e.g. love, loved, cherished, adored, beautiful, precious, daughter, beloved.

Songs

O how He loves you and me
His banner over me is love

The Source 329 The power of His love
Boundless Love (Women of Faith – Boundless Love CD)

Word Search (See CD)

Devotions

John 3:16

Sharing

Ask the ladies to share stories of how they met their partners or of great love stories.

Devotions

The Greatest Love Story of all. God – He is always Love. His response is always Love

Like a great masterpiece is a gallery. Everyone may have a different opinion, different view and thoughts about the picture. Some will adore it, worship it, some will love it. Others will choose to ignore it, to not see any relevance or interest in it, some will hate it.

None of these opinions or views changes the picture. The frame remains the same, the picture remains the same. No matter what our thoughts, opinions, views or responses to God are; whether it is love, adoration, indifference, hate or scepticism – His response is always the same – Love.

The way we feel about God, and respond to Him cannot change who He is. It cannot change His character – which is Love. His response to us is always Love.

God does not change to fit the opinions, beliefs or responses of man (or woman). He always was, always is, and always will be Love.

Everything He has ever done, everything He will ever do – is out of Love –for us.

Oh, if only all men and women knew how much He loves them.

If we can know and understand just a fraction of how much He loves us – it would overwhelm us. I can't imagine how much it would change the world.

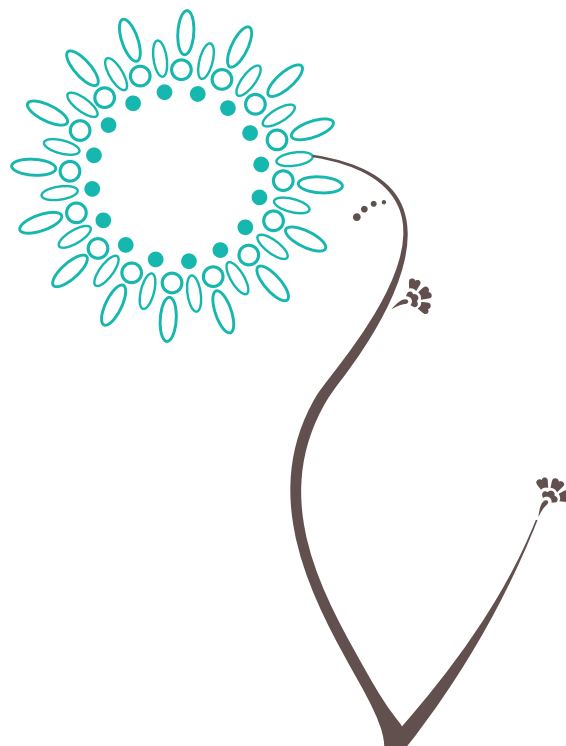
Overwhelming – boundless love – poured out for all mankind – for eternity. That is our God. That is the Greatest Love story ever told.

Gift / Craft (See CD)

On the CD you will find a series of 10 'Love Letters from God'. The set is very plain and can be printed onto coloured paper, 2 per page A5 size each. You can add borders and change fonts to change them as you want. As a simple gift they can be printed off, rolled into a scroll and tied with a ribbon to hand to the ladies after the meeting.

For a craftier role, print off the letters and purchase some cheap A5 size photo frames. Plain wooden frames or clear acrylic frames would work. Then you can get the ladies to decorate the border of the frames with paper cut-outs (from scrapbooking etc) or plastic / fabric flowers etc. Encourage them to be as creative as they like. When they have completed their frames you can hand them one of the letters to insert.

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Introduction

SLIDE 1 ACCEPTED

SLIDE 2 - MOVIE CLIP: Available at WingClips.com
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatball selected clip is entitled
"Real You."

Scene setup: Sam Sparks and Flint Lockwood have been hanging out for weeks and Flint has noticed that Sam hides the fact that she really understands science, instead opting for a persona that is clueless.

Showing this clip helps us to understand that we can be our true selves and do not need to disguise who we really are – accept yourself for who you are.

Quotes - SLIDES 3, 8, 17, 21, 22

These are quotes to be shown throughout the meeting.
They help us to think about being accepted.

Scripture Reading - SLIDES 4-6- Psalm 139: 13-18 New Living Translation

Song - SLIDE 7 - SASB 49 Have you ever stopped to think how God loves you?

Prayer - SLIDES 9-11 - The Serenity Prayer By Reinhold Niebuhr

Group or team activity - SLIDES 12-16

- Who am I?

3 slides have been prepared of well-known people. This activity can work in different ways.
A person is selected from the group and they face the audience. The well-known person's picture is placed on the screen. The selected person asks the group questions to help them guess who they are for eg. Am I male or female? Am I on TV? Am I a sporting person? It may be helpful to have a couple of hints that can help the person with their questioning if they get stuck.
Alternatively, the leader can give the group hints as to the well-known person's identity and the group guess who the person is – the picture is revealed.
You may choose a fourth person who is from the group and try to guess their identity, making up **SLIDE 17**.

Group Discussion – SLIDES 18-20

– Who am I? Do I accept who I am?

This discussion involves using two DVD clips from the TV series *The Vicar of Dibley*. These are available from youtube – search for The Vicar of Dibley and then the following two clips: *The Vicar of Dibley – Chocolate Fountain* and *The Vicar of Dibley - Geraldine and Darcy Bussell Perform "The Mirror"*

These clips will provoke much laughter, which helps in discussing some of the issues involved with being accepted. Depending upon the make up of your group lead the discussion to point out some of the following.

- We enjoy doing those things we are passionate about, or are good at.
- The things we are not so good at take more energy, but sometimes it is worth the effort to do those things.
- Regardless of what others think of me I am to love myself and be confident.
- My physical appearance shouldn't stop me from doing certain things – sometimes the benefits are beneficial to me.
- Allow yourself to receive from others
- Sometimes we need to laugh at ourselves

Songs - SLIDE 23 - SASB Chorus 173
I'm living my life for Jesus
SLIDES 24-30 - The Source 1722
You are my King (Amazing Love)

Words & Music By Billy James Foote© 1999
worshiptogether.com songs/adm by Kingswaysongs.com
Note: This second song can be shown by using the youtubeclip, however it is more impactful if sung.

Optional Sharing – SLIDE 31 – Personal Testimony

Thought – SLIDE 32

Sometimes encouragement comes in very unexpected ways. I was attending a Prayer training day and the participants were in two lines facing each other. The person opposite me had to share a word that would be God's encouragement to me.

"I want you to picture yourself as a sunflower" – that I could do. Then I was told, "Picture that sunflower in a field of sunflowers. All are seemingly identical except for one which was higher than all the others. That one standing higher than all the others is you!" **SLIDE 33**

I took that as God's special encouragement to me. I might think I'm just ordinary and like everyone else but, in God's eyes I'm the one who is accepted and who stands out! At least that's the message I took away from the day.

So today ladies I would ask you to do the same. You are that one special sunflower standing high above all others.

You are accepted. **SLIDE 34**

How do you know this? Listen to who you are.

SLIDE 35 I am God's child - John 1:12

SLIDE 36 I am God's masterpiece - Ephesians 2:10

SLIDE 37 As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus - John 15:15

SLIDE 38 I have been bought with a price, and I belong to God - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

SLIDE 39 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
- Colossians 1:13-14

SLIDE 40 I am complete in Christ - Colossians 2:9-10

SLIDE 41 I may approach God with freedom and
confidence - Ephesians 3:12

SLIDE 42 I have direct access to the throne of grace
through Jesus Christ - Hebrews 4:14-16

SLIDE 43 I am confident that God will complete the good
work He started in me –
Philippians 1:6

(For a more comprehensive list and additional scriptures
please see the book: Victory Over the Darkness: Realising
the Power of Your Identity in Christ
by Neil T. Anderson)

Song –SLIDE 44-49-Magnify 4 All that I am
Words & Music by William Himes © 1994 Hope Publishing
Company, Illinois

Prayer and Close – SLIDE 50

Handout – A postcard size handout has been prepared
to give out to the ladies with the accepted key points
and scriptures.

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Conquering Ones

Captain Melanie-Anne Holland

Scripture

Romans 8: 35, 37 – “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us”. (NIV)

Décor

You may like to make a display with camouflage netting and toy weapons of various styles (swords, guns, bows and arrows, armour and the like).

Introduction

While much is made of the differences between men and women, and the stereotypes that accompany such distinctions, we are becoming increasingly aware of how strong women truly are. Given the right circumstances, women will often fight for what they believe.

Do you believe that we were made to be warriors?

Connecting and Engaging

How strong are you? This is a challenge to find the strongest arm wrestler. Have an arm wrestling competition to establish who is the strongest in the room

Questions to consider together:

- How do we measure strength? Is it just physical?
- What do we use our strength for?
- Who are strong women that you admire?

Women Warriors

It is not lady-like to fight.
Or is it?

You may like to show a DVD clip of a female warrior. There are so many movies to choose from:

- Mulan
- Joan of Arc
- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

Through circumstances, many women in history have become warriors, taking to the battlefield for their convictions. Refer to the Resource CD for information sheet and powerpoint presentation.

Quiz

If your technology allows, there is a range of quizzes on the internet that allow people to work out what kind of a warrior they may be.



Abundant
Identity

Interview

If at all possible, it may be helpful to interview someone who has served in the armed forces, to explain how they perceive strength, and what it means to be a warrior in their perspective.

Reflection

While many of us will not be called upon to serve on the battlefield for our nation, there will be instances where we will need to fight.

There are times for all of us to take our stand for what is right.

Ecclesiastes 3:8 says,
(there is) *"a time to love and a time to hate,
A time for war and a time for peace"*.

The enemy, Satan, would want us to drift from Christ. His strategies include:

1. distortion – twisting truth
2. distraction – removing our focus
3. discouragement – damaging our hope
4. disunity – undermining our relationships with fellow warriors.

Paul, knowing this declared that nothing would come between him and his confidence in the Lord. His daily battles with the enemy would not deter him – hardship, trouble, persecution, famine, physical need, danger, violence – he knew that through Christ, he would prevail.

Paul said that those in Christ would be conquerors. The word conqueror is not passive. It means to overcome and defeat; to take control by force. You vanquish your enemy and emerge the winner.

What is our battlefield today? For some of us, that is easy to pinpoint. eg. my kids safety, the prejudice of a child's disability, unfair work conditions, world poverty, an environmental issue, for your family to stay together, persecution for faith in Christ, the war for good mental health, victory over addiction.

You, women, are more than conquerors through him (Jesus) who loved us!

Response

I would suggest the song, "In Christ Alone" for the value of the last verse.

The I-worship DVD is very helpful.

The women might want to name their battlefield in a time of sharing and prayer for each other.

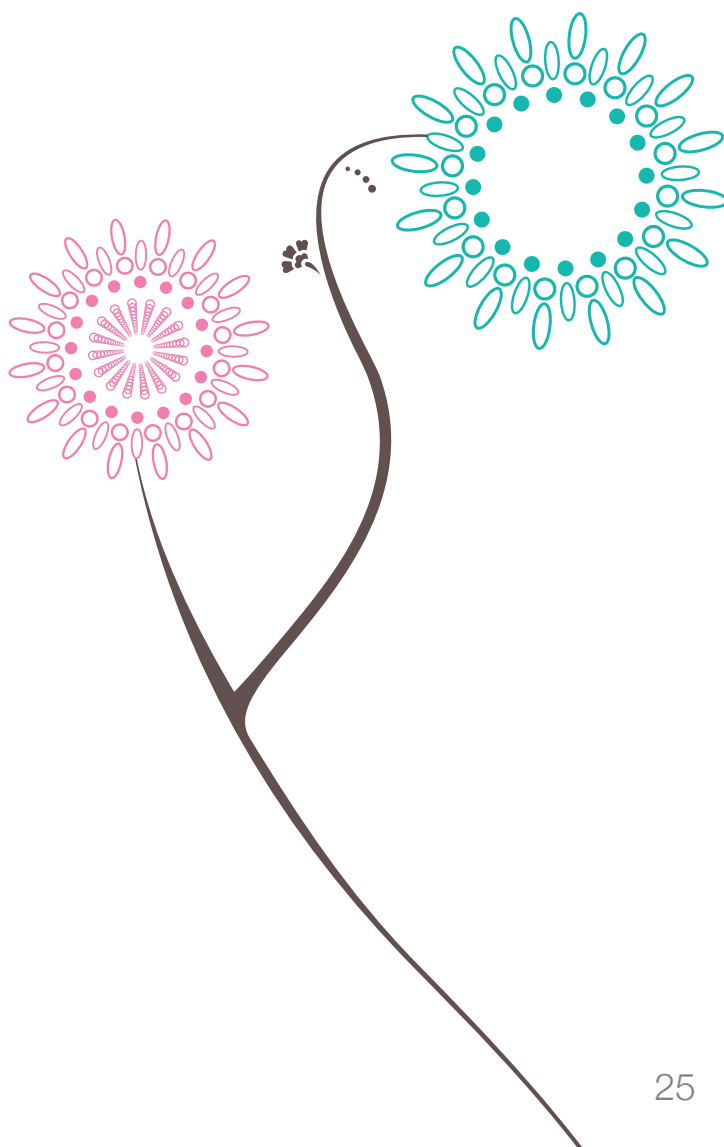
Songs

- Song 801 God's soldier marches as to war
(tune 62 – God's soldier)
- Song 814 Salvation is our motto
(tune 799 - Steadily forward march!)
- Song 820 We're a band that shall conquer the foe
(tune 508 – we shall win)

Activity

For something fun and empowering, you may like to paint your faces as warriors – think "Braveheart style", Pacific Islander or commando. As teams, devise war dances to encourage each other to conquer in the love of Christ.

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This meeting could be used as a coffee and dessert night.

Décor

Have the room set up like a coffee shop. Small tables if possible with table cloths and decoration in the middle. (Small vase of flowers etc) Contrasting serviettes folded. Mood lighting.

Have two or three types of desserts already cut and placed on plates. These can be served later. You may even like to get some men to come and serve.

If you haven't got the facilities to serve nice coffee then buy a range of different teas and coffees. (Different satchels of coffee are great and look good placed in a basket)

If you are really adventurous, you could do it as a high tea with small sandwiches, small quiche and other savouries, cakes and slices. This looks great set up on a central table with tiered décor plates.

Guests

Invite someone to talk about Osteoporosis.

For more information on Osteoporosis go to Osteoporosis Australia
<http://www.osteoporosis.org.au/>.

Invite a personal trainer to talk about physical fitness and how to strengthen our bodies. You could also use part of the Fully Fit program by Emma Johnson found on page 16 in the Whatsoever is Lovely Resource Manual as a hand out.

Songs

What the Lord has done in me.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7frh3UTNGg>

Stronger

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv55FMjeMV0&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PL893F48B919215AAE

Delta Goodrem – Be Strong

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqzxCoYDMlk>

Quotes (See CD)

Discuss the quotes

Sharing

Have someone share about a time in their life when God has helped them be strong (will need to line this up before)

Devotional

The dictionary defines strong as: physically powerful; capable of exerting great physical force. We say that people who have a strong personality have a forceful character, will, or intelligence. That leadership is strong when the person demonstrates and exercises authority. The world is all about being strong, survival of the fittest. Strength is something that is admired and sought in our modern culture.

In our modern world the emphasis is all about our strength, what we can do, what we can achieve. People pay large sums of money to join Gyms or have personal trainers to improve their physical strength and fitness. They go to self help groups to improve their emotional stamina or courses on self improvement.

The world says it is through my own self effort that I am strong but the Bible says something totally opposite. It is in our weakness that we are strong. Listen to what Paul says about his weakness and the strength of God.

2 Corinthians 12:7 - (The Message)

2 Corinthians 12:9 - (NIV)

It is not about our strength but God's. The world says weakness is something to be avoided at all cost. God says it is through your weakness that you get to rely on me.

Philippians 4: 13

"I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength." It is not by our effort and striving that we are strong. It is through our weakness and surrender to God that we are strong.

Another source of strength that comes from God is the gift of the spirit Joy. Nehemiah 8: 10 *"The Joy of the Lord is your strength."* Joy is a spiritual Gift that is given freely by God. It is a Joy that wells up from the inner most part of the believer and is not reliant on circumstances. People in the most difficult and despairing circumstances can feel a deep sense of Joy that nothing can take away. That Joy is a deep sense of strength that comes from God.

Joy Bookmarks (see CD)

Many people have also discovered the power of praise. You don't always have a choice in what happens to you but you do have a choice in what you do with it. Life is full of many difficult circumstances: ill health, death of a loved one, trouble at work etc. When we choose to praise God in spite of our circumstances we take our eyes off what is happening and put our focus on God. God who is loving, faithful, all powerful, who knows every hair on our head, who is for us. Praise doesn't always change our circumstances but it does change us. We no longer see things in the light of who we are but in the light of who God is.

Let the weak say I am strong

Let the poor say I am rich

Let the blind say I can see

It's what the Lord has done in me

Prayer

Quotes (See CD)

Forgiven and Free

Major Edith Kardell

Scripture

There is no freedom without forgiveness.
John 8:32; Romans 8 1-17; Gal 4:21-26

Invitation

To Courts and Prisons Chaplains, Kairos prison ministries.
There may be some one in the fellowship who has been in prison and is willing to share the experience of prison and the difference Christ makes in their lives.

Songs

SASB 365 O happy day
SASB 308 Amazing grace
Chorus I am redeemed, by the blood of the Lamb

DVD

Amazing Grace- the story of William Wilberforce and the abolition of the slave trade. There are some graphic images of the misery of the slave trade. An illustration of the desperate lives who live in slavery to sin.

William Wilberforce

William Wilberforce was a deeply religious English member of parliament and social reformer who was very influential in the abolition of the slave trade and eventually slavery itself in the British Empire. The movie Amazing Grace is the story of his part in the Abolition of the slave trade.

He was born on the 24 August 1759, the son of a wealthy merchant. He studied at Cambridge University and in 1780 he became a Member of Parliament. His lifestyle changed completely when he became a Christian. His Christian faith prompted him to become interested in social reform, particularly the improvement of factory conditions in Britain.

The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson had an enormous influence on William. He and others were campaigning for an end to the trade in which British ships were carrying black slaves from Africa, in terrible conditions, to the West Indies as goods to be bought and sold. He was persuaded to lobby for the abolition of the slave trade and for 18 years he regularly introduced anti-slavery motions in parliament. The campaign was supported by many who raised public awareness of their cause with pamphlets, books, rallies and petitions. In 1807, the slave trade was finally abolished, but this did not free those who were already slaves. It was not until 1833 that an act was passed giving freedom to all slaves in the British Empire. Wilberforce's other efforts to 'renew society' included his desire to provide all children with regular education in reading, personal hygiene and religion. He was closely involved with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He was also instrumental in encouraging Christian missionaries to go to India. Wilberforce retired from politics in 1825 and died on 29 July 1833, shortly after the act to free slaves in the British Empire passed through the House of Commons.

Celtic Women – Amazing Grace

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsCp5LG_zNE

Talk

When we think of prison we naturally think of someone who has no freedom, not able to come and go as they please. And there is usually reason for them being in prison...

But think about this:

Being a prisoner of your emotions, of society/culture, is a disability.

Emotions can be a very powerful force and can keep us from realising our potential. Anger, fear and guilt are a few examples that can hold us in such a state that we can't relate to others.

Counsellors can help us to overcome the emotions that hold us prisoner. Jesus in John 8:32 tells us the truth will set you free.

And Jesus is the way the truth and the life.

Our culture and society can hold us bound with the expectations placed on us. The culture of the kingdom of God is freedom. The freedom to realise the potential that God has gifted you with. Not freedom to do as we please but in loving and serving our Lord.

A disabled person is often pitied because of their inability to go and do as they please because of an intellectual or physical disability. They are in a sense a prisoner of their body. But many are content in their situation, making the most of where they are at.

Jesus came to set the prisoner free. Free from what? Our sins keep us prisoner and until we accept the forgiveness from Jesus we will continue to sit behind the bars of sin. When Jesus died on the cross he bought for us peace with God.

If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed." John 8: 36

To be truly free we have to come to Jesus accepting his forgiveness and then in turn we have to forgive those who have wronged us.

In the Lord's Prayer we say just that "forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

If God could forgive us for all the things we have done wrong, it seems petty that we cannot forgive others, no matter how badly done by we feel.

When we forgive, that clears the way for God's love to flood our lives and we experience real FREEDOM.

Romans 8:1

Bookmarks (See CD)

Romans 8:1 and John 8:32

Décor

A wooden cross and a freestanding mirror joined by white cloth. This can be used to show the relationship between recognising our own identity and how Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

Ask five of the ladies to bring a photo of themselves as a baby or young child and one of them later in life but not recent. Place these photos on a white board using magnets. Mix the photos up. This will need to be done before the program commences.

Introduction

In line with the theme Recognising our Identity & Living in the Abundant Blessings of God, today we are looking at and recognising our identity with an emphasis on being Redeemed. How do you or others recognise your Identity?

What is the first thing you do when you see a newborn baby? Say who do they look like?

Who or what do you see when you look at yourself in the mirror? Maybe your Mum or Grandmother.

Let's see how good you are at recognising others.

Select 2 Ladies to come and organise the photos on the blackboard and tell us who they are.

How else do we recognise who we are? By Name

We all have a birth certificate which states our name.

In Matthew 1 v 21: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the Name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Songs

HLSB 111	There is a name I love to hear
HLSB 48	God's love to me is wonderful
HLSB 48	How great thou art
HLSB 3	Amazing grace
The Source 768	My Redeemer lives

Redeemed

Now we know who we are.

The word REDEEMED means

- To recover ownership of by paying a specified sum
- To set free; rescued or ransomed
- To save from a state of sinfulness and its consequences
- To be saved from the bondage of sin

Redeemed Acrostic (See CD)

Organise to have each Verse/s read out.

The Cross in my Pocket

I carry a cross in my pocket, a simple reminder to me of the fact that I am a Christian no matter where I may be.

This little cross is not magic, nor is it a good luck charm.

It isn't meant to protect me from any physical harm.

It's not for identification, for all the world to see.

It's simply an understanding between my Saviour and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket to bring out a coin or key,

The Cross is there to remind me of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me too, to be thankful. For my blessings day by day, and to strive to serve Him better in all that I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder of the peace and comfort I share with all who know my Master and give themselves to His care.

So I carry a Cross in my pocket, reminding no one but me, that Jesus Christ is Lord of my life, if only I'll let Him be.

The "Cross In My Pocket" poem is a copyright poem and cannot be used or reproduced without the written consent of Agora, PO Box 54342, Atlanta, GA 30308 USA.

Bible Wordsearch (See CD)

Devotional

God's abundant love for us is clearly expressed in 1 John 4 v 7– 21 God's Love and Ours

I read a story of a young man who described his grandmother as one of the greatest influences in his life.

Throughout his adult years, he has kept a portrait next to his desk to remind himself of her unconditional love. "I really do believe," he said "that she helped me learn how to love."

Not everyone has had a similar taste of human love, but through Christ each of us can experience being well loved by God. In 1 John, Chapter 4, the word Love occurs 27 times, and God's love through Christ is cited as the source of our love for God and for others. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice for our sins (v10). "We have known and believed the love that God has for us" (v.16). "We love Him because He loved us first" (v.19).

God's love is available. It isn't only available when He feels like it but at anytime you need it He is there to give it. Whatever our family background or experience in life – whether we feel well-loved by others or not – we can know love. We can reach out and draw from the Lord's abundant and inexhaustible love for us.

In Christ our Saviour we are well loved. Nothing is more powerful than God's love.

Make sure you reach out for it and only then will you recognise and see His love in your face as you look at yourself in the mirror. Then you can share His love with others around you.

Close in Prayer

Transformed by God's Healing Hands

Captain Alana Mills

Introduction

Theme Night ... A Pamper Night Revolving Around "Hands"

This special theme evening could be held on a Saturday night and this gives the women that normally attend your group the opportunity to bring a friend.

Ask the ladies to bring some yummy homemade goodies and have coffee and cake to end the night.

Invite a beauty therapist if you know of any to come along and demonstrate a basic manicure including a hand massage. Don't be daunted if you can't get anyone as you can view how to do manicures and hand massage on YouTube or Google. If you are not up to accessing the internet ask a computer savvy person in your corps. The idea is you work in partners with one person performing the manicure on the other then swap over.

Equipment wise all you will need is:

- Emery boards or nail files (one per couple)
- Nail Buffers
- A hand or body scrub you would use in the shower
- A nice hand cream
- Tissues and cotton wool
- A few pretty polishes including a soft pink and a clear and nail polish remover
- Hand towels and a few bowls with warm water

You don't have to spend a fortune as you can purchase most of the above from the two dollar shops.

You can use the tables in your hall and have ladies sit across from each other.

Have soft music playing in the background. If you are the one who is leading, the ladies they can either watch a manicure being done or you can sit with them and have them work on each step with you as you perform them.

The basic manicure includes:

- Step 1 Removing old polish and filing nails
- Step 2 Giving hands an exfoliation using the scrub – remove with a warm hand towel
- Step 3 Massage
- Step 4 Buff and shine nails and apply polish
- Tip: Make sure you remove any oily residue from the nail with polish remover otherwise your nail polish will slide off.

As the nails are drying give the ladies a copy of "Grandma's Hands" handout and read through. (See CD)
Before the coffee and chat time spend a few minutes doing a short devotional.

Jesus knew all about the power of healing touch. Many people came to him for healing but one story from the bible that stands out to me is the story of a man who had leprosy. In the bible he makes one appearance, one request and receives one touch. But that one touch changed his life forever.

In Max Lucado's book "Just Like Jesus" – he tells the story something like this... "Oh how I repulsed those who saw me. Five years of leprosy had left my hands gnarled. Tips of my fingers were missing as were portions of an ear and my nose. At the sight of me, fathers grabbed their children. Mothers covered their faces. Children pointed and stared... But then I saw him (Jesus) and when I saw him I was changed. Before he spoke, I knew he cared. Somehow I knew he hated this disease as much as, no – more – than I hate it... I waited until he was only paces from me, then I stepped out. I called out "Master " and he stepped toward me.

I cried out "Lord, you can heal me if you will."

I will ", he responded and he reached out and touched me. No one had touched me for five years; not my wife, my children but he touched me!!!

His words were as tender as his touch. "Be healed!"

In an instant I felt warmth where there had been numbness. I felt strength where there had been atrophy. My back straightened and my head lifted. I was healed. He could have been content to heal me with a word but he chose to touch me.

Imagine that ... unworthy of the touch of a human, yet worthy of the touch of God"

Tonight you may be in need of a touch from God - not in the physical but maybe you have come here tonight lonely, hurting and broken. Jesus knows your hurt and pain and can take that hurt and pain away, if you allow him. Do you know him tonight? Maybe it's time to allow the great healer into your life and experience the "wholeness" that only Jesus can give.

For those here tonight who know Jesus personally let us be Jesus healing hands in our world, a kind word, the power of touch; a hug given to a friend in the time of need, a shoulder to cry on...

Jesus desires to use US to reach out to a hurting world. Will you allow him?

Finish with a prayer



Our True Identity!

Bible Study

Colonel Robyn Maxwell

Should have gone to Specsavers!!!

Not sure if you have seen the TV commercial where there's this senior couple who sit down at what they think is a comfy bench seat to enjoy their cheese sandwiches only to find that it is in fact a roller coaster and they go for the ride of their lives. As they're walking away you can hear him say... "must have been the cheese". The caption being if they had of gone to Specsavers for their glasses their outlook would have been different. They would see things with clarity.

Often the way we see the world is through the lenses we wear! This is influenced by our life experience which usually plays a part in the way we see ourselves. We all have thoughts and experiences which challenge our feelings of self-worth or rob us of our true identity. Often there is also the temptation to strive to be like someone else.

In the fairy tale Snow White, the queen kept looking into the mirror and asking the question, **"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"** It's a real temptation for us women to look around and compare ourselves to others especially through books, magazines, television, or even friends who appear to be more gifted than we!

It is vital that we as women of God understand what our true image and identity in Christ is because everything in our life that happens will hinge on that revelation. The enemy will bombard us with lies on everything from the way we look, how much money we have in the bank, the car we drive, our clothes, our education, the home we live in, the type of job we have, even to what people think of us.

The loss of our true identity is part of the enemy's plan to keep us from living our life to its fullest.

Identity Theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the world. This is when someone takes your personal information and it is used to access your finances. It was reported that one in four rubbish bins contains important personal information – things like bank statements, credit card information and electricity or gas bills. People throw it away not realizing how easy it is for someone to rummage through their garbage, find their personal details and then steal their identity.

Sometimes it is easier for us to steal someone else's identity than to spend time trying to find out who we are. **There is no substitute for being you!!!** God has an individual identity for every single one of us. Taking someone else's identity will never get the results God intended for you. If

you don't know who you are then other things will try to define you.

The only reliable source of our identity is God! He created each one of us, loves us, sent His son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, and transforms our lives through His Holy Spirit! When we allow Him to define our identity we stand on a sure foundation for a life of peace with contentment. When we establish our identity in how God sees us we can confidently live our lives in the assurance of His perfect plan for our lives.

When we look at ourselves what do we see?

Discuss:

- What makes you unique?
- What has God placed in your life that sets you apart from everyone else?
- What makes you stand out from the crowd and makes you different?

It is important we see ourselves the way God sees us and then live in obedience to Him.

What does the Bible say about our identity in Christ?

READ Psalm 139

This Psalm gives us a beautiful picture of God's great care in creating each one of us.

Verses 13-16 of the Psalm capture the heart of this chapter. Write a sentence to describe what each of these phrases mean to you.

1. "For you created my inmost being;"
2. "You knit me together in my mother's womb."
3. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made;"
4. "Your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Even before you were given an earthly name and an identity, God knew about you. You are His child, marked by His love, made in His image.

- God designed you and knew you long before you were born.
- God was thinking about you long before you ever thought about Him.
- God created you uniquely, and there is genuinely only one of you.
- God, from the foundation of the world, had good works for you to do.

READ the following verses and discuss what they say about us...

John 1:12 1 Corinthians 12:27
Ephesians 1:3-8 Colossians 2:9-10

Romans 8:1-2 Colossians 3:1-4
Philippians 1:6 1 Timothy 1:7

John 15:16 1 Corinthians 3:16
Ephesians 2:4-10 Philippians 4:13

I read a sign out the front of a bread shop in Brisbane that said, **"Every loaf bares the signature of its creator."** So the next time you look into a mirror, really see the woman who is looking back at you, a woman who is fearfully , beautifully , and wonderfully, made in His image, God's very own creation.

Take encouragement from these two verses...

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" Ephesians 2:10 NASB

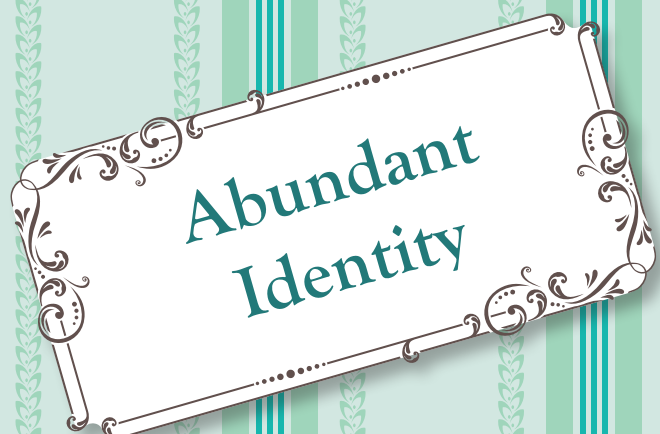
"The Lord will hold you in His hand for all to see – a splendid crown in the hand of God." Isaiah 62:3 NLT

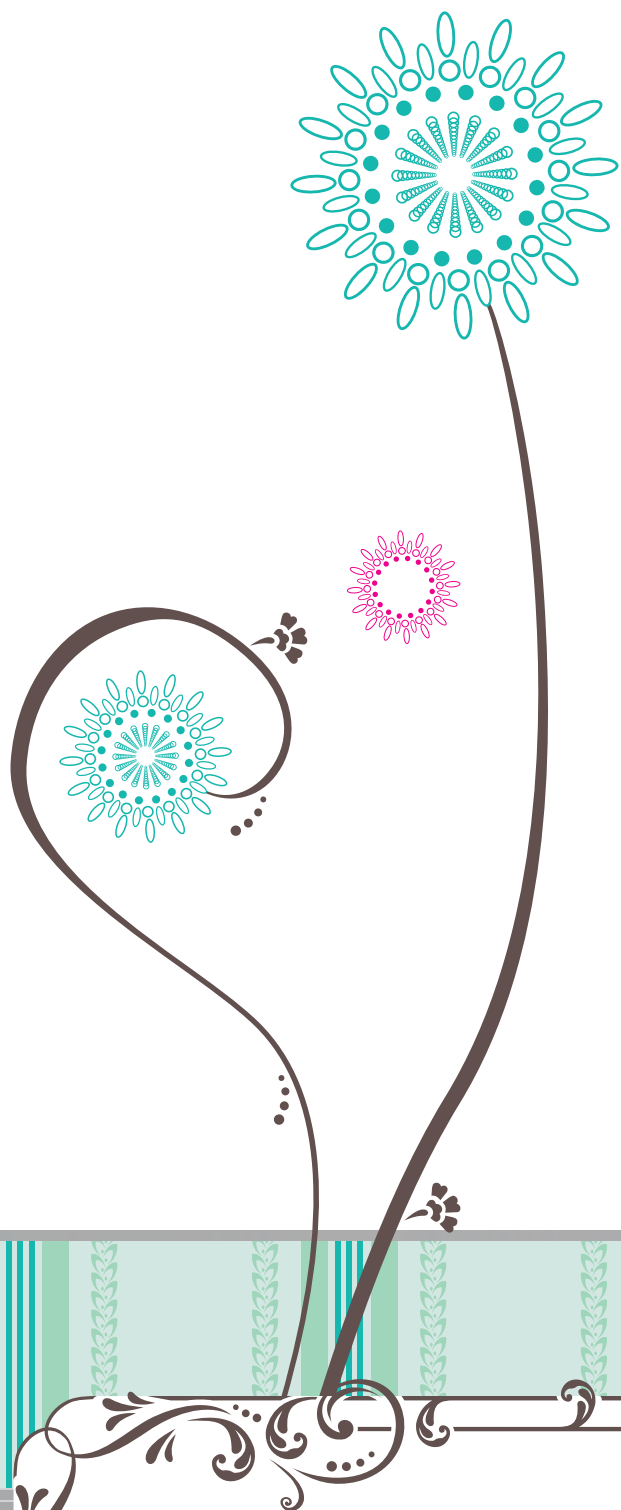
Your life is special. You are an original and unique in every way. There is no-one else on this planet who is just like you. You have an original thumb print and the iris in your eye is different to anyone else. You also have a unique DNA code. How great is our God! I am sure it would have been far less work to create everyone the same, but God had other ideas. He has a plan and purpose for your life that is uniquely yours. The potential within you is amazing, but the only way to maximise it is to commit to the journey of becoming the person God created you to be. The world needs us to be all that God intended us to be; the most precious gift you can give is to be the real you. Stay strong and true to who you are.

May you discover all that God has placed in your life that sets you apart from everyone else. All that is uniquely yours, all that makes you stand out from the crowd and makes you different. The only way to discover your identity and purpose is through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Always remember... ***"Your identity and value is not determined by your outward beauty. It is based on the truth of who God says you are....His dearly beloved child, formed in His image, created with a purpose and a calling."***

See CD for "Who am I?" resource sheet





"And God is able to provide you
with every blessing in abundance,
so that you may always have
enough of everything and may
provide in abundance for every
good work."

2Corinthians 9:8 RSV

Abundant Blessings

In the Unexpected

Major Cheralynne Pethybridge

"When fate hands you a lemon, make lemonade"
- Dale Carnegie

Concept

Turn obstacles into opportunities and trials into triumph.

Scripture

'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. 'Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Preparation

Have the ladies wear yellow or bring anything to do with 'lemons'

Décor

Set up room using the colour yellow. Have a display of lemons or anything lemon related. Refreshments could include food made with lemons

Songs

Hallelujah Choruses Song 65	God will make a way
Hallelujah Choruses Song 32	He leadeth me
The Source 329	Power of your love
The Source 625	All the way my Saviour leads me

Clips

He's an on time God... Talley Trio
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDWUPmzT1_4

Scenes from "One Night with the King" (FoxFaith) starring Peter O'Toole
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjLy-oYnXBo>

Quotes

"When fate hands you a lemon, make lemonade" ~ Dale Carnegie
"If you have a lemon, make lemonade." ~ Howard Luck Gossage
"If life deals you lemons make lemonade" ~ Proverb (source unknown)

Thought

Sometimes things are not as they seem – when we dig a little deeper God reveals to us unexpected blessings and opportunities

Devotions

The story of Esther is a beautiful one! It's a love story

about a Jewish woman who was not only beautiful, but also strong, wise and courageous – a woman who trusted in God's leading and determined to make the most of situations, a woman who turned 'lemons into lemonade'!

Esther's parents had died when she was young and as a result she was raised by her cousin (some versions say 'uncle', Mordecai. The King of Persia at this time was Xerxes and he had banished his first wife for refusing to bow to him.

Xerxes right hand man was an evil man, Haman. Haman was determined to annihilate the Jews (which included Esther and her uncle) and used every opportunity he could to persuade Xerxes to do away with them. It was at this point that Mordecai encouraged Esther to intercede on behalf of the Jews. In Esther 4:14 we read Mordecai's words to her, *"If you keep quiet at this time, someone else will help and save the Jewish people, but you and your father's family will die. And who knows, you may have been chosen queen for such a time as this."* What incredible words! Words that gave her the courage to take the selfless step of presenting herself to Xerxes uninvited so as to save her people from being massacred!

Esther could have simply rested in her situation, knowing that she was in the relative safety of the Kings court, but she knew that she had been given an opportunity that could not be overlooked. She was given an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of those around her.

Throughout the Scriptures we read story after story of God unexpectedly breaking into to the lives of His people. The apostle Paul in Romans 8:28 (NCV) has this to say *'We know that in everything God's works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan.'* Paul knew what it was to have one struggle after another (in fact, before his conversion, he was a key orchestrator of making life uncomfortable for God's people). But he also knew in his life the abundant grace of God that supplied him with strength, wisdom and perseverance. God stepped into his life and he was never the same again!

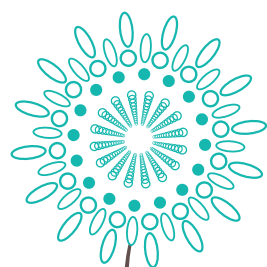
Jeremiah 29:11(NCV) reminds us, *'For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'*

When life fails to meet your expectations, you should expect God to do the unexpected. Often we become discouraged when life, people and God don't meet our expectations. We believe that we live in a cause-and-effect world. We believe things are supposed to turn out a certain way. It is in these times that we need to expect God to

do the unexpected. Our lives are often reshaped by the unexpected intervention of God. Unexpectedly, sins are forgiven and guilt is removed. God comes suddenly, and whole new prospects are opened. We have nothing to lose by expecting God to do the unexpected in our lives. Our lives aren't going anywhere without him anyway. We may discover that the unexpected exceeds our expectations. Dreams are reshaped, lives are recreated, hope is renewed, and faith is filled with life and energy. New opportunities, new directions, and new goals are presented. It is up to us to take hold of all that He has to offer us so that we can know God's plan for our life – a plan that is far more than we could ever dream or imagine!

Additional Resources (See CD)

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Seeing God in the Ordinary

Tessa Albini

"The true call of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way."
~ Dean Stanley

Décor

Have a decorator table set up with a white tablecloth and a bunch of bright flowers. Have the guest tables set up in a similar manner with bright flowers but also bright napkins in contrast to the white table cloths to demonstrate the impressive nature of ordinary things.

Activity

Below is a link for an origami flower. Doing a search through Google will provide an abundance of origami diagrams. Depending on the group that will be participating, you can choose an appropriate difficulty level of origami.

This activity is to demonstrate how much enjoyment can come from an ordinary piece of paper. This also gives an opportunity for the ladies to share fellowship.

<http://www.origami-instructions.com/origami-modular-5-petal-flower.html>

Scripture

Psalms 4:6-7 (NLT)

Why is everyone hungry for more? "More, more," they say, "more, more".

I have God's more-than-enough, more joy in one ordinary day

Gift Ideas (See CD)

On the CD you will find a postcard to print for the ladies. This can be attached to a single flower or given out individually. Printing it double sided on coloured or textured paper then laminating will make it a bit more special.

Encourage the ladies to pass on the origami that they have made to someone in their lives struggling to find God in the ordinary.

Sharing

Have the guests who are comfortable sharing an experience within their lives where they experienced the closeness of the Lord through an ordinary moment.

Devotional

The Oxford Dictionary defines ordinary as:

1. With no special or distinctive features; normal
2. Not interesting or exceptional; commonplace

So often we search for God in extraordinary circumstances. However, it is well established that God often reveals himself through the ordinary, if not mundane, every day situations. Theologians would refer to this as providence.

God gives us all a gift, the gift of His presence consistently and persistently. As such, we need to create a discipline to remain conscious of God's presence. The reality is that the majority of us will live what is to be considered an ordinary life. However, no life given to God will ever truly be considered ordinary. Every action we take is for the glory of God, thus making our normal lives special through Christ. It is through this that we can receive a tangible sense of God sanctifying the ordinary.

The philosophy of Opus Dei is; "Find God in daily life". This is to say that no matter what your position in life that you would carry out these daily tasks, no matter how insignificant they may seem to the glory of God. Whether you are a husband or wife, a blue-collar worker or a businessperson, student, missionary, priest or unemployed, you should use your life in every way to honour Him.

Since, as people, we are able to do small, outwardly inconsequential things, we should strive to do these things with great love and great faith and in doing so, we not only turn these simply, 'ordinary' things in to great ones but we also honour our Father.

Challenge

Leave the guests with a challenge to find God through ordinary activities and to praise Jehovah through the routine tasks of every day life.

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Precious Promises

Captain Jennifer Wheatley

Scripture

2 Peter 1:4

And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

Décor

Decorate your space with rainbow colours using fabric or crepe paper in strips across the windows or as panels from ceiling to floor. Find a colourful tablecloth and use a basket or large platter to create a centrepiece (cornucopia/horn of plenty) for the main table. Fill with fruit, flowers and vegetables (real or artificial).

Preparations

Encourage your participants to wear clothing in the colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet).

Find an old box of 'Precious Promises' for each participant to take one and read. Prepare or purchase bookmarks with a rainbow and the scripture for the day. Participants to bring along something that is precious to them for sharing. Display on the main table as each item is presented and shared. Paper and pens for prayer time.

Songs

HLSB 95	Standing on the promises
HLSB 89	Precious promise
SASB 25	All things bright and beautiful
SASB 324	All the promises of Jesus

Prayer time

Invite participants to spend some moments writing sentence prayers of thanksgiving and praise for all of God's mercies; for forgiveness and renewal, for fellowship and friendship, for the blessings of daily life... food, home, family, provisions, our beautiful world, our life of faith and service, thanks for God's love.

As some music plays quietly on a CD or piano, each participant brings their written prayers to add to the display.

Personal Testimony

'A Full Life': Arrange with a person beforehand to prepare a short testimony of God's abundant blessings in their life, and can testify to a life lived under God's promise of an abundant life.

Reflection time

Ask participants to reflect on the question: 'How has God blessed me abundantly?'

Devotional message

God's precious promises are trustworthy (Hebrews 6:13-18), unchanging (James 1:17,18), faithful (1 Kings 8:56) and powerful (Isaiah 55:11).

There are many examples of how God's promises have been worked out in the lives of his people.

The promise to Noah and his family (Genesis 9:8-17) was the rainbow as a sign of an eternal covenant with God's people that there would never again be a flood that wiped out all of creation. God promised not to destroy the earth and its inhabitants.

The promise to Abraham (Genesis 15: 9-21) was for land and descendants.

The promise to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) was a promise of God's presence and blessing.

The promise to David (2 Samuel 7:5-16) was for a house of worship and a place of security. This house would be a place where God's people would find him and God promises his eternal presence with his people (v.16)

The promise to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31: 31-34) was that there would be a new covenant, which we understand to be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of God's promises throughout the centuries. Jesus brought to us the Holy Spirit, fullness of life, resurrection to eternal life, forgiveness, peace, joy, knowledge of God and his presence with us.

This in turn gives us the ability to live godly lives and allows us to share in his divine nature. When we are born again, God's spirit empowers us to live for him.

We understand this when we hear and witness the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people we meet. We have shared today in the lives of each other and heard for ourselves how God the Holy Spirit has worked amongst us and blessed us each with his precious promises.

Benediction

Romans 16: 26, 27 (NLT)

26 But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. 27 All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

Living Life Together

Major Angela Eyles

One thing I have learnt of late is the importance of supporting each other in season and out of season. We need to be more than "fair-weather friends" as the saying goes.

Galatians 6 talks about bearing one another's burdens and a major driving force in my life is the simple account of Moses in Exodus 17:8-16. This speaks of Moses and his obedience to God but also of his tiredness and the support of Joshua and Aaron. The battle would not have been won but for the support of others

Quiz (See CD)

My desire for this meeting is to encourage the women to discover that in the midst of recognising God's abundant blessings that they remember their own responsibility to support and encourage their sisters in the faith. There are many ways to do this and most times people will come up with ideas themselves once they get inspired.

Preparation

Things you may need:

- A white board and coloured markers
- Print out cards to share with each other
- Purchase or make cards to post
- Stopwatch or a mobile phone with stopwatch

Décor

Individual letters can be purchased from a variety of stores to make up various words as can words such as "love", "imagine" and "dream". Or someone in your group may already own these for use. Alphabet blocks can also be used.

Introduction

Life is meant to be shared, to be experienced and to be authentic. Our words and actions must match for our relationships to be authentic. Our lives are but one way we can share with others the reality of God's abundant blessings.

Part 1: Our Words

Participation (See CD)

Play "one minute please game"

The aim of this game is to talk for one minute on the subject given.

Most people insist they are not good at public speaking. It is good to remind them that they are among friends and after all one minute is not very long at all; only 2 x a 30 second commercial – 4 volunteers. Of course you will need someone to use a mobile phone with a stopwatch.

Subjects that are quite easy are included on cards provided;

e.g. "my favourite movie", "10 things you can do with a potato", is Television good for you or bad for you?" and "my first memory of..." (insert name of the group leader just for a little bit of fun)

Short talk

Many people insist they are not so good with public speaking or even sharing their faith. But there is one thing we are all good at and that is talking. So for just a moment let's think about the words we use.

There is much debate about who uses the most words per day, men or women but according to sciencemag.org both speak similar numbers of words. Of course that is if you want to believe some web site after all we know some people do talk more than others. The website indicated that those people in the study averaged 16,000 per day. If you think that is too much this short talk has already used 116 words.

See how easy it is for our words to add up.

Our words count.

They have the power to build and to destroy.

Time to write some words down

Participation continued

Using the white board and a helper to write the words up – ask people to volunteer some words/phrases both good and bad (some suggestions might help – "I love you", "you're important to me", "how can I ever repay you", "I'm proud of you") – mix up the suggested words/phrases. Now let's see if these are words that build or destroy? After enough words/phrases are on the board (good and bad) take use two different colours to underline the good phrases and the bad ones

Short talk continued

All these words affect us in some way, some positive and some negative.

Words are important.

Words frame our world. Our hearts are warmed when we speak words of truth, of wisdom and of beauty.

The Bible speaks of how we use our words and more importantly how we should use our words.

Psalms 19:13-14 "may the words of our mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight Oh Lord"

Proverbs 12:17-19 "the words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen"

Proverbs 12:24-26 "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up"

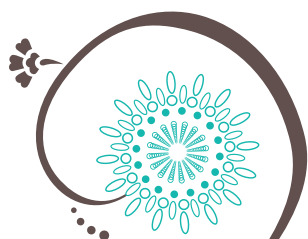
It isn't complicated. If we sow apple seeds we get apples

trees. If we sow apricot seeds we get apricot trees. If we sow love we grow love in a life. If we sow mercy, we see grow freedom because James 2:13 tells us mercy triumphs over judgement.

Link: James continues to tell us not just how we should use our words but that our actions are also important.

Part 2: Our Actions (See CD)

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**Abundant
Blessings**

Décor

Balloons (already blown up), baby photos, table games (as listed in the outline), bags of craft items (as listed in the outline). Lots of colour and lollipops.

*Women to wear brightest colours possible and bring along a joke to share

Introduction

Peter Scazzerro in his Book "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality" talks about the importance of the spiritual discipline of REST. REST incorporates Sabbath, Simplicity of life and Play and recreation. We re-create ourselves by having fun.

"...a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.." Ecclesiastes 3:4
Let's spend time together discovering God's Abundant blessing through fun and playing together.

How do I feel today handout

Through the below link you will find a chart with pictorial representations of emotions. Hand out to the women and invite them to circle which immediately applies to them and to share this with other members of the group.
<http://www.oaktreecounseling.com/feelings.htm>

Song

24 "God's love to me is wonderful" SATB 150
131 "When you think of all that God has done.." SATB 202

Reading

"My heart sings"
(Page 11 "Just a Moment Lord" Flora Larsson Lakeside Publishing)

Prayer

Q: What does fun look like to you?

Have a good laugh:
(Women to share the joke they have brought)

Q: What things could you imagine Jesus laughing at when He was a man?

Table Games

Jack (knuckles), pick up sticks, snap, dominos, marbles, quoits etc

Any games that would have memories for the ladies- tables spread around the room and 2 games on either end of

each table. Groups of 4-6 to each table.

The ladies have 2 minutes each to play a game before moving to the next table, but whilst playing share a memory with the group that the game brings.

Clip

"Mother taught me"

This clip can be purchased from
www.worshiphousemedia.com

Q: Were there other sayings your Mother taught you not mentioned here?

Competition

"Who is that beautiful baby" (Each lady brings their own baby photo, they are numbered and displayed around the room and people have to guess whose photo it is).

Balloon Faces

On each table have a bag of craft items such as sticky tape, wool, cotton wool, permanent markers, packets of craft mixed embellishments e.g. pipe cleaners, googly eyes etc. Give a blown up balloon per person. Each lady is to make a facial portrait of themselves on the balloon – they have 4 minutes to do it.

Devotional

Play does not have an age restriction. We all need fun in our lives. We are told laughter is good medicine and healthy for you:

- It reduces stress
- It reduces the chance of heart disease
- It drives out fear
- It drives out depression
- It creates a positive outlook on life
- Laughter helps us deal with pain better

It's a scientific fact that people who laugh more lead healthier lives. I love to see the laughter in people's eyes.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 tells us *"there is a time to weep and a time to laugh"*. Many people today don't seem to be able to get the picture that God Laughs, Jesus laughed and He wants us to laugh. John 10:10 screams at us, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* Having a life that is full is a life that is filled with joy, laughter and rejoicing.

It's not a full life if our life is filled with seriousness and pessimism.

It's not a full life if our life is filled with criticalness and grumbling.
It's not a full life if our life is filled with crying and mourning.
It's not a full life if our life is filled with whining and negativity.
It's not a full life if our life is filled with no smiles and no good belly laugh.

Life can be hard. Things come our way that can rock our world or leave us hurt, confused and even angry. Joy/ happiness / fun is a choice in spite of trials. Life does not dictate how we behave; we make a choice to react to a situation. Our spiritual experience and security should not be measured by our circumstances but by our faith in an ever present God.

Paul says in Philippians 4:11-12 *"for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."*

If we are going to be people who can see beyond our circumstances, we need to find joy and happiness in having good, healthy relationships. People who can support us and help us discover a sense of fun.

Joy in life also comes from knowing who you are in Jesus Christ and where your destiny lies. Learn more about the God we serve and take the journey of discovering what God has for us, no matter our stage of life.

The Be Happy attitude in life is what makes life enjoyable and bearable. Let's decide to become dispensers of this wonderful gift to ourselves and to others.

Charles Swindoll in his book "Laugh again" states, "I know of no greater need today than the need for joy. Unexplainable, contagious, outrageous joy. When that kind of joy comes aboard our ship of life, it brings good things with it-like enthusiasm for life, determination to hang in there, and a strong desire to be an encouragement to others. Such qualities make our voyage bearable when we hit the open seas and encounter high waves of hardship that tend to demoralize and paralyse. There is nothing better than a joyful attitude when we face the challenges life throws at us."

Benediction



Over the Years

Commissioner Jan Condon

Scripture

John 1:16 – “from the fullness of his grace we have received one blessing after another”

Prayer

Ask for sentence prayers of thanks (for blessings)

Segment

Blessed through our Senses

Sight – prepare a Power Point of beautiful scenery, people, or things that are pleasing to the eye. You may choose these or ask women to bring a picture/photo that blesses them as they look at it.

Taste – cook an easy meal in a frypan (during the meeting) and let women taste it.

Hearing – ask women to share what sounds bring pleasure to them – eg. birds, ocean, music, rippling stream, children, key in the door (waiting for someone to come home), silence, fire siren if house on fire, laughter.

Play a devotional CD

Touch - tell the story of the school teacher who asked her class to draw something for which they were thankful. The kids in her class all came from poor neighbourhoods. She thought they would draw a turkey on a plate, lots of food – perhaps things they could only dream about.

One boy's picture surprised her – it was a poorly drawn picture of a hand.
The teacher asked the class if they might guess whose hand it was.
One child said maybe the hand of God who brings us food. Another said maybe a farmer who grows the food for us. No one guessed correctly.
When the class was at work, the teacher bent over and asked the child who drew the picture whose hand it was. He said “It's your hand.”
Then she remembered that she often took his grubby little hand and had never thought too much about it. But it meant a lot to Douglas because the teacher refreshed his spirit and he never forgot.

Song

Touch through me (you may be able to get a recording of this and play it)

Smell – share what smell/scent the women enjoy – e.g. onions on the BBQ, curry, mint, flowers, perfume.

How blessed we are to have our senses – life is not as enjoyable without them.

Songs

SASB 52 O the wonder of His grace
SASB 33 Great is thy faithfulness
SASB 396 Count your blessings
Blessed be your name (Matt Redman)
–probably available on YouTube
Thank you, thank Lord for saving me

Activity

Bless the women with a small gift.

Bless the women with a compliment – ask everyone to compliment another person in the group.

Make a small gift to bless someone in need.

Devotions: Based on Ephesians 1:3

Purchase a set of decorative boxes and print the names of the blessings on them and build them upon each other as you share the points from the devotional. And emphasise “gift upon gift” – “blessing upon blessing” John 1:16 Chosen, Adopted, Showered with Grace, Redeemed, Reveals His will, Inheritance, Sealed (write these on card on the front of each different size box)

Every Spiritual blessing in Christ

Vs 4 – He chose us – we did not choose Him.

Vs 5 - Adopted into God's family.

Vs 6 – Showered his grace upon us.

Vs 7 - Redeemed us through his blood - freedom and forgiveness from sin.

Vs 9 – Reveals his will to us.

Vs 11 – Gives us an inheritance – not as the world sees – but a heavenly kingdom and as daughters of the King, all that He has is mine.

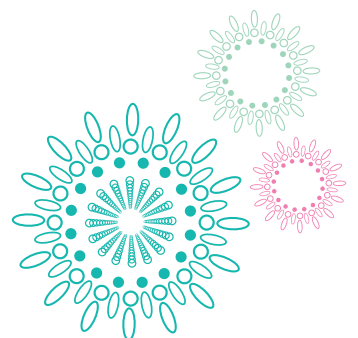
Vs 13 – Sealed by the Holy Spirit – guarantees receipt of the inheritance – God will give what He promised. Holy Spirit empowers, equips, encourages, comforts, guides.

Thought

We are blessed to be a blessing

If there was time, you could ask a couple of women to share a blessing

Bookmark (See CD)



In the Difficult Times

Lieutenant Vanessa Kohler

Introduction

It is often difficult to recognise God's abundant blessings in the difficult times and seasons of our lives. If we were to all look at our lives we would be able to recognise some blessings that God has given us. Regardless of our circumstances and surroundings there are blessings that God has given all of His creation- the sun that shines, the air that we breathe and the many promises that He makes to us in his Word.

Activity and Reflection

Counting your blessings.

A soul training exercise taken from *"The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows"* by James Bryan Smith, pg 70-73. This book is available at Koorong.

Introduction to activity:

When we are going through difficult seasons in our lives it is often difficult to recognise the many blessings we also have in our lives.

Counting your blessings is a powerful spiritual exercise. Make a list of all the things God has blessed you with, all of the things that make life wonderful. Pay attention to the details of your life. Look for the hidden things. Take notice of all of those wonderful things you easily overlook. Start small: try to come up with a list of ten things God has blessed you with. It can be things like your loved ones, material provisions or opportunities you have been given. It can also include things like the created world: the sun, the stars, the mountains and so forth. Or you might want to include things you love, life coffee or ice cream! Finally, also include a list of things that God has done for you. Each day God is at work providing for us, even though we cannot always see it. This exercise is aimed at helping you see "the wide spread mercy" that is much greater than the "black blot".

Don't just leave your list at what you write out today. Take it home and add to it each day. Strive to make a list of fifty things. Then keep going! You will likely end up with, as George Buttrick called it, a "vast treasure". Most of us are accustomed to waking up and thinking about our problems. This exercise will help us shift our focus from the few things that are wrong to the many things that are beautiful and wonderful.

I did this exercise myself a few years ago and I found once I got started I was overwhelmed by how much God had really blessed me with. I found I was blessed beyond what I had first thought. I was praising God for the big and little blessings. For the blessing of deep and meaningful spiritual conversations with friends, to butterflies, to my family

members who had found Jesus, to the privilege of having a training college to attend in the first place, to the wisdom of my mentors, to mint choc chip ice cream with the really chunky choc bits!

This exercise is one that needs to become an ongoing habit in our lifestyle. David Crowder writes *When good is found and we embrace it with abandon, we embrace the Giver of it. Every second is an opportunity to praise. There is a choosing to be made. A choosing at each moment. This is the Praise Habit. Finding God moment by revelatory moment, in the sacred and the mundane, in the valley and on the hill, in triumph and tragedy, and living praise erupting because of it. That is what we were made for.*

I believe he is right. When we are grateful for something as ordinary as "curiosity", we are offering praise to God. In every single moment we have an opportunity to find something worth being amazed by. The more we do it, the more likely it will become a habit, and eventually we will find ourselves doing it without thinking. We will become, as Augustine said, "An Alleluia from head to toe".

Some suggested questions for ladies to answer to think about as they write out their list of blessings.

1. Were you able to make a list of your blessings this week? If so, did you find it difficult? Why?
2. What, if anything, did you learn about God or yourself through the exercise?
3. What were some of the things that made your list that surprised you? Why?

Sharing

In groups small groups, encourage the ladies to share together their list of blessings and discuss the above questions. Encourage the ladies to pray for each other as they share.

Devotional (See CD)

Songs

SASB 579 He giveth more grace

Clip

When I Cry Marshall Hall (There are several YouTube clips for this song to choose from. You could also Google the lyrics and print these out.)

Prayer

"O God, You are Lord over heaven and earth and Lord over my life. I praise You, my precious Redeemer and King. I thank You that You are a God of redemption and restoration. I surrender to You all of my grief or sadness over any loss, disappointment or failure I have experienced and praise You in the midst of it. I thank You, Holy Spirit, that You are my comforter. Lord, I thank You that You allow no suffering that is without purpose. I know that You are a good God and what You allow will be used for good. I draw close to You and put my hope in You, for with You there is mercy and redemption."

*Taken from: A BOOK OF PRAYER
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Scripture

Psalm 56:8-9 (NKJV)

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In Sacrifice - Easter Meeting

Major Heather Unicom

Preparation

You'll need two nails and a piece of light wire for each person. I put these into a ziplock bag with a handout (See CD).

Easter celebrations have an amazing impact on children, so included an Easter week devotional handout with activities for families to do together that will create memories for children.

Songs

The Source 274	Once again
The Source 185	How deep the Father's love
SASB 118	Man of Sorrows

Scripture

Matthew 27:27-31 (NLT)
John 19:28-30 (NLT)

Competition (See CD)

God's Abundant Blessings word search. This can be printed on A3 and groups of ladies enjoyed working on it together.

Devotional

Show video clip, Boy with Cow (See CD)

Listen to this boy who knows that there was purpose in Jesus death and that God understands what we are going through and the boy wanted everyone to know that so he rang a radio station.

Recap - I loved him, He had to die. He had a son. He was special. He had a purpose... He understands...

- There was purpose in Jesus suffering on the cross.
- It was necessary to fulfil prophecy.
- His sacrifice was necessary to fulfil the law.
- It was painful. *The Physical pain* - whipping, crown of thorns, weight of the cross on his back, the nails piercing his hands and feet, breathing, the agony of being watched. *The Spiritual pain* Jesus had never sinned now He was covered in it. He had lived in fellowship with God, now isolated from God. My God, my God why have you abandoned me? Who can imagine the spiritual loneliness Jesus felt in that eternal moment (and it must have felt never ending to Jesus) when our sin cut him off from the Father.

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. Romans 5:8 (NLT)

Participation

1. PRAYER WITH NAILS...(show PowerPoint on cd) This would be good near the beginning of the meeting – then put the nails back in the ziplock bag to be used later in the meeting.
Hold the nails in your hand as we pray about everyday situations and how we can recognise God's Abundant

Blessings in those circumstances.

- Let us think and pray now for those who are in pain, remembering that God is always in control.
 - Think of others who face an unfair situation through no fault of their own.
 - Think of those who are homeless, or confused, or feel unloved.
 - Think of those we know who are sick.
 - Think of those who are jobless or face an uncertain future.
 - Think of those who feel life has passed them by.
 - As you hold the nail in your hands, THANK GOD for Jesus
2. MAKE A CROSS WITH NAILS Your challenge is to make a cross out of nails... Do this as you listen to worship music or sing songs of worship to God. Suggestions. Once again we think of the cross where he died or How deep the Father's love for us.
 - You held those nails in your hands before and thought about normal, everyday situations.
 - Now with the nails and wire MAKE A CROSS out of it
 - Put the nails across each other like a cross,
 - Wrap the wire around the point where the nails intersect to bind the nails into a cross.
 - Crisscross the wire in the centre.
 - Recall an event of the Crucifixion with each wrap.Whilst you are doing this...
 - Remember Jesus, who, as the nails were hammered into him, prayed that God would forgive those who were torturing him.
 - Ask God to give you the power to forgive as Jesus did.

Extra Participation

1. Write txt messages that include encouragement and a challenge about Jesus being alive. Put it in your mobile and send it to a friend... E.g. Jesus alive! Wiv u 24/7 +4eva... live 4 him
2. Watch "Matthew" DVD Search by event The crucifixion and The death of Jesus. Write 2 poems illustrating the theme of sadness being transformed into gladness...
3. Easter week Family devotions (See CD). These can be done together as a family or some of our ladies rang a friend each day and read the Bible together. The idea is to make time each day to intentionally discover and discuss Jesus' love and sacrifice for each of us. Use these experiences to create memories this Easter.
Easter Celebrations have an amazing impact on children, so I've include activities for families to do together that have an eternal impact on children. I also sent these out each day as emails to families.

In Nurturing Relationships

(Mother's Day)

Major Romona Kinder

This is designed around a progressive dinner in which the ladies go to three different venues.

1) Entree 2) Main 3) Dessert

Preparations

Pre arrange the different houses you want to go to and what food is served. It would be great if you asked some of the ladies to bring food that the recipe has been handed on to them by their mothers or grandmothers, and get them to say where the recipe comes from and what memories it brings.

Send out invitations well in advance inviting all of the ladies. You may like to encourage them to bring their friends, sisters, mothers and grandmothers who do not normally attend.

Buy gifts from a \$2 shop and either wrap them or put them in nice bags to be given to the ladies during the night. Attach the abundance gift tags. (See CD)

First venue – Entree

Celebrating Daughters

Have ladies share the stories about the food they have made after or during the entrees.

And then have someone read out the following after you have eaten;

Introduction

Signe Hammer said: "Mothers of daughters are daughters of mothers and have remained so, in circles joined to circles, since time began."

Isn't that an interesting thought! Every person here is a daughter. We all share that one common bond.

The thing about daughters is:

- Even when they're not with you, you can never escape their presence in your heart,
- They need love the most when they are hardest to love.
- Once they're teenagers, no matter how much they love you, they will still embarrass you.
- They are so much like you, and yet so different.
- They break your heart one minute and make you laugh with joy the next.
- They often steal your clothes from your closet and yet will never listen to your advice when the two of you shop for clothes.
- Daughters are a gift that is forever.

Second Venue – Main Course

Celebrating Mothers

After you have eaten and people have shared the stories

about the food they have brought have someone read out the following.

The thing about Mothers

- You can't lie when you are looking into their eyes.
- When they're on a diet, everyone in the family is too.
- All their children are geniuses.
- They are the best cook in the world.
- They always take your side in an argument unless you are arguing with them.
- No matter how old you are they are always the best person to have around when you are sick.
- They will always love you.
- And in a crisis who do you call?

Third Venue - Dessert

Celebrating Grandmothers

After or during dessert and coffee have someone read out the following and share the stories of the recipes.

The thing about grandmothers

- They are soft and cuddly
- Always make you feel as if you are the most special person in the world
- Give lots of gifts (although not another pair of socks)
- Make amazing cakes and cookies (and even though they have given you the recipe yours never taste as good, must be the love.)

Present Gifts

Benediction

John 10:10 - "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).

And part of that abundance is found in nurturing relationships. Tonight we have looked at three significant relationships in our lives - that of mother, daughter and grandmother, and we have celebrated these relationships and the significance they have to each one of us.

Know that you are loved and are more precious than flowers, perfume or gems. Be a woman of God, a daughter, a mother and a grandmother who is called blessed by her family and friends.

'Based on 'Mothers and Daughters' by Audrey Etsell, published in 'A Sketch - A Program Resource Guide for Women 2003', Canada and Bermuda Territory.'

Recognising God's Abundant Blessings - Bible Study

Commissioner Heather Lang

"May I **never** forget the good things He does for me"
Psalm 103:2 (NLT)

Long ago I was introduced to an idea by Selwyn Hughes in his devotional writings, "Every day with Jesus", and he suggested that when we wake in the morning it is good to begin each day by thinking of 5 things for which to thank God. I have done this now for many years and I find it so difficult to stop at 5. The list just goes on and on. By commencing the day on a positive note, it becomes easier to take throughout the day an **"attitude of gratitude"**.

Try it! It will lift your spirit and cause you to recognise God's extravagant grace as the blessings flow from Him in abundance.

The dictionary defines 'abundance' as; "Existing in plentiful supply – copious amounts"
So, bear that in mind, when we read Psalm 103: 1-5, & verse 8 (The Message).
It is a wonderful reminder of God's abundant blessings. Read it in the first person...it is very personal, written just for you!

1-2 O **my** soul, bless GOD. From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name!
O **my** soul, bless GOD, don't forget a single blessing!

3-5 He forgives **my** sins—every one.
He heals **my** diseases—every one.
He redeems **me** from hell—saves **my** life!
He crowns **me** with love and mercy—a paradise crown.
He wraps **me** in goodness—beauty eternal.
He renews **my** youth—I'm always young in his presence.

8 God is sheer mercy and grace; ... he's rich in love. "
What a long litany of abundant blessings from our generous God. His mercies are new each morning, and His love, faithfulness and grace are already at work when we open our eyes each day. We can readily recognise and live in God's abundant blessings.

Pause for a few minutes and make a list of God's abundant blessings, then take the time to THANK HIM! Finish your prayer with the words "May I **never** forget the good things that you do for me".

At the conclusion of our term in the Singapore Command it was time to finally say farewell to the Myanmar Region. The Salvationists said to me "Ma, Ma Colonel, please do not forget us", and then they presented me with a hand woven bag with the words, "This is our bag of blessings. We need a power generator, a photocopier, a new Regional

HQ, a vehicle, Corps buildings, telephones, etc etc" - the list was very long and costly.
From that time onward, we promised to tell their story so that the bag of blessings wish list could slowly become a reality.

I often look at the bag and it reminds me to pray for the dear people of Myanmar, but it also reminds me of how blessed we are. God has been so good to us in Australia and when you see how other people live, ours truly is a land of plenty.
It is also a reminder that, as daughters of the King of Kings, we are so rich in spiritual resources. God has made abundant provision and He lavishes His blessings upon us so generously – yes, in copious amounts.
I have a favourite passage of scripture from which I derive much strength and encouragement as I journey through life and I want you to share it with me - **my bag of blessings, if you like!**

It is Philippians 4 and there are 4 verses that are just packed full of blessings and promises, and they are ours to recognise and utilise.

Verse 5: God's Presence

"The Lord is near" (NIV)

This, I believe is the key to this entire magnificent passage of scripture. Because He is near we need not be anxious for anything. David, in Psalm 16 verse 8, expresses this nearness of God "I am constantly aware of the Lord's presence. He is near and nothing can shake me". Thank you, Jesus, for your abiding presence.
And because He is near we experience the blessing of...

Verse 7: God's Peace

"The peace which transcends all understanding will guard you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."(NIV)

It never ceases to amaze me that Paul wrote these words while he was chained to a prison guard, 24 / 7, and we think we've got problems! It reminds us that we can know God's inner peace regardless of outward circumstances. We have the peace of God to **guard** us and the God of peace to **guide** us.

So often we are confronted by all kinds of problems and turbulence, and yet we can have a sense of calm within. That is the peace that Paul is talking about in this verse – the peace which exceeds anything we can understand. In fact, verse 6 in the Message paraphrase says "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle

you down". It's good advice; indeed they are great words to live by. Even though we are not sure what tomorrow will bring, we can be sure of this one thing. Because God is near we can experience the blessing of His peace, come what may.

Verse13: God's Power

"I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me". (TEV)

WOW! That is good news and it gives a clear message that Jesus not only lives within us but he also POURS His POWER into us and because of this we can confidently say, **I can – through Christ**. In our own strength, **we can't**, but through Christ, **we can**!

Again, in The Message paraphrase, Eugene Peterson puts it this way when he says *"Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am."* Satan will tell you "You can't, and will try to fill your head with all kinds of negative thoughts, but just give him a good kick and say, I can. It is positive power, so let us keep the PMA (positive mental attitude) flowing. In fact, success comes in **cans**, not in **can not**s.

John Maxwell reminds us that Paul maintained a positive attitude even in prison and even on 'rotten' days. Paul teaches us that:

1. Attitude has little to do with circumstances – *"I have learned in whatever state I am to be content"* verse 11
2. Attitudes can change, just like circumstances – *"I know how to be abased and how to abound"* verse 12
3. Attitudes can be improved if we learn the secret – *"In all things I have learned both to be full or to be hungry, both to abound or suffer need"*. Verse 12
4. Attitudes have a source for their strength – *"I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me"* verse 13

Verse 19: GOD'S PROVISION

"My God will supply ALL your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (NIV) ... And he does!

Maybe not all that we want, but He certainly provides all that we need, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The word **PROVISION** comes from two Latin words: **PRO** meaning **BEFORE** and **VIDEO** meaning **TO SEE**. God's provision means that He sees to it beforehand. It is God working in advance to arrange circumstances and situations for the fulfilling of His purposes.

With God in control, *life is not a series of accidents- it is a series of appointments*.

Abraham called God "JEHOVAH-JIREH" meaning "the Lord will provide".

In more than forty years of ministry, I have proved the truth of those words over and over again. God sees what we have need of before we even ask.

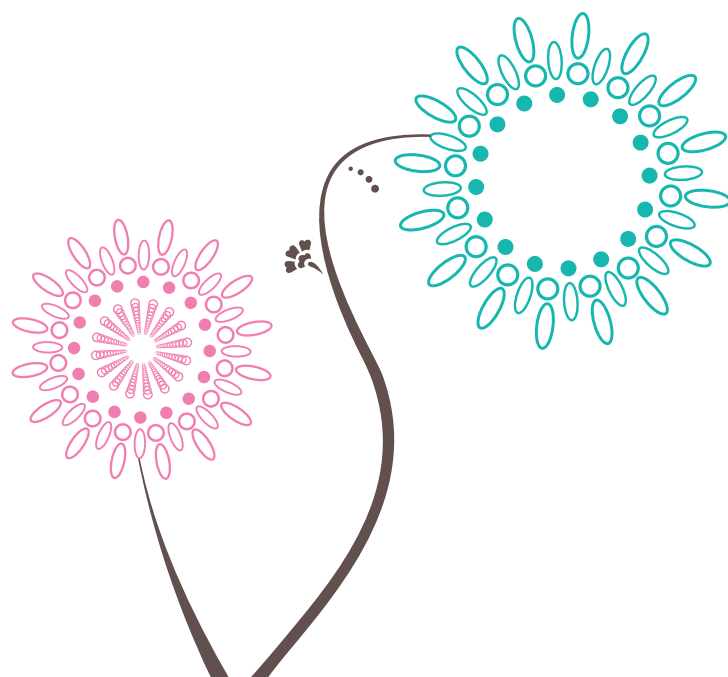
I never cease to wonder at His marvellous provision. I have always known this but since retiring, there have been many practical examples of this wonderful provision. Having built our a new home , there always seems to be something else that we need , and every time when our financial resources have reached exhaustion, quite unexpectedly, a cheque will arrive in the post, or a rebate show up in the bank, and again we have that wonderful provision, just when we need it. Yes, God is Jehovah – Jireh, our provider in every sense of the word, and that is just one reason we begin each day by thanking God for His provision and His abundant blessings.

TO PONDER: Reflect on times when God has provided for your needs and make a list. THANK HIM!

That is my bag of blessings, **God's Presence**, **God's peace**, **God's power** and **God's provision** and it is this continual outpouring of abundant grace that will sustain us throughout our journey as we trust Him. Our God is awesome and we **can** make it through any situation with His presence, His peace, His power and His provision.

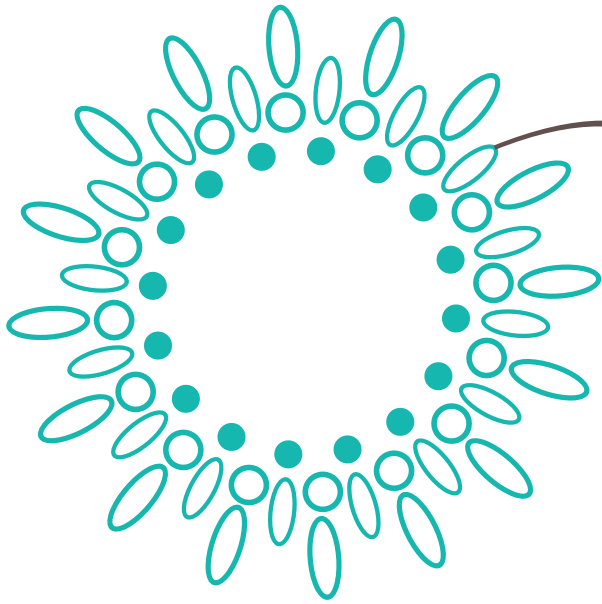
A PRAYER: Our gracious and loving God, help us to never forget the good things you do for us. Thank you for your promise: *"I will open the windows of Heaven for you, and I will pour out a blessing so great that you won't have enough room to take it in"*. Malachi 3:10b NLT. How good is that- so get your bag of blessings ready to receive all that God has in store for you.

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"He who supplies seed to
the sower and bread for food
will supply and multiply your
resources and increase the harvest
of your righteousness."

2 Corinthians 9:10 RSV



Abundant Living

Knowing What Matters

Captain Wendy-Sue Swann

Matthew 6:25-26 *"If you decide for God, living a life of God – worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.* (MSG)

Introduction

Knowing what matters is being aware of what occupies our space. With so many things to worry about now more than ever it is important that we occupy our space with God and our relationship with him.

Ideas

Live Big For Less – Big W are always telling us that at their store we can live big for less, which to some extent is true. But if you really want to live big for less, know what really matters - seek salvation, know God's will and live accordingly - and you'll "have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)" (AMP) John 10:10

Décor

Fashion and food magazines – Bibles – Pictures of Jesus

Participation Ideas

Fashion Timeline (what was popular in which era) have pictures of different outfits (from magazines or internet) and have 2 ladies come up and try and put them in the right timeline order, you could make more than 1 set and have the ladies in teams.

Favourite Food (My Kitchen Rules taste off) the week before ask the ladies to bring something that they like to cook and have a mini My Kitchen Rules taste off. Allow everyone to vote on which was their favourite.

Songs

Bobby McFerrin	Don't worry, be happy
HLSB 14	Dear Lord, as keeper of the home –
HLSB 115	There shall be showers of blessing –
Michael W Smith	Breathe (This is the air I breathe)

Scripture

Matthew 6:24-34 – NLT & AMP
Luke 10:38-42

Handouts (See CD)

Devotions

If you looked up the definitions of know and matter in the Macquarie Dictionary you would find that a definition of 'Knowing What Matters' = 'To be aware of whatever occupies space'

Are we aware of what occupies our space? Do we fill too much of our space with things that don't matter, the clothes we wear, the food we eat? Spend the next minute becoming aware of whatever occupies our space. Let's write them down. Are we allowing concern that our clothes are not the latest fashion, that our TV is not 3D, that we can't eat at 5 star restaurants to occupy our space? Are we allowing these concerns to push us into occupying our space with work and money-making ventures?

Do we really want these unessential things occupying our space? No!

We want God and the work for which He created us to do to be the thing that occupies our space.

In Luke 10 we are told when Jesus tells Martha what really matters, Jesus said to his friend, "Martha, you're bothered about so many things. So worried and distracted." Then Jesus says something that is truly world-shattering especially by today's standards "Only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." What Mary had chosen, what she wants to occupy her space with was to cultivate her relationship with Jesus, above all else – and that one necessary thing would never be taken from her. It's quite clear what Jesus is saying - that when you boil all of life down to the basics – not much is truly important. In fact, He says only one thing really matters, and it's that one thing that should occupy our space.

In The Message Matthew 6:25-26 is put this way

"If you decide for God, living a life of God – worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds."

So while we need to think about what we eat or wear, there are more important things to occupy our space. If the birds can count on God to take care of them, and we know we are worth more to him than birds, then we can know that he will take care of us.

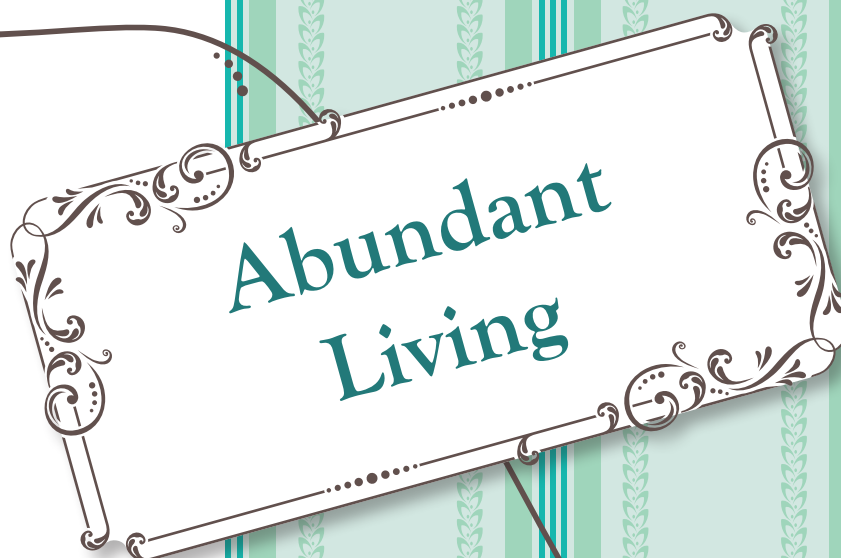
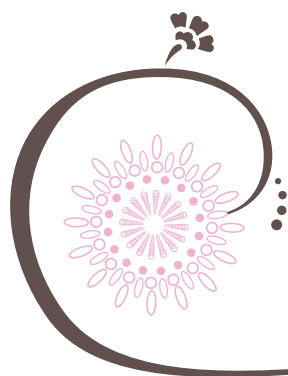
When we 'Know What Matters' when we occupy our lives (space) with God and living for him as Matthew 6:33 reminds us "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

Participation

Idea based on a section from the book "I Grow in Grandad's Garden" by Brian Andrew & Ellie

In the book Brian talks about having a "Think & Thank" chair in his garden. In this idea we just use the chairs we're in and take a couple of minutes to think about what really matters (our relationship with Jesus) and do we make it the most important thing in our lives. Then thanking God for giving us all we need and abundantly more.

Readings (See CD)



With a Cheerful Heart

Mrs Cheryl Grigg

Scripture

This meeting is based on the verse from Proverbs 17:22 (NLT) -

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength."

Décor

Have the main table set up in three sections. The first section, pictures of different things that can make us feel depressed in the every day life – money, health issues, desire of material items for homes etc. The second section can be simply a Bible and a wooden cross. The third section can represent things which can uplift our spirits, i.e. flowers, cards from friends, pictures of children from developing countries etc. Use your own imagination, the idea being how Jesus Christ can change our feelings of sadness to feelings of being abundantly blessed.

Introduction

I think if we had to be honest, most of us would have to admit to not feeling cheerful all of the time. There are often periods of time in our lives when we feel a little sad and sorry for ourselves. There is a common saying today when we feel sorry for ourselves – "having a pity party". We can be so busy thinking of all the things in our lives that are going wrong, or are/are not happening, that we fail to even think of the positive and uplifting things in our lives.

These experiences can often determine how our whole day will unfold and if we are not careful, can be translated to others.

I think God looks upon us and thinks "hello, I'm here, I'm available, you can talk to me about this". God longs to hear from us at these times and if we look to Him for His help, He is ready willing and able to help us. Now the circumstances we are in may not disappear as we would like, but God helps our attitude of feeling sorry for ourselves to change our heart to being cheerful in all circumstances. Our God does care and understand and He longs to walk our journey with us, no matter how insignificant or how important our circumstances of life are.

Songs

SASB 10 Joyful, joyful, we adore thee
SASB 35 Morning has broken
SASB 37 O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
SASB 552 Thank you, Lord, for all your goodness

Roll Call – Word "Cheerful/Happy"

Suggested Websites

<http://www.echristianstories.com/funny-christian-stories.shtml>

<http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Seniors.htm>

<http://christianity.about.com/od/topicaldevotions/qt/laughtertherapy.htm>

http://www.ellenbailey.com/poems/ellen_424.htm

Suggestion 1

Ask ladies to share with everyone things that make them feel cheerful and happy (remembering that this meeting is meant to be a positive experience).

A Bible Heart Quiz (See CD)

Suggestion 2

Ask the ladies to write a list of all the things in their lives that they are grateful for – once again focussing on the positive. Time them for 2 minutes and give a prize to the lady who has the longest list.

A Personal Testimony

Invite a lady to share her personal testimony and faith journey who has gone through a very difficult time, like a period of serious illness or loss of a child, for example.

Devotions

10 benefits of living a life of cheerfulness

1. Life is about making choices. When I choose to be cheerful, I will not be controlled by my circumstances ... now that makes the enemy frustrated. Instead of being sad and whining about your life, you choose to let Jesus take control. That's powerful.
2. When I choose to be cheerful I increase my physical health and wellbeing. Doctors and medicine are so expensive, but I can increase my health by cultivating a cheerful spirit. It is good medicine, and it doesn't cost anything! If I am miserable I am not promoting good health and wellbeing. God created me to have a cheerful heart. God gave me the gift of laughter. Let's not neglect such a wonderful gift. A healthy spirit and mind free from worry increases a person's health.
3. When I choose to be cheerful I improve my looks. There is nothing more refreshing than a lovely, healthy smile. All the money in the world can be spent on face lifts and botox, and I can apply makeup all over my face but unless I use the natural attractiveness of a smile, all else is in vain. A smile is the most beautiful face of all.
4. When I choose to smile, other people enjoy my company ... and I think my husband would prefer that I was cheerful rather than grumpy.
5. When I choose to be cheerful, I help to make

Christianity attractive. There is nothing worse than cranky Christians. Jesus light shines through a cheerful heart.

6. When I am cheerful, then tension is lessened in my home. I become part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Now that's important.
7. My giving to God will honour Him more when I am cheerful.
8. When I choose to be cheerful I tend to have a more positive attitude rather than having the attitude of giving up. When I exercise the joy of the Lord, I am more likely to increase my efficiency, creativity and productivity.
9. When I am cheerful I manage the stress of life far more easily. A cheerful heart keeps me from taking life or myself too seriously. Life on earth is too short to waste on being weighed down by life's stresses and strains. My plans, my desires and my problems are nothing in the light of eternity. Let's lighten up and 'smell the roses'!
10. When I choose to be cheerful I am honouring God with an attitude that simply says "I thank you and praise you Jesus for all your goodness to me." A cheerful heart sees things that a miserable person is unable to see.

The cheerful heart has a continual feast ...

Prayer and Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:11 The Message

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In the Here and Now

Captain Sharon Allen

Introduction

Begin by asking the ladies what do people worry about today? What things do they worry about? Bob Marley sang "Don't worry, Be Happy" – play this song at the beginning with the ladies having a print out of the lyrics to read or sing along with. At the end of the song have the ladies write down the things that they worry about or someone they know worries about - family, health, job security, getting married, passing exams – and keep the list for later in the meeting.

Scripture

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes. Matthew 6:34

Décor

Large print out of words "Today" "Tomorrow" "Here" "Now".

Have lots of clocks around the room– obviously all saying the same time

(Maybe ladies could bring in a clock or watch that is unique or was given to them as a present).

Songs

HLSB ch2	All your anxiety all your care
HLSB ch 4	In thee O Lord do I put my trust
HLSB ch 26	My Lord knows the way
HLSB ch 52	I'm in his hands
HLSB 93	Simply trusting every day
HLSB 95	Standing on the promises
HLSB 111	There is a name I love to hear
HLSB 124	What a fellowship, what a joy divine
HLSB 125	What a friend we have in Jesus

Contemporary Songs

Still

Have faith in God

I walk by faith

Quotations

The following website has a number of great quotes about worrying. They could be printed on paper and each lady could read out one or two.

<http://www.quotegarden.com/worry.html>

Blessings

Have each lady write down all the ways God has blessed her today – read out the lists and then tell them to put this list in their bag somewhere in case of an emergency . Pull out the list whenever you feel tempted to worry and begin to count your blessings again. Alternatively if the group or someone in the group enjoys craft they could make a blessing bag and the ladies could fill the bag with things to

encourage someone else – notes, Bible promises etc.

They could be given out within the group, the Corps or the community.

Humour (See CD)

Devotional

Matthew 6: 25-34

What do you think about worry? How does worry affect you? Really, worry is a waste – a waste of time, thought and nervous energy. In these verses we see that all the worry is directed to tomorrow – food, clothing but it is experienced today. We need to learn to live for today, to maximise today. Everyday has its problems, some constant and some varying. We have a quota of problems each day and we need to stop ourselves from going into tomorrow and taking on tomorrow's problems today. Tomorrow's quota of problems will come but we will be ready to deal with them when tomorrow comes.

Think about the things you are worried about? Are they to do with today? Most are probably not. Many of the situations that entangle our minds are situations that we have borrowed from tomorrow and yet they are affecting our health and wholeness today.

The final verse reminds us to keep ourselves focussed on God. The Message translation of Matthew 6:34 says, "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."

How good are you at taking things to God as soon as they arise? Remember the God who helps us today will be the same God tomorrow and He will help us tomorrow. As the Hebrew Christians experienced troubles and trials, the author reminds them not to worry because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever "Hebrews 13:8. Christ is changeless, everlasting, always the same so don't think about tomorrow instead think about the changeless Christ.

Prayer Activity

Have each lady pick up her piece of paper where she wrote down the things that she or someone else they know worries about. Ask them to look carefully at what they have written and then to fold the paper over so they cannot see the worries. At this time you could sing or play an appropriate song and if the ladies are able they could bring their paper – "their worries" – to God. Perhaps you could have a cross or use the mercy seat or create some space where women can meet with God. Let them know that they can come privately or have someone else pray with them to encourage them to hand their worries over to God with the faith and confidence that He is able to deal with the hard things.

Generosity

Major Romona Kinder

Song

What the Lord has done in me
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nolqO2sS9W0>

Competition

Make a list of all the things for which you thank God
Where does God fit into our lives, our resources? A lot of people say He is number one.

Watch

The God Pie
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upmyrinWq64&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Discuss the Generosity Quotes (See CD)

Testimony

Have someone talk about a time in their life when they have been blessed by the unexpected generosity of someone else.

Discussion

May like to take the opportunity to discuss ways that the group can give or raise money towards this year's Missionary Project.

Talk

John 12:1-8

In this reading we see the story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus. It stresses the point that Christian giving should be an expression of love and gratitude. We do what we can, we give what we can, but it's the motive that matters. Jesus recognised what's happening here. Mary is bringing her dearest and best and pours it out as a sacramental gesture of an outward and visible sign of inward gratitude and devotion. That should reflect our giving. Not some law but a heart touched by the grace of God that says nothing is too good for Him.

So Mary gave an extravagant gift, an exclusive gift, and when she did this, fragrance filled the house. Jesus only asks of us what we can do – and this is beautiful in His sight.

Wherever giving is spoken about in Scripture, somewhere in the context, God is talking about blessing his people. Now, we don't give to God as a type of trade off or make deals with God, or if I give I'll get more back. No, we give with no strings attached. We give to One who does bless those who give and we discover the blessing that comes in

giving. We discover the grace of giving which Paul spoke about in his letter to the Corinthians.

It's like Mary who brought this extravagant gift, this exclusive and now enduring gift to Jesus. If we follow this kind of example, take Mary's principles of giving as a model, if we see this as the principle of giving that reflects a heart overflowing with love and gratitude, then we will begin to understand the scripture when it talks about giving to Jesus.

Our Stewardship can be like this – an outward and physical sign of an inward and spiritual grace – a beautiful and sacramental expression of "our lives, our all this very day" poured out as an extravagant, exclusive and enduring gift to Jesus.

Giving as Mary gave is the model, the standard of which we sing sometimes:

*Take my love, my Lord I pour at thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be ever **(that's enduring)** only
(that's exclusive) all **(that's extravagant)** for Thee.*

In this familiar story we meet a woman who did something quite spectacular, but she was not seeking to do something spectacular. She was simply someone for whom Jesus did so much, and she could find no words to express her gratitude.

Now in Jerusalem and in ancient Israel ointment, perfume, nard was very important. For the women in Jerusalem these were special possessions. For this woman, it was her life's investment her most precious position. So in this story Mary suddenly takes this container and pours its contents over the feet of Jesus. Love prompts that type of spirit. Mary's was an impulsive act of devotion, in which she threw away her most prized possession; Mary's gift represented her "dearest and best".

An Extravagant Gift

In *John chapter 12:3* we read:
"about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume"

This was equal in value to a full year's pay for a working man. It was of great cost that Mary gave this; it truly was an extravagant gift. A few hours later in verse 12 the crowd greeted Jesus with palm branches. But these cost very little. It cost Mary everything to break the vessel of nard.

Sometimes we cannot find words to say what's in our heart; we may say it with flowers or a gift. Mary was doing this, finding a way to say what only the heart could say. It is one thing to wave the palm branches of public worship (this is pleasing to the Lord), but quite another to offer

that “true spiritual worship” which involves our making “a living sacrifice” (*Romans 12:1*).

The gift was criticised by Judas. “Why this waste?” We may feel Judas does have a point, but we must understand the deeper things of the heart, the life changing encounter Mary had with Jesus. Mary had got it right. Worldly-minded people ask the same question like when a gifted young person decides to enter some kind of full-time service for God.

By Alan Harley: The Fragrance of Stewardship, Bible study 6, Leaders notes Planned Giving

Watch

The Gift of Generosity

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhmmeFuzGRk&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Everything we have comes from God. If we recognise that everything belongs to God and we are only stewards of it then we are free to give it back to Him. We have been blessed to be a blessing. We are blessed to bless others.

Discuss

What are some of the things that God has given to us that we can give back and use to bring blessing to others?

Benediction

Watch Prayer of thanks

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5r0FEfS_mP8

Other Resources (See CD)

Generosity from a Biblical Viewpoint by Dorothy Young

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Abundant
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How We Treat Each Other

Major Helen Pearson

Scripture

Luke 6:37-38 "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults – unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back – given back with bonus and blessings. Giving, not getting is the way. Generosity begets generosity. (Msg)

Décor

A bunch of roses and chocolates set out on the table to be shared with the ladies during the meeting. To show that you respect, love and appreciate them.

Songs

SASB 50 If human hearts are often tender
SASB 662 Help us to help each other, Lord
SASB 664 Love at home

Reading

Luke 6: 27-38 extra reading Matthew 7: 9-12

ACTIVITY: Hand out a card or writing paper with an envelope which has a stamp on it for each lady to write a message of appreciation for a friend or relative, letting them know that they are respected, loved and appreciated.

Quotes concerning how we treat each other

www.quoteagarden.com/kindness.html

Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you – not because they are nice, but because you are ~
Author Unknown

Kindness, like a boomerang always returns
~ Author Unknown

"By swallowing evil words unsaid, no one has ever harmed his stomach" ~ Winston Churchill

"Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to die by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can muster and do it with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again" ~ Og Mandino

As the bus slowed down at the crowded bus stop, the Pakistani bus conductor leaned from the platform and called out, "Six only!" The bus stopped. He counted on six passengers, rang the bell, and then, as the bus moved off, called to those left behind: "So sorry, plenty of room in my heart - but the bus is full." He left behind a row of smiling faces. It's not what you do - it's the way that you do it ~
The Friendship Book of Francis Gay, 1977

Quotes concerning how we treat children

www.baby-poems.com/children_learn

"If you want your children to improve let them overhear the nice things you say about them to others" ~ Haim Ginott

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy
If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciate
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence,
If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.
If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith,
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
He learns to love the world.
~ Dorothy Law Nolte Ph.D

Stories (See CD)

Competition

In 3 Minutes write down as many ways you can think of that demonstrate God's love to others

Devotional

When we think about how we treat other people, the golden rule jumps into mind. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

Before Jesus came to earth this golden rule was written in the negative sense it said, "Do NOT do to others what you do NOT want others to do to you".

It is called the golden rule as it is the most important issue in social ethics.

When we really think about the golden rule it reminds us how selfish we can be! Jesus' audience could relate to this command because people universally demand respect, love, and appreciation whether they deserve it or not. Jesus knew this and used it to show how His people should treat others: how they themselves wanted to be loved, respected, and appreciated.

In Matthew 22: 37 we read - Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind." 38. This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: "love your neighbour as you love yourself.."

Have we changed in 2,000 years? No I do not believe we have. We still want to be loved, respected and appreciated.

Being Satisfied

Susan Petterson

Décor

Vases of flowers, floral tablecloths, mirrors different shapes & sizes, new clothes / old clothes

Definition (Power point see CD)

Being Satisfied (ppt slide 2)

To have what is desired, expected or needed

To be free from doubt or anxiety, assure, convince

To be given what you are owed

To have paid or discharged a debt

Scripture

Luke 12:25-28 (MSG) (ppt slide 3)

25-28 "Has anyone by fussing before the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? If fussing can't even do that, why fuss at all? Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They don't fuss with their appearance—but have you ever seen colour and design quite like it? The ten best dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you?"

Songs

SASB 274

He came to give us life

The Source 118

Give thanks

Geoff Bullock

You give me shelter

His eye is on the sparrow

Cast all your cares

Mansion over the hilltop

In His time

Activity

Prior notice would need to be given – bring along clothes that you haven't worn for a long time (usually waiting until you lose weight) They could be donated to Salvos Stores or RSFS or have a "Swap" table – swap your clothes with someone else for a donation for the Missionary project.

Quotes on Being Satisfied (See CD)

(ppt slides 4 & 5)

Questions

(ppt slide 6)

What would you change about yourself?

What do you think is your best feature?

What are you most grateful for?

If you were to liken yourself to a flower which flower would you choose?

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Humour /stories

1. According to an old fable, attributed to Aesop, a dog was carrying a bone as he crossed a bridge. He looked into the water and saw his own reflection. He took this to be another dog and another bone. He desperately wanted the other bone so he dropped the one he had to scare the "other dog." Of course there was no other bone and he lost the one he had into the water. Such is the nature of human greed. In the effort to get what we want, we frequently lose what we have.

2. There is a story about an Amish farmer who bought a new pair of overalls. Of course, the Amish are famous for their simplicity, and trying to avoid pride. As he put on his new overalls and looked in the mirror, he said, "Oh, this will never do! I'll be proud in these!" So he removed the new overalls and put on the patched, worn, and dirty ones. He stood again in front of the mirror and said, "Ahh, you'd look good in anything!" Sins like pride can be so deceitful, that you can be proud that you're not proud.
(source unknown)

Devotional

How often have you looked into the mirror & said I wish..... I wish I was taller, I wish I was shorter; I wish I was thinner, or less likely I wish I was fatter. Those with curly hair want to straighten it; those with straight hair want it curly. Mrs Jones has a new car; next door got a new satellite dish, the man down the street well he is sure to have something that I would like!! Society makes it seem as though the whole goal of life is to accumulate things. There is a saying that has become popular "he who dies with the most toys wins" or as seen on a fridge magnet "she with the most shoes wins!" In our consumer driven culture this would nearly seem to be true. Nearly, but not quite. Remember that owning more than one set of clothes & shoes makes you richer than most of the earth's population. For many of us our wardrobes are bulging with clothes in a range of sizes. Our homes are filled with TV's, sound systems, computers & an endless list of items "necessary" for living in the 21st century. But are we satisfied? Maybe for a while until the next model comes out, or new seasons colours are in but it soon passes. There is a verse of Scripture in Philippians 4:19 (ppt slide 7) which says¹⁹ My God will meet all your needs. He will meet them in keeping with his wonderful riches that come to you because you belong to Christ Jesus. (NIRV).

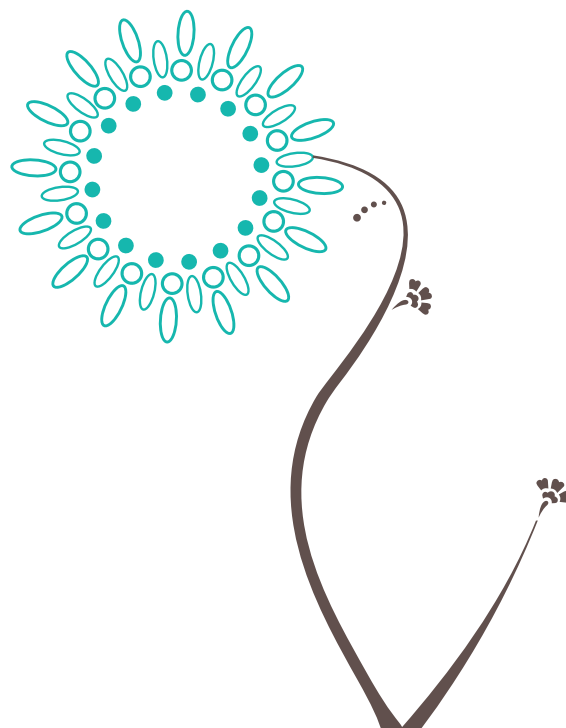
God knows just what we need & what is best for us. The theologian, Haddon Robinson stated this, "With Him the calf is always the fatted calf; the robe is always the best robe; the joy is always unspeakable; and the peace passes understanding. There is no grudging in God's goodness. He does not measure His goodness by drops like a druggist

filling a prescription. It comes upon in floods. If only we recognize the lavish abundance of His gifts, what a difference it would make in our lives!" What a difference indeed.

We stand before the Lord like a child with his hand stuck in the lolly jar who can't take his hand out without letting go of the lolly. He wants to get his hand out but he wants the lolly too. God is waiting to offer so much more than things. He says "Come to me - If I give such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don't you think I'll attend to you, take pride in you, do my best for you?" It's not about "What" can satisfy me, it's about "Who". Life is not about possessions it's about God's abundance, he loves us extravagantly, he satisfies.

Gift Card (See CD)

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Fear Factor

Major Julie Campbell

This outline is based on the popular TV Program *Fear Factor*. The contestants participate in various difficult & seemingly impossible challenges. They learn to trust in their skill and abilities to face or overcome fears. Episodes of the show can be seen on YouTube. You might like to show one of the challenges.

Scripture

But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you.
Psalm 56:3 (NLT)

Songs

SASB 732	I'm in His hands
HLSB 95	Standing on the promises
HLSB 124	Leaning on the everlasting arms
HC 3	He is able more than able to accomplish what concerns me today Blessed be the name of the Lord (Matt & Beth Redman) Forever (Chris Tomlin)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6umWkVwpfBk>


Without degrading the real fears that women experience, use the following easy & fun challenges/games adapted from Top Ten Fear Factor Party Games. More games can be found on PartyGamesPlus.com. Used with permission.

PowerPoint (See CD)

1. Place a bowl of boiled eggs in front of the players. All players must pick up an egg out of a big bowl and on the count of three, immediately crack it against their forehead. The challenge is before the game you tell the players that one of the eggs is actually raw. Who has the courage to egg themselves in the face? The trick is that ALL the eggs are actually boiled and this is just a test of courage. The players that hesitate to crack the egg fails. Award all the players that don't hesitate with 5 points.

2. Empty a variety of different jars of baby food into individual bowls (make sure you know which is which). Label the bowls with numbers and challenge players to taste every bowl and try and guess what it is. To make it more of a challenge, add some food colouring into the food that might be given away by its colour. Make sure to have paper and pencils handy so guests can write their answers on them. Winner is the one that tastes and guesses the most correctly. Award 1 point for every correct guess, and 3 additional points to the one that has the most correct guesses

3. Provide all players with an object of varying sizes and value eg unused lipstick, a pen, a chocolate, candle, writing



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pad, packet of noodles, soap etc. The idea of the game is that they must go around the group and try and trade it for something bigger and better. To make things a little harder, place the objects in paper bags, so the women have no idea what they have or are trading. Set a time limit of 5 minutes, to trade. At the end of the time limit whoever has the biggest and best item wins. You can choose to have two winners by awarding 10 points for the biggest, and another 10 points for the best.

4. Fill a large bowl or children's pool with water, marbles, and bag of ICE (you want it to be freezing). The object of the game is for players to stick their foot in the ice water and grab as many marbles as they can in a two minute period. The winner is of course the one that collects the most marbles. Award 1 point for every marble they are able to retrieve and 3 additional points to the one that pulls out the most.

Fear Factor Alternative Activities (See CD)

Message

Fear is a factor of life that affects us all in many and varied ways. Some fears are obvious such as the fear of heights, spiders, confined places, old age, terrorism, unemployment, financial insecurity. Other fears are not so easily identifiable eg fear of failure, rejection or what others think.

Fear is a natural warning system that alerts us that something is not right and causes us to feel concerned and anxious in times of danger and uncertainty.

It's comforting to know that when we are afraid, God promises us strength and power to acknowledge and control the fear instead of our fears controlling us.

In Psalm 56:3 David speaks from his own experience and declares - But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you, God.

During a difficult and life threatening time in his life, David placed his trust in God, and focused on the Faith Factor instead of the Fear Factor.

A friend recently suggested the following as a helpful reminder that fear can be overcome through trusting in God.

F – Faith in God enables us to trust Him, in the most difficult and uncertain times of life. In the Bible, God reminds us not to be afraid over 100 times and promises to always be with us. God is faithful and assures us of His constant love and peace.

A little boy was crossing the ocean with his father, who was captain of the ship, when they ran into a terrible storm. The waves tossed them about like a cork and everyone was sick with fear. But he sat unafraid, his eyes directed toward a certain spot. When someone asked him why he was not afraid, he answered; 'I have my eye on that little window. Through it I can see the bridge, and on that bridge is my father. He's the captain of this ship. He has taken it through many storms and I know he will take it through this one too.'

When you feel afraid, look in faith to our Heavenly Father- He is faithful.

Memorise a couple of God's promises & repeat them whenever you feel afraid.

(Print the attached Bible Promises on coloured cardboard to give to the women. See CD)

E – Example. Read the stories throughout the Bible of the men and women of faith who trusted in God whenever they were afraid. Read or listen to the testimony of how other Christian women have trusted God with their fears.

A – Attitude. Our attitudes determines how we react to our fears. David declares that he will trust in God. It's a positive and confident statement. Whenever he felt afraid then his attitude was one of trust. I will trust and continue to trust not maybe. Confidently believe that God is in control.

R - Relationships are important in coping with our fears. Strengthen your relationship with God through worship, prayer and reading His Word. Phone a friend or have coffee with someone you trust and share how you are feeling. Ask them to pray with and for you.

When you are afraid, trust in God, and depend on the Faith Factor not the Fear Factor.

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A Healthy Recipe for Life

Major Daphne Cox

Décor

Place posters of people (including children), "enjoying life" (laughing, talking, eating, playing, taking part in fun activities etc), brightly coloured flowers (suggestion gerberas or sunflowers...could be artificial to save on cost) and brightly coloured cushions around the room. If possible include one with embroidered, "Live Well, Laugh Often, Love Much" (purchase these at gift shops, markets or even discount stores). Have pictures of clowns or ornamental 'clowns' around the room. Include posters/signs with the wording, "Live Well, Laugh Often, Love Much".

Introduction

Live Well! Laugh Often! Love Much!

How do you greet each day? What do you say when you wake up in the morning? Are you a 'lark', "Good morning, Lord!" or are you more like an 'owl', "Good Lord, it's morning..."

Commissioner Robert Street, a previous Chief Secretary, tells the story of his little daughter running into her parents' bedroom each morning and calling out, "It's a new day"! Her enthusiastic approach to the morning gave the Commissioner incentive to write a little book with that title, "It's A New Day".

Having a positive approach to life – guarding our minds against negative thinking – living out the abundant life that Jesus offers – is what we're focusing on today and to help us we're looking at some wise advice – Live Well, Laugh Often, Love Much.

Songs

SASB song 537	Be glad in the Lord and rejoice
SASB chorus 173	I'm living my life for Jesus
SASB chorus 215	Life is a song when you walk with Jesus
SASB chorus 206	There's joy in following Jesus all the way

Live Well

Live Well Magazines

These are full of information on healthy living and can be read online www.gnclivewell.com.au or purchased and included in the decor.

Lessons for Living

Go to www.lessons4living.com for lots of different ideas/thoughts on lessons for life.

Competition (See CD)

Something to think about

Our thinking affects our living. It's not so much what happens to us as to how we handle what happens to us. What goes on in our mind and our attitude can determine how "well" we live.

Quotes on Thinking

"Change your thoughts and you change your world" ~ Norman Vincent Peale

"People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be" ~ Abraham Lincoln

"As you think so shall you be" ~ Jesus Christ

You Are What You Think

http://www.lessons4living.com/you_are_what_you_think.htm

Poem (see CD)

Scripture

Philippians 4:8 (The Message)

Laugh Often

National Belly Laugh Day

January 24th – smile, throw your arms in the air and laugh out loud. What is Belly Laughing? Most of us giggle, chuckle, crack up, snort, and snicker about 13 times a day. A belly laugh, on the other hand, is a burst of deep loud hearty laughter that leaves you feeling happy for long after the laughter has stopped. You know those laughs – the kind that splits your sides and tears up your eyes.

Health Benefits of Laughter (see CD)

Quotes about Laughter

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people" ~ Victor Borge

"Nothing shows a man's character more than what he laughs at" ~ Unknown

"You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing".

~ Michael Pritchard

Participation

Invite the ladies to share an experience that made them or someone else laugh. Or an experience that brought them great joy or happiness – that made them feel it was good to be alive!

Humour

Organise someone to tell a few jokes
YouTube – “Keeping up Appearances”

Scripture reference

Proverbs 17:22 (The Message)

22 A cheerful disposition is good for your health; gloom and doom leave you bone-tired.

Love Much

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

This book can be purchased at any bookshop (there is a series of them – excellent). Refer to – Live this day as if it were your last... (Page 245).

Words of Wisdom (see CD)

Quotes Worth Quoting

“Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes and kindness in your smile.” ~ Mother Teresa

“To love God is to discover your created purpose. To love life is to live that life to the fullest”. ~ Bobby Houston

“Love God and love others as yourself”. ~ Jesus Christ

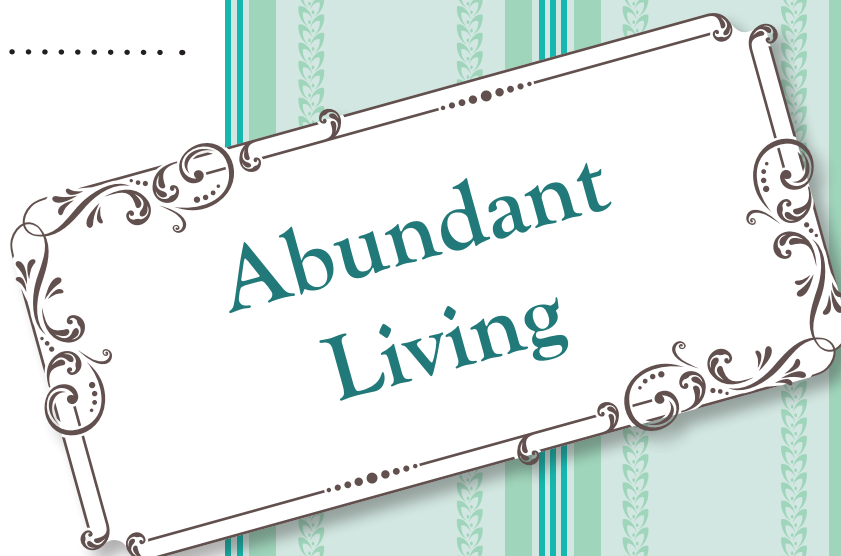
Poem (see CD)

Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8 (NLT)

Devotional Thought (see CD)

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Actively Looking for God's Provisions

Captain Christy Kurth

Introduction

The idea of this meeting is to focus on what we do have - the things that God has provided for us, not on the things that we do not have.

Ahead of time:

Most people have cameras on their phone, so ask people or a few people to take photos of the simple things they are thankful for, are evidence that God provides or could never have a price put on them.

Ask people to keep a journal for a week of all the good things that have happened in their day.

Ask people to share about their pictures or journal notes during the meeting and particularly how this activity may have affected the way they view or think about their life and God's provision.

Décor

For this meeting I would encourage you to ensure your space is clear and uncluttered of unnecessary stuff and NOT to put too much effort into decorating your space. If you do, make it very simple and inexpensive. Minimalism is the word here.

Relaxation

This is a skill used by company executives to school students. 5 -10 min a day allows you to stop thinking about all the pressures that may be crowding your mind or diary and allows the important things to come to the surface.

Find a mindfulness coach, a yoga instructor, a counsellor or psychologist who can come and teach some basic techniques in relaxation. Or look up some techniques and do 5-10 min at the beginning of the meeting.

Game

Give each person paper and pencil and ask them to list 10 things they could not do without if they were stranded on an island. Ask the people to share some of the things on their list. Then tell them their baggage limit has been reduced by half and they have to cut 5 things. Ask what kind of things they were willing to cut and how important they were to begin with.

Scripture

Luke 12:29-32

"What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works

fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself. (MSG)

Food for thought

We live in one of the most privileged countries in the world, and yet we seem to have turned into highly competitive consumers. Think about it - how often do we replace phones, clothes, cars and other gadgets simply because a newer model has come out or some one else has a better one than we do? We have TV shows, magazines and even the internet that show us all the latest things that we simply have to have. For so many of us getting the things we want can bring short term satisfaction and if we cannot get it, we can become frustrated. This approach to life has resulted in us wanting more, working longer and harder, surrounding our selves with ever more stuff, becoming increasingly competitive and getting into debt, yet we are more unhappy, unhealthy and discontent.

A few years back I found I was nearly ready to crash physically and emotionally. There were so many seemingly important and good things that I could have been doing and yet the harder and longer I worked the fewer results I was seeing. Despite many people telling me to stop and rest I felt that I simply did not have the time. I then went to some training where I learnt many good things. At the end I was told that I could not implement one of those things until I had cut three things from my schedule, I had to slow down to make room for the great things that God wanted to do.

Stop. Relax. Think. Are all the things that fill your life really making it better? Is God trying to provide you with a greater fulfilment? For the next week take 5 minutes a day to sit by yourself maybe at morning tea, take note of the ways in which God is providing for you and your family. What is he trying to do in your life, How is he trying to show you that he loves you? What can you remove from your life so that you don't miss out on what GOD has for you?

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When Life Gets Too Hard to Stand, Kneel

Major Carolyn Harmer

Concept

The idea of this meeting is to focus on prayer
To encourage women to build a healthy prayer support network
To know that when you feel your lowest prayer works
To share times in their lives when all they could do was rely on prayer
This meeting could coincide with a 24/7 prayer vigil in the corps
(it would be better having this meeting before the 24/7 prayer vigil in the hope that some of the ladies would then join in the 24/7 prayer vigil)

Décor

The room could be set up like a prayer room with various prayer stations

A mural on the wall could be displayed (either by painting on butchers paper or cutting out a collage of pictures and placing them on the wall) of people standing but gradually interspersed with a picture of someone kneeling, then gradually more and more pictures of people kneeling, until at the end of the mural they are all kneeling... around a cross.

This could also be part of the décor for the 24/7 prayer vigil
Use items like a variety of crosses (large and small), bibles, journals, paper and writing material, praying hands, picture of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, lots of cushions, bean bags, draping material, candles, soft music playing.

Create a "Prayer Tree" by placing a number of leafless branches in a large vase. Choose branches that you can actually hang paper leaves on with written prayer requests.

An alternative is creating a prayer wall perhaps by painting a brick wall design on butcher's paper or on a sheet placed on the wall.

One corner of the room could be set up like a Post Office with letterboxes, Australia Post posters, stamps, envelopes, prayer postcards etc but instead of calling it Australia Post you could call it "Prayer Post".

Activities

"Prayer Tree" -Ask the ladies to offer suggestions for prayer requests, write them down on paper leaves and hang them on the branches of the Prayer Tree. As the prayers are answered replace the leaves with flowers. This is something that can be started at this meeting, used throughout the 24/7 prayer vigil and maintain in the prayer life of the corps.

"Prayer Wall" -People can write their prayers on post-it notes and stick them on the wall. Later the notes can be taken down and recorded for follow-up prayer during the 24/7 prayer vigil.

"Prayer Line" - After the devotional segment of your meeting a time of reflection could take place. Organise with a few of your good prayer warriors to come forward to form a prayer line. Invite anyone who would like specific prayer that day to come forward so they can pray with them.

"Prayer Post" - The ladies could be invited to visit the Prayer Post so they can actually write a prayer to someone on a prayer postcard provided. These prayers could later be mailed to the recipient, that way they can read the prayer that was prayed for them rather than just be told "I prayed for you today."

Personal sharing - Ask the ladies if they would like to share any personal stories of how God strengthened them through prayer during times of great difficulty in their lives.

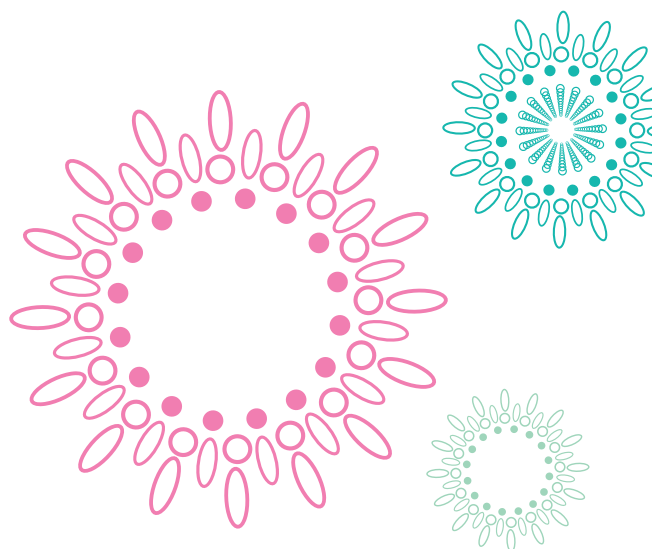
Songs

Song 576 SASB	God of comfort and compassion
	Tune 444 South Shields
Chorus 94 SASB	Prayer gently lifts me
Song 579 SASB	He giveth more grace
	Tune 591 Blacklands
Matt Redman	Blessed be your name
Foster & Sager	The Prayer

Devotional

(See CD)

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Living Out of a Place of Abundance - Bible Study

Major Lyn Edge

Introduction

Discuss What does abundance mean to you?
When in your life have you experienced a time of abundance?

God's promise of Abundance

Read: John 10:10 in as many versions of the bible as possible

Discuss: What do you think Jesus meant by these words?

What is abundance in the Christian life?

Read: Luke 12:13-21

Discuss: What did this man have an abundance of?
What was his attitude to his wealth?
What did Jesus say about it? (See verse 15)

Whilst we believe that God offers us an abundant life as we read in John 10:10 this life is not defined by material possessions, in fact it seems to be about something quite different. In the parable which you have just read Jesus says, "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Discuss: What did Jesus suggest should be where we find our abundance? (See verse 21)

Jesus is suggesting that our abundance should be found in being "rich toward God"

Discuss: What does being rich towards God mean to you?

Some commentators suggest this verse could be translated as rich in things pertaining to God. This might mean in spiritual things, in faith, and in good works.

To be rich toward God is to acknowledge that we receive all our riches from God, 'as the Ethiopic version reads; he gives up all into the hands of God, depends upon his providence for the increase, security, and continuance of it; and uses it to his honour and glory, and for the good of his interest; and is chiefly concerned for the riches of grace and glory; and enjoys much of God, and places all his riches in him: such a man is a wise man, but the reverse of this is the fool in the parable. (John Gill)

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Discuss What does this verse tell you about the abundant life?

Abundance calls for action

Read Genesis 12:1-3

These verses record the call to Abraham to go in response to God and in return God promised to make him and his family into a great nation and give them land and blessings.

Discuss: Why do you think God promised such blessings to Abraham?

These verses mark the beginning of the Israelite nation, a nation that was to know God and reveal God throughout their history. A nation that was special to God. However even at the outset of this new nation, God makes it clear that his purpose wasn't only for their own personal happiness and riches.

Re-read Genesis 12:3b

Discuss: What was God suggesting that the purpose of their blessings were?

From the beginning of the nation of the people of God, there was a suggestion that their blessings were given so that they might bless others.

Our abundance in Christ is not a gift to be held onto and kept to ourselves; it is to be shared if it is to be real.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

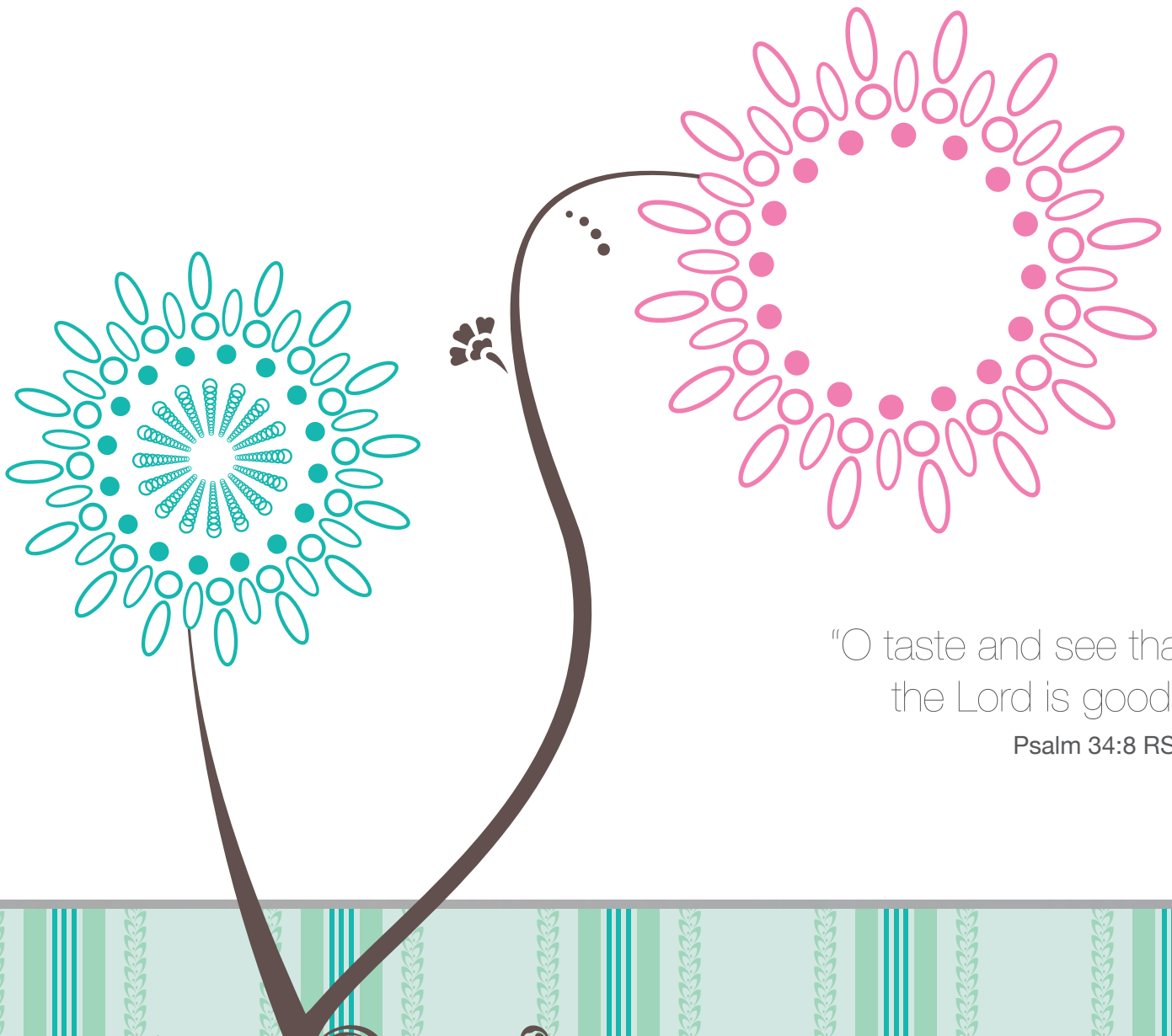
Discuss: How might you share your abundance in Christ with others?

Conclusion

If possible, listen to the song Heaven to Earth (We are blessed to bless a world in pieces) by Andy Flannigan.

YouTube clip at
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fx8FoTUyFk>

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"O taste and see that
the Lord is good!"

Psalms 34:8 RSV

Abundant Ministries

Sisterhood

North Brisbane Corps

Sisterhood@nbc is an opportunity for women to meet together and share in the journey of life. At sisterhood we laugh, we learn, we cry, we celebrate but most importantly, we aim to equip women to change their world. We want to be the women who are encouragers not discouragers. We want to strive to be women who build each other up, not tear each other down. We aim to be women who support each other through the different stages of life's journey, and share in each others triumphs. Sisterhood recognises the gift that women share of a common bond and a common journey, while also realising we all have a unique journey to share and we can learn from each other. This group is open to women who are high school age or older.

Theme - The Cycle of change

The focus of this night was to highlight the change cycle and equip women to identify where they sit within this cycle as they deal with the challenges of relationships, ministry, children, work and life in general.

Gift – A fridge magnet was made of the cycle of change so that women were equipped with a quick reference to help them. They were given an extra to pass along to a friend.

Décor – The night was done totally different to any other night. Supper was served at a different time, in a different way and the room was not really decorated in any way apart from some large question marks hanging around. The chairs were placed in a different format which changed throughout the evening. All of this was done to model our theme of change.

Skit – We had two of our team dress up as scientists and throughout the night they shared good information about each stage of the change cycle. After each explanation they also did a short (very humorous) skit to demonstrate the stage. This was very funny.

Devotions/teaching – Was based on the seasons of life and how every season is important (it is because of our winter that we can bloom in spring). A time for ... (Ecc 3)

Sisterhood is run by a team of women who range in age from 22 – 69. We also encourage other women of our church to be involved in specific things to give them an opportunity to be involved and this brings a lot of variety.

We aim to have a good balance of relevant teaching, fun and opportunity to serve our community and make new friends.

Captain Merisa Holland



Abundant
Ministries

Sweet Scented Ladies

Centennial Lodge Crisis Care Services

A Social Centre's Evangelistic Event

Questions we have to ask in doing women's ministry within the context of the unchurched and yet missional in essence are:

- How can we bring Jesus to the unchurched in a relevant way?
- How can the unbelievers feel comfortable being with believers, seated side by side and enjoying fellowship together? Enjoying a common ground?
- How can we break the perception of unbelievers that church events are boring and unattractive? For the believers, predictable.
- How can the church engage and be genuinely accepting of the unbelievers for who they really are?

Centennial Lodge conducts Sweet Scented Ladies Evenings twice a year that are enjoyable, entertaining, encouraging and inspirational. Those who attend come from church and the centre's residents/ clients, multicultural community groups, friends for the purpose of bringing the message of Jesus Christ and intentionally promoting oneness and acceptance of differences, allowing the Holy Spirit to convict and do His work in both the believers and unbelievers as they share fellowship together. Every planned event is in nature:

- Thematic– has a theme to create expectation and has a specific purpose to achieve.
- Evangelistic. Jesus Christ must be the main purpose for the event. Allow Him to draw everything that has taken place to point to Him.
- Relaxing and enjoyable.
- A friendly place where believers and unbelievers interact together.
- Use of prayers to speak of the unspoken need of the unbelievers and believers alike as the theme unravels.

Preparations

Decor

Decorate the venue to suit the theme and to make attendees feel special when they walk in. To make them feel that they deserve such preparation and effort.

Food/refreshment

Food is a major complement to fellowship. Food relaxes the body and makes people closer as they share meals together. A way of allowing time for guests to settle down and be comfortable before the program begins. Have the concept that you are organising a party, a celebration where food is not just something to serve but a main part where interaction and friendship takes place.

Publicity materials and Invites

Think big. The more people will attend, the more will hear about the Gospel.

- Announce and mount publicity materials on site for residents to know. This will create curiosity and interest.
- Promote the event during chapel, group meetings and give an idea of what's going to take place. Encourage and allow residents to participate in the program.
- Distribute invites to residents to give to their friends to come along.
- Send invites to friends, community, corps for their distribution.
- Send publicity materials to the Corps and other centres close by to promote the event.
- Use all means to personally invite people whether through email, facebook, text messages, phone, meeting with them.
- Hand extra hard copies of invites to friends for them to invite others to come along.

What to keep in mind in developing the theme

- Unbelievers want to relax and enjoy what they have come for. Believers are the same.
- They want to have and bring home something with them, whether this be material, an encouragement, inspiration, challenges, knowledge, etc. There's always this question, "What's in it for me?"
- If they get something, to bring home with them, they will come back to the next event.
- Make them dress for the occasion appropriate to the theme. Ladies love to dress and feel special.
- Prayers and/or scripture verses in between the items should not be overlooked but emphasised. A short message always brings home the entire evening to a conclusion that touches the spirit.

Resources

- Use of Christian and popular secular songs and music. The use of non Christian songs must contain clean and non offensive words or language which will clearly convey human needs and desire common to man.
- Use Songs that will speak about the theme. Start with secular songs and end with a gospel song that speaks of the theme powerfully.
- Appropriate choice of Gospel music to seal and thus bring out the spiritual meaning of the theme that will tie up with the Gospel Message.
- Use of modern and creative dances
- Use of available materials to decorate the place and brings out the theme of the event. Use Google to get different ideas to help come up with the simplest,



Abundant Ministries

most appropriate and yet easy way of decorating and setting up the place.

- Videos, DVDs, You tube
- Create a sense of expectation through ads and promotions
- Use light, happy, funny sketches only when needed.
- Use painters to paint Biblical truths or images to reinforce the theme.
- Ask friends to participate and present in the event. They will surely bring along other friends.
- Use pictures, people, props to be as visual as possible

Note

The above works for us and may not be relevant in your own area of ministry. So, adapt according to the need and target group.

Focus

It is important to be sensitive to those who will be present. Biblical languages should be used in simple terms for the unbelievers to understand.

Focus is mainly Jesus. The Lord is clear, precise and creates understanding. He draws people to him and makes them interested in what He has to say. Likewise, our message must be simple, sharp, short but with depth.

Sweet Scented Ladies Evening

Theme: ARABIAN NIGHT

This was the theme for the launching of our Women's Ministry called Sweet Scented Ladies Evening. Primarily intended for clients and their friends to come along together with the support of the Corps and friends by associations.

Purpose

- To show that Christians can celebrate and party in a fun clean way without the inclusion of alcohol and drugs but not compromising the Gospel.
- To allow the ladies to see and experience that the Truth of the Gospel will always be relevant no matter where we are, who we are, and who we are with.
- To have no apology for the Gospel but to simply impart the teaching of Jesus Christ applied in a modern setting.
- To allow Jesus to be seen and be experienced, His love for each of us the way He treated and gave importance to a "woman who washes his feet with alabaster perfume." Luke 7:37-50
- To apply the lessons on the issues of women today.
- To launch the Women's Ministry, Sweet Scented Ladies

Evening symbolising that all women coming to Jesus will have a story to tell that will leave a sweet scent wherever it is told.

Food

- Prepare for the expected number of people attending with allowance for extras.
- Nibbles, sandwiches, sweets, cakes. Arabian dishes.
- Set up and served under a tent to tie up with the theme.
- Served before the actual program commence.
- Time allowed for eating and mingling together is 30 minutes. 5 minutes before the allocated time is completed, announcement that program will commence soon.

Ideas and ways of building up the theme

Since it is the launching night, traditional owners of the land were invited to say the "Welcome to Country and the Traditional Didgeridoo dance was presented.

The program was highlighted by three stories, where prayers were offered after each. Ladies who journeyed through struggles in life but ended up with beautiful stories to tell.

Story of an ex-client how her life was changed by being at the centre. Her life of drugs, low self esteem, of not believing in herself was replaced by a new confident woman who learned to believe in herself once again.

Story of our cleaner who is an artist - a talented painter who ended up as a cleaner at the Lodge and had left her love to paint. A power point presentation of all her painting work was shown. Most of her paintings were sold overseas and nationwide. She talked about the 3 meter mural painting hanging at the Cairns International Airport as one of her own creation. She talked about the help and therapeutic way of dealing with her life issues at the Lodge and how spiritual enlightenment came to her. A dedicated painting she did for the Lodge which now hangs in the Chapel was unveiled at that night.

Relating the Story of the woman in Luke 7:37-50 and applying it in today's setting.

A new emerging local Christian singer sung her own songs and was able to give away CDs to our clients.

The "Jesus Painting" was actually painted by hand that night using the song "Above All" as a background. When the band started to sing, the painting commenced. By the

time the song has ended, the painting was also completed. This was also a highlight that night for Jesus face was really seen with awe and amazement!

Decoration

Most materials used were borrowed from the family store.
Big cushions and mattress
Colourful curtains
Second hand lampshades
Small glasses for candles put in each table.
Colourful lantern lights
Arabian tent set up for the stage
Appropriate drape for the cross to emphasise the presence of God in the place.
20 tables with black table cloths

Resources

You tube for the song "The Alabaster Box", to be used after the message.

Bible

Introductory narrative to Jesus Painting

The Jesus Painting - an idea taken from You Tube

Easy Arabian tent design from Google Images. Surf and apply different ideas together that suit our venue.

Dancing Queen by Abba. Music used to introduce the next theme in October

"The 70's— A Night to Remember"

Publicity Materials/Invites

Given in advance so that invited participants have enough time to practise.

Promotional materials given to the Corps, Migrants Services, other service providers

Invites given out to the Corps, corps folks, friends, relations, clients, ex-clients community leaders

Invites and ad were sent through emails, Facebook, text messages.

Program Plan

Organised and printed for distribution beforehand to the participants and on the night to guests.

Given to Participants

Letter of appreciation given out at the conclusion of the night event.

Sample of what was actually done and used

(Please not to be used for printing for copyright purposes. Designs are not my original)

Promotional Material

Invites

Programme Plan

Actual photos

Mini Muzos in Taree

Captain Roscoe Holland

In January 2011, my wife Melanie and I were appointed as the Commanding Officers to Taree Corps. We moved here with Reuben who was 1, Tierney who was 3 and Isobel who was 8. I did what most officers with a family does in new appointments, check out what is available for my children in the corps. Taree offered a Sunday School, Junior Soldiers and SAGALA. Isobel was right but what about my two toddlers. I then went to ask the other families in the corps who had children under the age of five for their impressions or ideas, only to realise there was only one other family who had children similar ages to ours. So nothing was running at this time.

Having spent my previous appointment as Divisional Youth & Children's Secretary in another Division I immediately started to do some research into what other churches provided for this toddler age group and the families in the Taree region. Not a lot was out there - in fact virtually nothing. Here was a town with hundreds of young families with toddlers in tow and there was no bridge to connect them onto our or many other faith communities. Having had the privilege of hosting and resourcing many other Mini Muzos groups in various corps, I did more investigation into commencing our very own Mini Muzos group. And there was a large response from mums and dads alike.

So we set about planning and preparing for our very own ministry to these toddlers and families. By School Term Four in 2011 we were ready to launch a playgroup on Mondays and Minis Muzos on Fridays so we could engage as many families as possible. First Steps Playtime started on Monday and Mini Muzos started on the Friday. It was a little slow at first, but before long word spread and we were seeing our group go from 4 kids (two were mine and two were from the other family from our corps I mentioned earlier) to 20 plus toddlers each week at each ministry. Since then we have had a Christmas break and a few families moved out of the area but we still have good attendance each week and interest and numbers continue to grow.

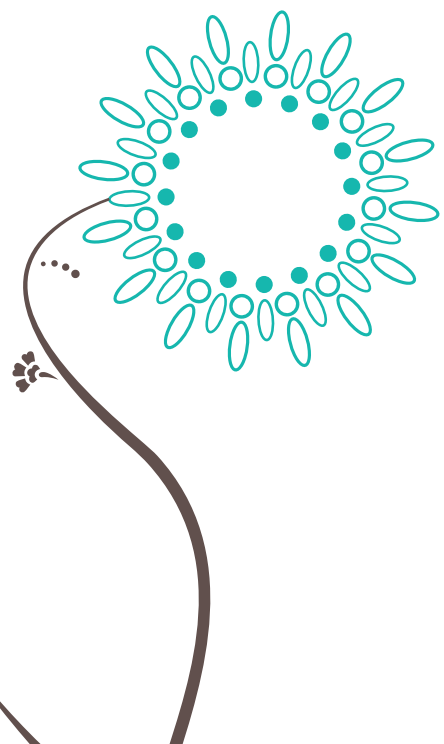
A normal Mini Muzos day goes a bit like this: get to church and pop up our Mini Muzos sign in the front window and pop on the CD player with a Hi% CD in the foyer. We are located on the main street of town so anyone walking past will hear this. Then we get out the toys, musical instruments, mats and tables ready for our morning of music and mayhem. The families arrive and we get all the kids on the mat and start our morning with the 'Hello' and 'Mini Muzos' theme songs, then out comes the percussion instrument box and it's all on like Donkey Kong. The kids (& parents) dance and play and sing together and it creates a wonderful cacophony of sound. As we wind up we have enlarged the pages from the 'Thank You God for

everything' prayer book that has been published through Salvos Publishing, and placed it on the wall. We say the thank you prayer together and then ask each child what they are thankful for today and write it on a laminated piece of paper left blank at the end of the poster. This book was also given to each child as their Christmas present from our corps last year. Our wonderful team then provides a healthy morning tea for the toddlers and sometimes a decadent one for the adults - full of chocolate and cream.

It is wonderful too that older members of our congregation come along and act as the 'rent-a-granny' and play with the toddlers while the mums and dads have morning tea. The other exciting thing to note is that this year we have seen four of the Mini Muzos families begin to attend our 11am Worship of a Sunday morning. Also this year one mum has also given her life to Christ for the very first time.

We use a great amount of creative license with the programme provided and mix and change things to suit the resources we have, but the toddlers and their families are responding well to it and we are building God's Kingdom by introducing new generations to Jesus. It is not neat. It is not quiet and reverent and polished. It's noisy, messy and smelly but I know this brings a smile to the Father's heart as these families worship Him together.

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H.O.P.E - (Helping Other People Elevate)

Report by: Frances Johnson, Founder and Project Coordinator

Summary of Program

H.O.P.E has been running ongoing sessions every Monday 11am – 1.30pm and Friday 11am – 4.30pm since September, 2011.

The purpose of H.O.P.E is to create a breakthrough community based initiative focused on empowering its participants with practical skills, positive direction and a vision of hope for a brighter future. We aim to engage with young people primarily from troubled backgrounds within the community and to create ongoing programs such as;

- Mentoring
- Leadership
- Recreational
- Motivational
- Faith based Christian Learning programs

These programs focus on building self-awareness, promoting self-development and overall empowerment. H.O.P.E aims to add value to the community by inspiring change and elevating the community from the ground, up. Since our launch last September we have had 55 participants, a large number of that was young women in between the ages of 12-25.

Most of our resources used are from the John C Maxwell curriculum "Put your dreams to the test"

The lessons consist of theory and then attended events and training workshops that put our theory work into practice and participants participating in practical exercises relating to leadership.

H.O.P.E Timeline

Launch of H.O.P.E

Information day for local services and residents. We had 35 people who came and majority of attendees were from family services YMCA, TAFE NSW, Campbelltown council, Workventures, Multicultural LAC, Pastor Meredith Freedom City church and community advocate Jan Niccoll.

Linked up

Our sponsors and supporters Salvation Army, Workventures, APM, John Maxwell, and Freedom City church

First Session

All sessions have taken place at The Salvation Army Macquarie Fields since the 19th of September, 2011.

Switch Funday

20 young people participated in the football and volley ball in October and our team came in second place.

Fun Day

We ran a fun day of sports, fun activities and a sausage sizzle for the community early November 2011 on a Saturday. Original location was Simmo's Beach but was later changed due to weather conditions. This event was very successful and had 80 plus people who attended and a large number were young people

Street Mate Boxercise

February 2012 we included a more proactive session with personal trainer from Bodsquad that runs for one hour on the Friday focusing on health, motivation and perseverance.

H.O.P.E didn't have limited numbers on registration for the program. It was open to everyone but mainly wanted to target the age group of 12 – 25 that were not engaging in education, employment or training.

Here are some of our stories

Young woman age 23

- Stopped using drugs and attended on a regular basis
- Voluntarily attended rehabilitation for her addiction
- She also volunteered her time at local community events and programs
- And has considered going to college to pursue her passion for music

Young woman age 19

- Attended regularly
- Is now attending TAFE NSW studying as a Beautician and would love to be a make-up artist in the future
- We are now assisting her in getting her learners license

Young women 24 and 21

- Came along to help out at H.O.P.E as a volunteer
- Now gone to Western Samoa for studies at YWAM Bible college and have a dream to run a women's Ministry one day

Young male 15

- Declined enrolment at mainstream school
- Gifted artist
- Rewarded Highest Achievement Award for Visual Arts at Pacific Awards October 2011
- 2012 is now attending mainstream doing his year 10 school certificate and will be leading and running the next Art Exhibition in July at Koch Centre, Macquarie Fields and has inspired other young people to embrace their gifts and talents.

These may not be huge success stories but it is to these young people who have come into the doors of H.O.P.E with no vision, no hope and have left feeling empowered even if they only attended a few times, believe these young people will shine and will be successful in everything they do.

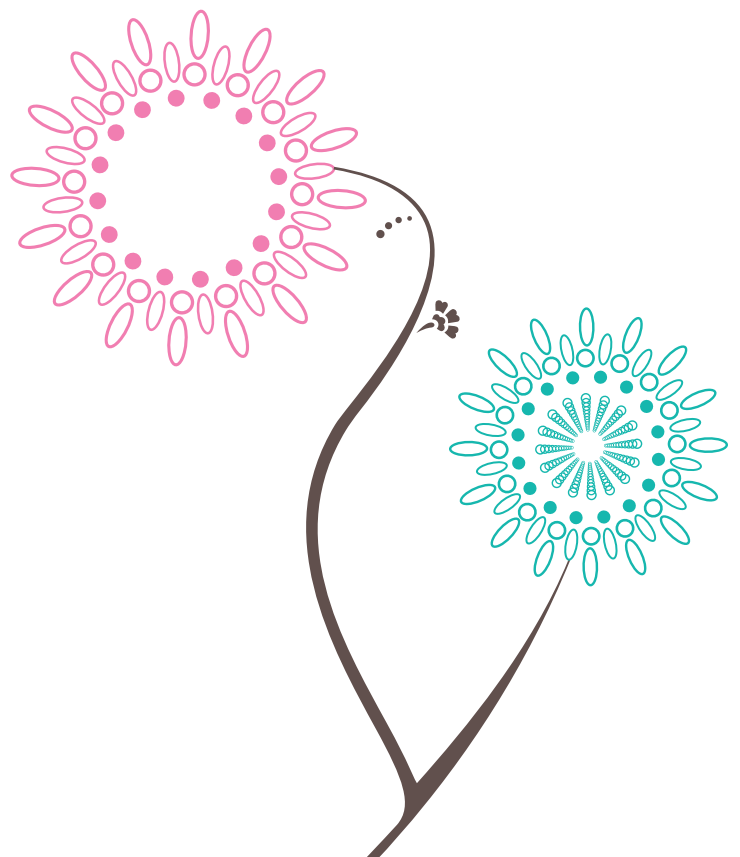


Future programs

We are looking at doing a program just for women and also early intervention in the near future.

My name is Frances Johnson I am 27 years old and the founder and project coordinator of H.O.P.E and here is a short testimony on a vision that drove me to create H.O.P.E. I was once a youth of Macquarie Fields who grew up in the area and had experienced life on the streets. It was tough having no support or having a mentor program where someone can believe in me and give me directions and say "that I can become somebody and that I can get somewhere". Growing up in the area I saw a pattern of young people not having any hope or dreams for the future. I have witnessed how tough life can be when you have no vision to base your dreams on and this is why I am so passionate to break the chain of hopelessness, by Helping Other People Elevate.

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Ethical Shopping

Major Lyn Edge

Décor

Today's meeting explores the importance of shopping in a sustainable and ethical manner. If you are able to set the room up to look like a shop or at least have interesting products available for display or even purchase.

Introduction

Shopping has got easier and easier over recent years. From longer opening hours to internet shopping, we can get almost anything we want whenever we want it these days. However all goods come with a price tag. Not only is there the price we pay, but there is the price others have paid in the production of those goods. Unfortunately some products have cost some people very dearly, such as trafficked children harvesting cocoa for our chocolate or people in sweat shops to bring us our clothing.

What is ethical Shopping?

'Ethical shopping means choosing to think about the economic, social and environmental effects of what we buy. It's making the choice to buy products that have not been produced by exploiting vulnerable workers, the environment or animals'

Game – How much is it?

Choose a range of basic grocery items. Before the meeting check the current price of these items and play a game in which people guess the price of these items.

Game: Company Logo (See CD)

Using the attached power-point play the game where people are asked to guess what brand the product is. The brand names are obscured on the first slide and revealed on the following one. Each company listed has been given the 'ethical tick of approval' from the Ethical Shopping Guide 2011.

Get informed

Why should we shop ethically? According to Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 "To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, states should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption..." We each have a part to play in reducing unsustainable and exploitative practices in the way that we consume, i.e. how we shop!

Thinking it through - 5 Principles... to guide a more sustainable purchase

Have each of the following principles written on a card without explanation. Show or read the card to the group and ask them what they think it means. If needed, read the explanation of each principle after the group has discussed it.

1. Every purchase makes an impact

Remember, your choice makes a difference. For most of us, most of the time, cost and convenience are the main reasons for our shopping choices. These aren't bad reasons, but they don't reflect the true cost of our purchases to the environment and people.

2. Ask, 'do I need it?'

Avoid unnecessary consumption. About 80 per cent of products are discarded after a single use. How you buy will influence directly what you buy so it is important to think about the way you spend money. Make a preferred shopping list and keep to it

3. Learn about the issues

Take on one issue at a time so you're not overwhelmed. Start with the products that you buy most frequently. See the attached sheet 'What did you vote for today' for some issues connected to common products

4. Seek out a best buy

Ask, "what do I value?". There are no right or wrong purchasing decisions. What you value will determine the criteria you see as most important. A 'best buy' for you will depend on what you're looking for in that particular purchase. (ie. coffee that is fairtrade, or perhaps coffee that is organic, or perhaps coffee that's roasted locally). Mostly it is not possible to find a product that meets all the criteria that we could choose, so it's important to prioritise our values. You might decide to buy local over organic, or choose to buy with minimal packaging over local. In this way you can determine the criteria you see as most important, knowing that you'll have to make tradeoffs.

5. Make lasting change

Celebrate good choices, create good habits! Once you've found a best buy, remember it and move onto the next product. Share your discoveries. Let the related companies know, via letter or email, of the choices you have made.

Guest Speaker

Invite the manager of the local Salvo or Family Store to come and share some stories of the work of their shop. Invite them to bring some products to sell.

Shopping Swap

Set up your meeting today as a sustainable shopping day. Ask people to bring household items, books or clothes that are still in good condition but which they no longer need. Display all the items then invite people to 'swap' the items they don't need anymore for something someone else has brought in.

Story – The match factory

In 1888, William Booth decided to investigate the way that matches were made, after some match-girls who worked at the Bryant and May factory complained about how they were treated. Booth's investigator found out that the yellow phosphorus which was used to make the heads of the matches was very dangerous and caused a terrible disease called 'phossy jaw' which could lead to death. The factory owners knew about this disease but they were worried about losing profits so they didn't do much about it.

There were other problems for the match-girls too:

- They had to work very long hours with little or no breaks.
- They were paid very little.
- They were expected to use heavy machinery.
- The factories had poor lighting.

Because people were so poor, some women had to work at home making match boxes. They worked for whole weekends but still got hardly any money for this.

Light in Darkest England

In 1891, The Salvation Army opened a clean, airy, well-lit factory which used safe red phosphorus. The girls who came to work there had tea breaks and were paid a fair wage - more than one third more than in the other factories.

Ten years later, all the other factory owners had been forced to improve their factories due to William Booth's hard work. Booth could close his factory, having achieved his aim.

Action Guide

As a consumer, you have the power. Every dollar you spend is analysed. When you shop ethically, you send a message to sellers, to manufacturers, and to other shoppers.

- Look for products that are ethically certified, such as the Fairtrade label. It's your assurance that exploitative labour and practices have not been a part of that product's manufacture.
- Ask your favourite retailer to stock ethically produced tea, chocolate and coffee.
- Support efforts to incorporate ethical products in your home, school and workplace.
- Help your school, university or community to become a Fairtrade community
- Encourage your MP to champion against labour exploitation with policies, ethical procurement and action.
- Consider whether your consumption is necessary. Remember to ask yourself: "Do I really need this?"

Your choice makes a difference. Supporting ethical businesses and rejecting unethical businesses is a form of voting. You are saying NO to human, animal and environmental exploitation and YES to good working conditions, fair prices, humane animal conditions and preserving the planet.

Handout: Green Shopping: A responsibility for Christians? (See CD)

Print and handout the attached leaflet from the Christian Ecology Link in the UK. There are some interesting facts and food for thought and action there, including the following devotional thought.

Devotions – The Christian Consumer

When we go shopping to buy products to care for our family and home we can extend this care to include God's wider creation by the choices we make. Christians have been given a command to cultivate and care for the earth (Gen. 2.15). Our concerns are therefore for the earthly world as well as the spiritual.

The scale of our consumption contributes to the destruction of the environment which is God's world! (Psalm 24.1) and also the Bible is full of warnings about affluence (Matt. 19.23; Luke 12.15).

Caring for the earth includes avoiding products and activities which cause pollution, waste energy and other resources, contribute to problems in the developing world, or cause pain and distress to animals. The products we choose to buy can affect the working conditions, wages and lives of the world's poor. It is important that as Christians we live — and shop — with integrity.

We may already be avoiding certain products, but does our Christian faith influence every aspect of our shopping?

St Paul urged us to think critically about our way of living when he wrote 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Rom. 12:2).

Can we honour and obey God when shopping? We are told 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth' (Matt. 6.19). Shop as caringly as you can. You can't meet all the criteria all the time, but every time you buy something, be aware that you can make a choice which says 'I'm on the side of a peaceful, just, sustainable way of life for God's world.' You could try saying a prayer before shopping in the way many people say grace before a meal.

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Careforce Lifekeys: 'Woman to Woman'

Major Belinda Spicer

'The woman to Woman' course; is a ten week program designed to assist women to overcome the challenges of life (both past and present). All too often, these challenges hold us back from becoming the true woman of God He has called us to be.

Pastor Helen Meyers, has written and designed a course specifically for women, and it is a 10 week course that is aimed at taking participants on a healing journey in a safe & trusting environment by a trained facilitator. Having facilitated many groups of women who (at times) have been desperate to live a John 10:10 kind of life, this course gives women permission to recognize the areas in their life that needs God's healing, and equips and empowers to live an abundant life.

Woman to Woman looks at;

- The arena of healing
- Functional & dysfunctional family dynamics
- Coping strategies of the child & adult
- Denial & anger
- Rebuilding after grief & loss
- The influence of shame
- Overcoming dependency
- Sexuality & Intimacy
- Forgiveness – Letting go
- Stepping into the future

Needless to say, the course can be confronting when one recognizes the areas of life that God wants to do a 'new thing' and live out of a place that testifies to Healing & freedom...that is only found in Christ Jesus. Here is a testimony from one woman who recognized that God created her to experience an abundant life;

"As a participant of The Woman to Woman course, I found the course to be invaluable. At a time in my life when I was experiencing great loss, illness and abuse, I had lost self-identity & self-worth. The course allowed me to identify past behaviors & equip myself with coping strategies I could use in my life. I learnt that I could grow and heal freely with God's love and understanding regardless of my situation. The weekly Bible readings of each session were helpful so that I didn't become overwhelmed with what I was learning. I felt more comfortable working in a group each week with a course designed especially for women to undertake in a safe environment." (Name withheld)

For Information on all the Careforce Programs go to:
http://www.careforcelifakeys.org/aus/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=62

**Abundant
Ministries**

Women’s Time Out

- “Purse-Onality”

Tuggeranong Corps

The basic outline of the night was that it would be a fundraiser for the Territorial Women’s Ministries Project (TWMP), and we raised money by charging the ladies \$10 on entry.

This money paid for the Supper and a donation to the TWMP. We had two stalls on the night, one being a 2nd Hand Bag Stall, where we had requested women from the Corps to donate all their unused handbags to be sold for a good cause! The other stall was selling new, good quality handbags, (Essential Additions - Handbag Party Plan Company) and a percentage of the profit was also added to our fundraising effort.

On the second hand bag stall, the bags sold for \$2, \$3 & \$5 = we raised a total of \$338 on that stall alone.

The Women’s Ministries Co-ordinator Joanne Paull had sought permission to show Anita Renfro’s DVD “Purse-Onality” and this was shown in three segments during the evening, interspersed with games, shopping and fellowship! The DVD is absolutely hilarious, and has a great Christian message as well. One of the things that Anita talks about was how our handbags reflect our personalities - we noticed during the course of the evening how true this was!! Well worth viewing. The DVD is available from Koorong, and Anita Renfro has a website where Jo emailed to get permission to show the DVD.

The run sheet on the attached disc shows how the evening was set out. We had the stalls open from about 6.30pm, and we welcomed everyone at approximately 7pm, and showed the first segment of the DVD. During the evening we also showed the Women’s Ministries Territorial Project DVD.

One of the games we played was ‘Guess the Handbag Brand’, and pictures of handbags with popular brands such as GUCCI, and OROTON were shown on the screen. The ladies had a guess sheet, and prizes were given for those who knew the most brands!

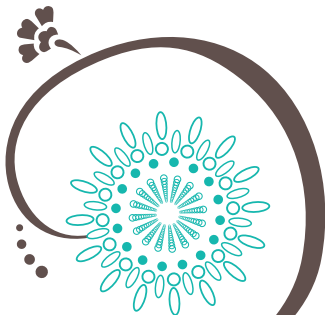
For supper there were creative cup cakes with little handbags on the top, and lots of chocolate and coffee!

A book mark was also created, with a handbag at the top and a Bible Verse to give out to all the ladies as they left. (See CD

It was an evening full of laughs!!!! A great night of fun and fellowship.

Captain Fran Everitt, Joanne Paull & Kirsty Hawkins

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Hope for Life Suicide Prevention & Bereavement Support

The Salvation Army has a large footprint across Australia and sees over 1 million people each year, people who come for some kind of social welfare assistance. In addition to this, The Salvation Army is active in every city, provincial town and across rural and remote Australia. With the right training, information and skills, Salvation Army personnel are well placed to be a catalyst for building social capital and help to strengthen communities so that supports are there when they are most needed.

In 1907, the founder General William Booth commenced the work in suicide prevention by establishing Anti Suicide bureaus in the UK. This work spread across the world and suicide prevention bureaus were established in London, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Glasgow, New York, Toronto, Cape Town, Bombay, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Colombo, Tokyo, Seoul, Paris, Milan, Berlin, Amsterdam, and Stockholm. The newspapers at that time reported an alarming increase in the number of suicide deaths and The Salvation Army looked for a way to provide practical assistance to those who were at risk of suicide.

Some of the observations the early Salvationists made in respect to the causes of suicide are still applicable today. They found that financial worry or hopeless poverty, melancholia from loneliness, sickness and disease were the major causes of suicidal tendencies in the people who came to them for help. Drink, drugs and crimes such as embezzlement and forgery also contributed to people feeling they had no option but to consider suicide. The Salvation Army responded with advice and support and many people were helped through their interventions.

One hundred years on, The Salvation Army received funding in 2007 under the Federal Government's National Suicide Prevention Strategy, to develop suicide prevention and suicide bereavement resources and training programs. The aim is to raise awareness about suicide in Australia and to educate and empower the general community to provide appropriate responses to people who have been bereaved by suicide. Particularly those people who may find themselves in a care giving role, whether they be mental health workers, welfare workers, teachers, doctors, Officers, chaplains or friends and relatives.

The programs and resources have been developed under the banner of **The Salvation Army Hope for Life**, we have named our programs Hope for Life because **Hope** is what people at risk of suicide and people who have been bereaved by suicide need most.

We can all be shining lights of **HOPE** to each other.

Suicide In Australia and Hope for Life

Whilst suicide rates have declined since 1997, they are still unacceptably high, with over 2100 people dying each year by suicide; that equates to one person every four hours. There are more people who die by suicide than in road accidents and suicide is the leading cause of death for men 15-44 and women 15-34 years of age.

The Salvation Army has extensive experience in working in disadvantaged communities and with people who have become socially isolated and marginalised because of poverty, homelessness, loneliness, substance dependency, ill health etc. This experience has created insights into the causes of disadvantage and has enabled us to develop a range of responses and programmes for people who don't have the support of family and friends. In addition to these professionally operated services, The Salvation Army has literally an Army of church members/volunteers and some paid staff who visit people in hospital, visit the pubs in various towns and suburbs; they stand outside supermarkets and shopping malls collecting donations; they attend sporting matches; there are rural chaplains; there are people who provide support in times of natural disasters, bush fires, floods, cyclones etc.

Basically The Salvation Army is able to mobilise large numbers of ordinary people, neighbours and friends who are committed and keen to provide practical support, counselling or just a listening ear, a cup of tea - we call it Christianity with its sleeves rolled up.

Being there for people is a key theme for The Salvation Army and also the name of Hope for Life's suicide prevention response – **BE THERE**. The aim is to equip people, ordinary people in local communities, including young people, older people, men and women with the skills, knowledge and confidence to **BE THERE** for people, to provide them with a listening ear, to give practical support and assistance and to give them a sense of comfort and hope.

Hope for Life Programs

The key elements of Hope for Life include:

- **QPR Suicide prevention on line training course**

QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer, and is an emergency mental health gatekeeper training intervention that teaches lay and professional gatekeepers to recognise and respond positively to someone exhibiting suicide warning signs and behaviours. Like CPR, QPR uses a "chain of survival" approach in which the gatekeeper learns to recognise early suicide warning signs;

- **Living Hope Bereavement Support Training – on line and face to face delivery options**

Living Hope is a comprehensive program which covers all aspects of suicide bereavement from practical matters to be attended to following the death of a loved one, the grieving process, aspects of spirituality, the influence and impact of culture on grieving, understanding emotions and a host of helpful information which aims to equip potential care givers to support individuals and families through the devastating experience of losing a loved one.

- **Interactive web site and portal**

The web site, www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au is essentially the gateway to the suicide prevention and postvention initiatives and the portal to access the QPR and Living Hope Training Programs. In addition, the web site provides general as well as specific information about the suicide prevention and postvention and is a means of promoting conferences and events. The web site also provides links to other relevant web sites and helpful resources.

- **Suicide prevention awareness raising**

During Suicide Prevention Week in Australia, The Salvation Army sets aside time to reflect on the impact of suicide in our community and to pray for people who may be at risk of suicide and for those who have been bereaved by suicide. Hope for Life develops a Resource Kit that is distributed to all Salvation Army church communities and social service centres. Other suicide awareness raising initiatives include producing regular newsletters, holding on line forums and producing articles for media.

- **Champions Program**

The Hope for Life Champion Initiative is all about change at a local level and helping communities to recognise that they can make a positive difference. By enlisting the help of motivated, educated and committed people (Champions) who can raise awareness about the issues and actively engage their local community, this project aims to build the capacity of Australians to help each other. Champions are not employed on a paid basis by The Salvation Army to act in this role, but rather they look for, and create, opportunities to champion the suicide prevention cause as part of their everyday life. Hope for life is recruiting Champions and we will provide training and resources which will equip Champions to become Agents of Hope in their local community.

- **Life Keeper Memory Quilt**

The Life Keeper Memory Quilt was designed as a memorial to people who have died by suicide. Life keeper Memory Quilts serve as a creative outlet for survivors' grief as well as a touching, visual reminder of so many who were lost to suicide. By putting a 'face' on suicide, these quilts help carry the message that preventing suicide is not just about lowering statistics, but also about saving the lives of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters across the nation. As well as being a meaningful memorial, the Quilt provided the opportunity to raise awareness of suicide.

- **For More Information**

Website: www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au
Email: stephanie.wilks@aue.salvationarmy.org
Phone: 02 9356 2120



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Girlfriends are great listeners

We can chat about all kinds of things with each other, and we know that our friends will accept us without judgement.

There are times, however, when we might be going through something that we just can't tell our girlfriends, or mums, or sisters. It might be something really personal that is hard to share, or you may not want to burden your friends with something that weighs heavy on your heart. Sometimes, you need to talk to someone in the middle of the night...

Salvo Care Line
1300 36 36 22



are also great listeners. We are here 24 hours a day, and all you need to do is pick up the phone any time you need to, and someone will listen to what's on your heart and mind. We have an extensive

database of other services in your area that we can point you to, if you need some further help. And we certainly love praying with people who call us, if that is helpful to you.

*Call **1300 36 36 22**, at the cost of a local call from anywhere in Australia, and someone will be there to listen to you, any time of the day or night.*

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Salvo Care Line
1300 36 36 22



*also love to equip people to become better listeners, and we hold two training courses a year in Sydney to equip people to become **volunteer telephone counsellors**. If you are over the age of 21, and*

*are a good listener, apply online at www.salvos.org.au/salvocareline, or give us a call on **(02) 8736 3297**.*

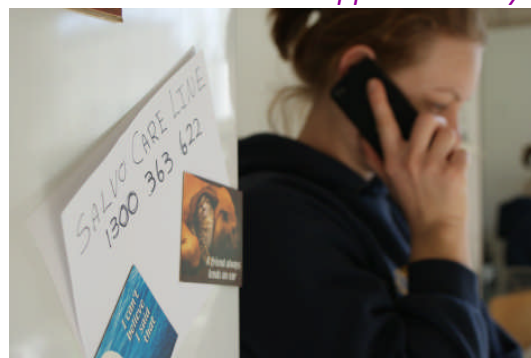
You can also help us by your generous financial support. If you were to give just 40 cents a week (about the cost of a local telephone call) for one year, that would be \$20. If a group of twenty of you supported us in this way, that would be \$400! In this way, you would be working with us to continue our support to many people in need.

If you would like to support Salvo Care Line in its service to people in need all over Australia, you are able to send tax-deductible donations to:

Salvo Care Line, PO Box 178, Five Dock NSW 2046.

We are in need of your practical support to help us continue caring for Australians—24/7.

Ph: 1300 36 36 22



The Place of Décor in Worship

Major Rowena Smith

Recently I flipped through a lovely Inspirational Calendar (2012) with the heading "The Earth is The Lord's". Each month it featured a different magnificent view of nature and included a verse of scripture and a reflective thought. With my mind now considering what I would write for this particular submission, I was particularly drawn to the month of July ... featuring slender leafy trees on a sloping hill smothered in a dense ground cover in a vibrant shade of green. The reflective thought read...

God created beauty to draw our eyes and hearts to Him – the giver of life and the source of every lovely thing.

God is the author of beauty. It was his marvellous idea. Through it, he gives his worshippers a glimpse of his majesty and it compels us to stand in awe of his wonder and might.

Psalm 29:2 call us to "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Beauty is all around us... above us in the skies... below us deep in the earth and the seas.

This was God's plan... to surround us with reminders of his exquisite handiwork so that we would look to him and bow before him with hearts totally amazed by his interest and concern for mankind. I love the way David the Psalmist expressed these sentiments in Psalm 8:3-4

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"

Fast forward many centuries and a modern day song writer, Chris Tomlin, expressed the same sentiments using these words...

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them
by name.
You are amazing God
All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God

We discover in the Old Testament that God not only intended beauty to be experienced outside in nature, but that he directed worship indoors to be enhanced by beauty through the use of décor. At the Captivated Conference in 2012 Commissioner Sue Swanson used as her text Exodus

35: 20-29. In this passage, we read about the response of the Israelites to God's instruction given through Moses commanding them to bring their offerings of precious metals, cloth, gemstones and wood for the beautification of the tabernacle in which God would be worshipped. These materials were gifts from God as they were resources given by the Egyptians to the Israelites when they fled captivity.

Everyone brought something as an offering and others who were skilled craftspeople, used these materials to create various objects of beauty including curtains, lampstands, sacred garments, tables, ornaments and accessories.

The spiritual application to this scripture passage as delivered by Commissioner Sue was that each person has a treasure and a skill that can be brought to the tabernacle to bring glory to God. As a person who loves to create beautiful spaces for people to connect with God, this passage really resonated with me quite literally. It validated my yearning to use the gift that God has given me to create visual places of beauty and interest to enhance the worship atmosphere and help people draw closer to God.

Not long after the Captivated Conference, I was reading in my private devotions from Our Daily Bread. On Sunday March 11th the topic was entitled "Beauty in the Church" and focused again on this scripture from Exodus. The writer Julie Ackerman Link acknowledged that beauty in the church building is not always a high priority. She went on to say "Some associate it with impracticality, so anything ornate or decorative is considered wasteful. But that wasn't God's attitude when he established a place of worship for the ancient Israelites. He didn't recruit just anybody to set up an ordinary tent. He appointed skilled craftsmen....to decorate the tabernacle with finely-woven tapestries and intricately designed ornaments."

Julie's personal feeling was that "beauty was important at that time because it reminded the people of the worth of God in their worship. In the dry and dusty days of desert wandering, they needed a reminder of God's majesty." She then added "Beauty created by God's people in worship settings today can serve the same purpose. We offer God our best talents because he is worthy."

Julie made this final point which we might not realise.... that through beauty we obtain a glimpse of heaven and our appetites are whetted for the future God is preparing for us.

I believe this to be true in a more immediate way. When a room or space has been especially prepared and intentionally beautified, it delivers a message to the person

who enters that space. That message is... **Something good is going to happen here today.**

Their appetites are whetted for what is ahead. The décor in front of them helps to open their eyes but more so their hearts to the opportunity to connect with God.

Perhaps at this point it would be good to give you some examples of how décor has been used with this intention.....to prepare a space where those who enter it, anticipate that something good is going to happen.....an opportunity to encounter God.

The theme of this Manual is **Abundance**. I have prepared décor for 2 separate events which have focused on this theme. Photographs of these displays can be viewed on the CD. I suggest you view the photos as you read the following explanation.

Full and Overflowing.

This event was a Divisional Women's Celebration held at Dulwich Hill in 2008. The plan was to display two banners which would feature the theme verse from Ephesians 3:18-19.

"I pray that you may grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of Christ".

The inspiration for the décor was the old familiar Sunday School song we loved to sing.....Running Over (my cup is full and running over). The other source of inspiration was a beautiful gift card purchased for \$1 which featured a blue teacup filled with white roses.

So the idea was set... the décor would feature teacups overflowing with white roses.

The aim was to create a scene that would convey the message of abundance... and to do this on budget that was not abundant! Contact was made with various Family Stores in the Division with a request to save any fine bone china teacups that were donated. These would be arranged in stacks of 3 on the morning tea tables. White roses (purchased from a Bargain Store) filled the top cup and several smaller rose buds were on the lower levels with some scattered on the tables.

Originally the theme colours were going to be blue and white. This changed when I started my search for fabric. A trip to Spotlight resulted in an unplanned purchase of pink rose fabric for \$2 a metre.....a huge savings of \$10 per metre. Amazing how a sale can change your direction of thinking! I was certainly feeling God's abundance that day! Enough fabric was purchased to make 2 tablecloths and numerous table runners for the morning tea tables.

The rose fabric was also featured as a banner in the display which was set up on the platform where the Celebration service was held following the morning tea.

In front of this, a scene was created which featured 3 large ceramic teacups at different levels overflowing with white roses. The purchase of the large teacups was yet another remarkable example of God's abundance. Originally I had only intended to buy one teacup which I located at Target... it was white with a pink rose design and I visualised it blending in nicely with the rose theme. Priced at \$40, I was delighted to discover at the check-out that it had been reduced to \$15 and so without hesitation I decided to purchase 3 of them. God's abundance seemed to be pouring down on me. On returning home I opened the boxes to discover that the other 2 teacups were a different design. I gasped in horror at the view of pink cups with white polka dots and wondered how I was going to make this clash of designs compliment the blue teacup design on the cards.

The problem was solved by choosing a light blue satin fabric for the banners which featured the theme Scripture verse. These were positioned either side of the central rose banner and formed the backdrop for the main feature. The teacups were placed on different levels created by a tall stand, a white decorator table and a white chair. Blue organza curtains from my daughter's bedroom were borrowed for the day. Other white drops of fabric (also previously used as curtains) were incorporated into the display. These fabrics cascaded around the teacups and down to the floor to give the impression of a constant flowing stream coming from the teacups.

The manufacturer of the cards was contacted and 150 cards were ordered with the plan to use these as the gift for each lady who attended the event. The aim was to urge the ladies to share God's abundant love with someone else by sending an encouragement card. To our great surprise the company donated the cards. Without this expense we were able to raise even more money for the Women's Ministries Project. It was most definitely yet another example of God's abundant provision.

The banners, teacups and table runners are available for loan from the Women's Ministries Department at DHQ, Sydney East & Illawarra Division.

Since this event they have been used as décor at Biggest Morning Tea events, a 21st Birthday celebration, the dedication of twin baby girls, a Mother's Day Service and a garden party held at the Training College. Other possible uses for this décor could include a ladies pampering event or a fashion parade.

Service of Thanksgiving

This was held at the Earlwood Corps in 2011. It was birthed by Major Christine Unicombe who wanted to express her abundant gratitude to God for his healing in her life, having overcome cancer. Other survivors of cancer and difficult health circumstances were invited to attend. Christine used as her theme verse the well-known text from John 10:10.

"I have come in order that you might have life... life in all its fullness."

She requested that the décor signify the idea of life and joy. A bright yellow satin banner was displayed on the platform which featured the text from John. It included the silhouette of 3 people with linked hands, jumping for joy. On either side of the banner, colourful gerberas (artificial) were placed in potted plants. These plants were always on the platform so no expense was involved. The gerberas were a borrowed resource from DHQ.

Café tables around the room were covered in dark cloth. These were chosen to enhance the bright yellow table runners placed on each table. The tables featured an arrangement of coloured gerberas. A vase was created from a green sheet of paper featuring the word Celebrate. The paper was laminated and formed into a cylinder and placed over a water bottle weighted with sand and the gerberas were placed into the bottle. Coloured tissue paper was placed into the top of the cylinder to disguise the bottle.

This banner is available for loan from Booth College.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that providing quality décor does not automatically mean "expense". A worship space can effectively be enhanced by décor on a budget.

I was given the opportunity to present a brief segment to 1st year cadets at their Women's Ministries Training Day on this topic.

Here are 6 simple tips for décor on a budget.

1. **Plan ahead.** Don't leave your décor preparation for your special event till the last minute.....by doing this you can take advantage of....

2. **Sales...** consider becoming a Spotlight member. But before you spend money.....

3. **Borrow things from other sources.** Become aware of what you can borrow from DHQ. Borrow things from your corps folk, your family store. Ask local businesses if you can display their products eg. A water feature from a Nursery. (include a sign promoting the business)

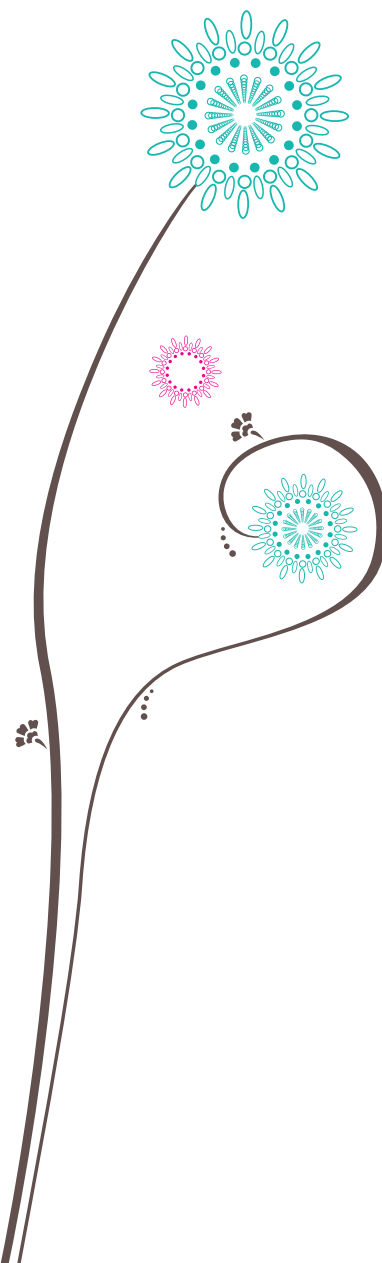
4. Bargain (\$2) Shops

5. **Recycle and Re-use.** Consider using what you have already used....in a different way.

6. **Banners and themes.** Using a banner for an annual theme means that the décor is repeated each time and expense is reduced.

The CD contains some images that illustrate these budget tips.

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Letting Children Be Children

Major Lyn Edge

Décor

You could decorate for today's meeting with photos of members of the group as children, with child stars or even children's games. People might also be encouraged to bring framed photos of their grandchildren to decorate the room.

Introduction

In October a special week is set aside each year to celebrate Children's week. Why is this necessary today? Surely every week is children's week! Well in Australia today there is a growing concern about the loss of innocence in childhood through the impact of advertisers and marketers.

There is strong feeling around Australia that during childhood, and certainly during the pre-teen years, children should be free to develop at their own pace, in their own ways. However, Australians voiced their concern that children's freedom to develop at their own pace and in their own ways is under threat from heavily sexualised advertising and marketing. While parents do their best to protect their children, many feel that they are losing the battle.

Today's meeting celebrates children and also raises the important need to resist the sexualisation of children so we can 'let children be children'.

Game to get started

Ask members of the group to bring in photos of themselves as children. See if people can guess who each photo is.

Get informed (See CD)

Read the following attachments to inform you on the topic. The first two articles may be appropriate to print and hand out to members of your meeting.

- Adult world must let girls be girls, article from the Sydney Morning Herald.
- War Cry article from October 2011: Innocence Lost
- Australia Institute report 'Letting children be children'

Sharing

Encourage members to remember their childhood, sharing what they remember about the following topics

- What toys / games you played as a child?
- What was your favourite clothes?
- How did your family spend the evenings?
- What was your favourite food?
- How much money did you spend on lollies / treats?
- What technological changes do you remember coming to your home as you were growing up?

Discussion (See CD)

How things change

Use the attached PowerPoint about how things change to generate a discussion about changes through time. There are photos there of how telephones, washing machines and children's toys have changed. Finish by discussing how the treatment and perceptions of children have also changed over time. Some of these changes have been good and led to increased education and protections for children (maybe the group can give examples of these positive changes). However other changes raise concerns for us, like the sexualisation of children today which we are discussing today.

Learning

There is a growing concern in Australia and other western countries today that young people are being targeted by marketers and advertisers in a sexualized way which denies them the innocence of youth and the ability to simply allowing children to be children.

As quoted in the War Cry of 22nd October 2011, Innocence Lost;

While the sexualisation of children (think skimpy underwear or lingerie, otherwise known as 'lounge-erie', for young girls) has monopolised the media's attention of late, it's the latest trend from some retailers and advertisers of treating children as mini adults that has parents groups, Christians and other concerned citizens seeing red.

'Put yourself in the position of an advertiser,' Dr Emma Rush writes. 'They have to push the boundaries to get attention, but they don't want to attract a backlash like the one seen four years ago...so this is the result. The public don't like sexualisation? Let's try adultification instead.'

With Children's Week (22–30 October) almost upon us, this carries with it a certain poignancy, not to mention urgency. In addition to bringing attention to the plight of disadvantaged children around the world, the annual event reminds adults, and children alike, of the importance, and impermanence, of childhood.

Without putting too fine a point on it, what's at risk is innocence itself, says the Salvation Army's Colonel Jenny Walker. 'Ultimately, I think children are being robbed of their childhoods. Childhood is being devalued in our society. The sexualisation of children is having significant effects on their cognitive and mental health, as well as what they believe about themselves.' The evidence of this is everywhere, she says, from the schoolyard to the numerous studies that have been done.

'The single most common reason young girls get admitted into hospital is self-harm,' says Colonel Walker. 'And the single most common reason behind self-harm is this whole idea of body image dissatisfaction. Girls and children are being told that their value comes from their body image.'

'They're not being valued for who they are and who God has made them. If you don't have the perfect body where does that leave you? Children are being forced into having sexual encounters at younger and younger ages and this leads to feelings of shame and guilt.'

Quote

"What we allow is what we approve" - Dr Glen Cupit
Senior Lecturer in Child
Development. University of South Australia.

Do Something

Sign a petition calling on Diva, the jewellery and accessories store popular with teenage girls, to withdraw its Playboy-branded jewellery at www.collectiveshout.org. Collective Shout is a grassroots campaigning movement against the objectification of women and sexualisation of girls in the media, advertising and popular culture.

Kids free 2be kids: Website to find out and do more

<http://www.kf2bk.com/home.htm>

Are you concerned about:

- How children are portrayed in advertising - i.e. What they wear, how they're posed?
- The images children are exposed to in their environment - i.e. Billboards, magazines, internet, TV?
- The toys, dolls and games children play with?
- Exposure to adult sexual images that a child is not developmentally ready to absorb?

There is a groundswell of people all over Australia who are also concerned, including experts in the field of child development.

Log on to this website to find out more and learn how you can help.

Devotions

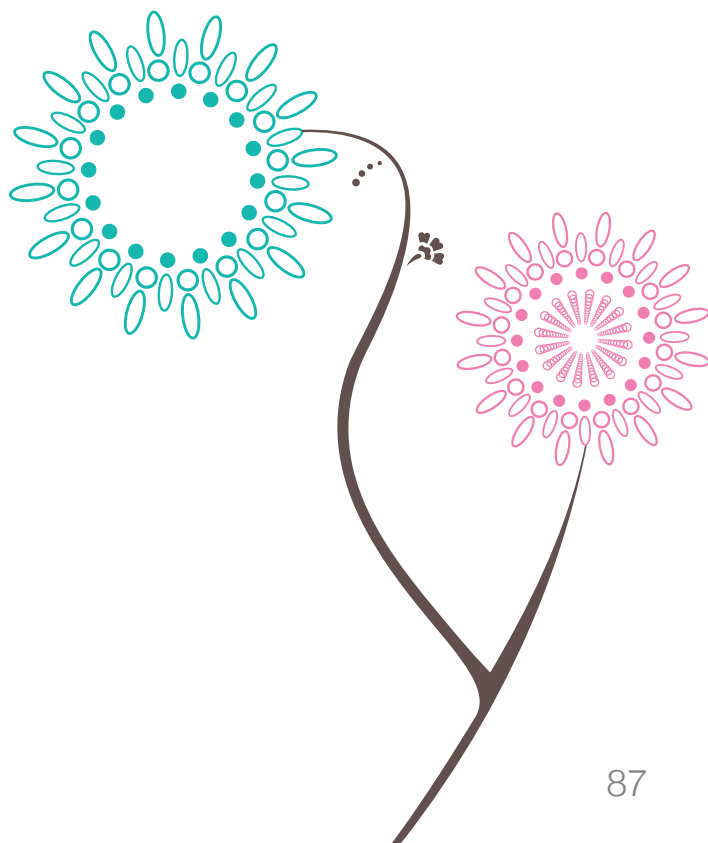
In Matthew 18 we read one of the most well known encounters that Jesus had with children in the first century. This is all the more amazing in a society in which children were not necessarily the centre of attention that they are today.

And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
(Matthew 18:2-6 ESV)

In these verses, we not only hear about the value of children to Jesus, but we are also warned of our responsibility to protect them as best we can. In today's world in which children are at risk of losing their innocence through media and also inappropriate adult relationships, it is vital that we take our responsibility even more seriously.

Conclude your meeting with prayer for the children of your families, Corps or centre. Use the prayer guide attached as you pray. **(See CD)**

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‘Come and see’...12 Bible Studies

‘Come and see’ is a series of 12 Bible studies and is the initiative of the IHQ Women’s Ministries Department. The studies follow a simple pattern that you can use in any setting. They are designed to be flexible, so that you can add material that is relevant to where you are.

This series of Bible Studies invites us to come and see.... God’s creation, His provision for us, His gift of Jesus and what Jesus has done for us. As we study together we are invited to see for ourselves, but also to consider how we, as Christian women, can invite others to ‘come and see’.

The Bible study follows a path through the Old and New Testaments, inviting us to see the story of how people learned more about God and his provision for human beings. The individual studies do not have to be used in this order – for example some are suitable for Christmas, Easter or Harvest time. You may want to use one each month or as a weekly series at some time during the year, or alternatively take more than one week on a particular study when there is a great deal to discuss.

- Each study begins with – **What the Bible says**, where you explore ‘What does the text actually say?’ It is important that you read the Bible carefully and allow it to speak to you and guide the content of your study.
- The second stage – **Our lives/world today**, considers such questions as: what does the Bible reading tell you about your lives? Does it highlight any problems in society? What challenges are there for the way you live your life?
- The third section – **Discussion**, poses a number of questions. Depending upon where you are using the studies, you may choose to select one or two that seem most suitable for you, or ask different groups to discuss other aspects and possibly, if you have time, share what they have been speaking about.
- Some of the studies have a final section that uses a Bible passage or verse from a song – **To think about**. You may want to use this to encourage silent reflection, sharing in small groups or as the basis of your closing worship – it is for you to decide.

We enjoy sharing our news with each other. So this is an invitation to do what we enjoy – to tell how God has invited us to ‘come and see’ and to find ways of sharing in his mission as we invite others to share what we have.

(See CD for all 12 bible studies)

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Mission Priorities

Mission Priorities

We will do whatever it takes to see:

1. A territory marked by prayer and holiness
2. Our whole territory – in every place – involved in evangelism
3. Corps healthy and multiplying
4. Our people equipped and empowered to serve the world
5. The territory passionate about bringing children to Jesus
6. Youth trained and sent out to frontline mission
7. Significant increase of new soldiers and officers

And we will be a Salvation Army knowing who we are,
showing who we are and being who
we are.



TERRITORIAL WOMEN'S MINISTRIES PROJECT 2013

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

To renovate and equip Salvation Army child care centres in Port Moresby & Kainantu.

PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

- ▶ Renovate buildings
- ▶ Fencing & play area
- ▶ Play equipment
- ▶ Furniture
- ▶ Books/resources for learning
- ▶ Mattresses and pillows
- ▶ Kitchen and toilets
- ▶ Toys

TARGET: \$110,000

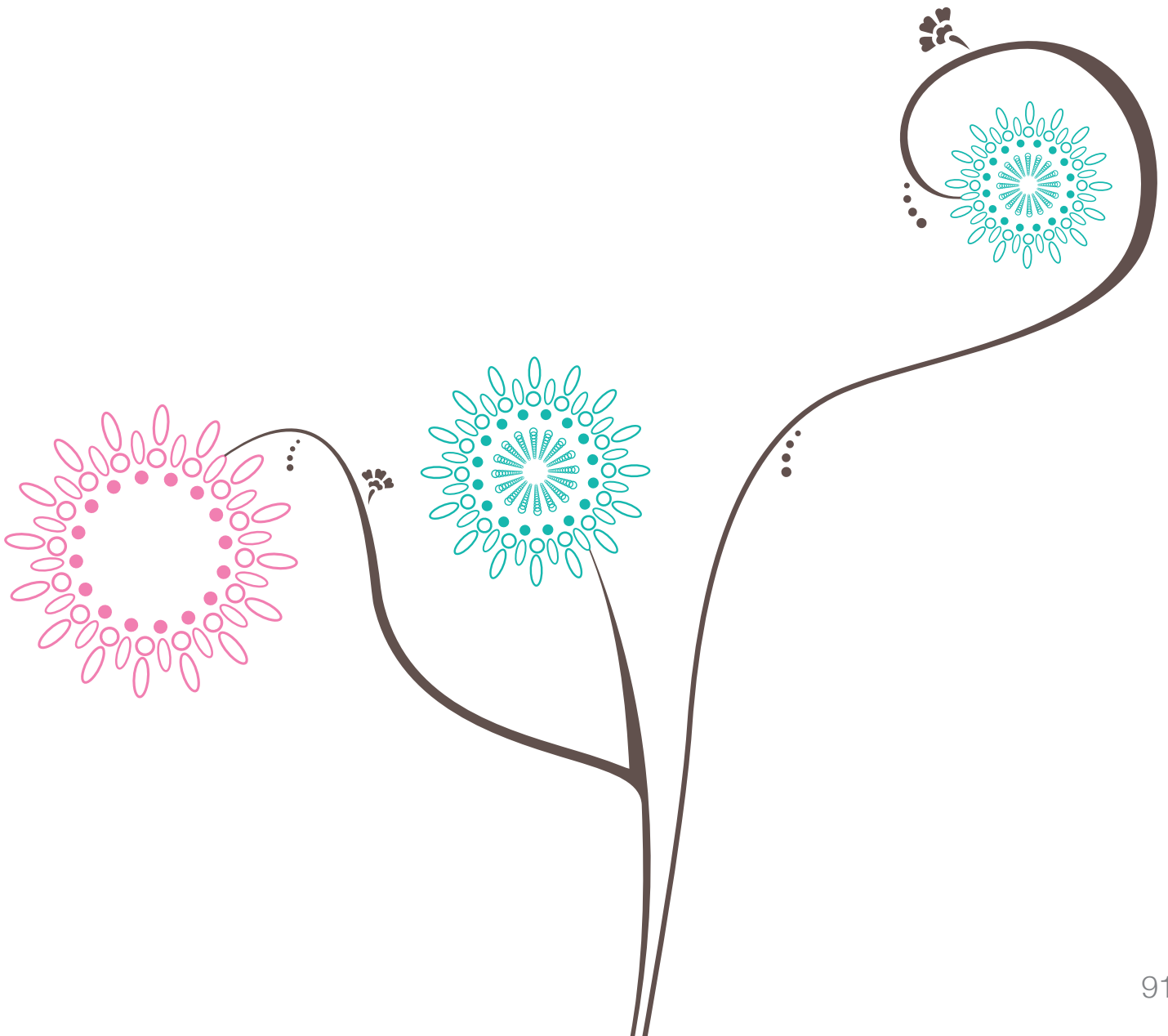


The Salvation Army
Australia Eastern Territory



Our God is so wonderfully good, and
lovely and blessed in every way, that
the mere fact of belonging to Him is
enough for an untellable fullness of joy!

~ Hannah Whitall Smith





THQ Women's Ministries Team

Commissioner Jan Condon - Territorial President of Women's Ministries

Colonel Robyn Maxwell - Territorial Secretary for Women's Ministries

Major Romona Kinder - Women's Ministries Resource Officer

Tessa Albini - Administrative Assistant to Women's Ministries