

# JESUS Centered

## The Salvation Army National Prayer Focus 2022: Jesus Centered AUGUST 21 – SEPTEMBER 11 2022

**Access all the resources here:**  
[mysalvos.org.au/NationalPrayerFocus2022](https://mysalvos.org.au/NationalPrayerFocus2022)

The Salvation Army Australia invites you to join in 22 days of prayer for our National Prayer Focus from Sunday August 21 to Sunday September 11. Our 2022 theme is 'Jesus Centered', and has three key ways to get connected:

### **National Prayer Focus 22 Daily Devotionals**

#### **'The Salvos Field Guide Devotional: Recognising Jesus in our everyday'**

This freely available 22-day devotional can be read online, downloaded or printed. Featuring 22 short reflections from Salvos, the devotional has thought-provoking questions, worship-song suggestions and first-hand story about how these Salvos recognise Jesus in everyday of life. There are four accompanying sermon outlines for each of the Sundays in National Prayer Focus 2022, available on the site.

### **National Prayer Focus 22 Nightly Online Meetings**

Find the link for National Prayer Focus Online meetings live or recorded here: [mysalvos.org.au/NationalPrayerFocus2022](https://mysalvos.org.au/NationalPrayerFocus2022)

Join us from Sunday August 21 to Sunday September 11 for 22 nightly online prayer meetings. These will be 45 mins in total, featuring a variety of ways to pray, artists and ideas for being Jesus Centered, and involve times of group prayer. The meetings and associated artistic creations will be uploaded after each night.

### **Paperback 'Jesus Centered: Focusing on Jesus in a distracted world' by Steve Brown**

The Salvation Army Australia's National Prayer Focus 2022 is based on 'Jesus Centered: Focusing on Jesus in a distracted world' by Steve Brown. 'The Salvos Field Guide Devotional' does not require you to be familiar with the book, but if you would like to purchase a copy to continue your prayer journey, The Salvation Army Salvationist Supplies have copies available at a discounted rate while stocks last. Email [trade.melbourne@salvationarmy.org.au](mailto:trade.melbourne@salvationarmy.org.au) to order.

There will also be a Salvos Field Guide Devotional for Kids made available from July 31, with simple activities and reflections to engage the children in our lives in prayer.

The Salvation Army Australia's National Prayer Focus 2022 will be a powerful time of connection, rejuvenation and joy as we seek God and seek good together. The National Prayer Focus 'Salvos Field Guide' daily devotions and corresponding nightly online meetings will provide a deep and valuable prayer resource as we walk forward into the future. We expect remarkable things as God's people stop, listen and lean into what God is saying. May we recognise Jesus in our everyday, as we place Jesus as the centre of all we do.





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## Sermon outline

# National Prayer Focus Week 1

SUNDAY 21 AUGUST 2022

*Theme: We can be Jesus-centered by following Jesus closely*

*Bible reading: Mark 1:16-28*

### Introduction

Week One of our journey of 'centering Jesus' in The Salvation Army Australia's National Prayer Focus.

Often words lose their power or impact because of our familiarity with them. Words like 'excellent', 'awesome', 'unbelievable' and 'super' are like that. Their overuse in our everyday conversations obscures their deeper meaning. We can use them almost without thinking and they become more like clichés than a true expression of how we genuinely feel.

Another word is 'amazing'. We are often quick to say 'that's amazing'. We say it to encourage someone and engage with them about a personal achievement of theirs or a story they are telling.

The writer of the Gospel of Mark often used this word too – about the 'amazing' Jesus and his ministry in Palestine. But it was no cliché, or platitude or saying that people often used. 'The people were amazed at his teaching,' says Mark 1:22, 'because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.' In Mark 1:27, people are 'amazed' at his power over evil and in Mark 2:12 at his healing power.

Jesus is truly amazing. When applied to our Lord, there is no question about it. And that's why, when Jesus called people to follow him at the

beginning of his powerful earthly ministry, they said 'yes' without hesitation. Jesus, who they would later realise was the Son of God, was irresistible as he stood before them calling them to follow.

What does this mean for us today who are so familiar with our faith. Can we still be amazed by Jesus? Can we experience fresh amazement as we read about him and his ministry to the world and the gift of his Holy Spirit? Can his words come alive for us today and burn within us as we seek to follow him in the 2020s?

Let's spend some time unpacking just why Jesus is amazing and how we can experience fresh amazement in our lives.

### 1. Following Jesus is a privilege

Although Jesus spent three years modelling leadership to the disciples, it all began by calling them to follow. 'Come, follow me,' he said to Simon and Andrew after he saw them fishing in the Sea of Galilee. 'At once, they left their nets and followed him,' says the account of this encounter (Mark 1:16-18).

How amazing is it that at the start of his ministry Jesus formed a team. And how amazing is it that Jesus still calls people to follow and to be part of a team of his followers. There must be no greater privilege than to follow Jesus and be on his team however that may look for us and wherever it may be.

The privilege of following is first and foremost about being with Jesus and experiencing his salvation and knowing his Holy Spirit's presence and power in our lives. It is the privilege of both being with Jesus and personally experiencing the transformation he brings to our lives. It is then the privilege of sharing this experience with others who are on the team. The Acts 2 community of faith is a classic example of the privilege of following Jesus – the richness of new life in Christ shared in community (see Acts 2:42-47).



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## 2. Following Jesus is the best thing for us

We learn from Jesus a whole new way of living and being. This is the 'Kingdom of God' way. It is not about living according to rules and regulations, but by the values articulated by Jesus throughout his earthly ministry. These values delineate a life comprising attitudes and actions and behaviors that are often opposite to what we have known before following Jesus.

For example, Jesus said the two greatest things we could do with our lives is to 'love God' and 'love others'. He also upheld the virtues of 'loving your enemies' and of leading others with a servant heart. Humility was high on his list of qualities and priorities for followers, as were prayer and discernment. In fact, what we now know of as 'the sermon on the mount' (Matthew 5-7) is perhaps the most comprehensive description of what it means to follow Jesus, at least in his own words.

So following Jesus is the very best thing for us. But it takes a recalibration of our lives in which we deconstruct old ways and learn new ways of living and being. Jesus spent three years leading the disciples through this process. And, once begun, the Spirit of God – with our 'yes' – nurtures the life of Jesus in us for the rest of our lives.

## 3. Following Jesus is a call to mission

Jesus didn't stop with, 'Come, follow me', when he called the first disciples. He added, 'and I will send you out to fish for people' (Mark 1:17).

This is exciting because we get to participate in a mission to transform the world. As the mission statement of The Salvation Army in Australia says, it's a mission to 'transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus'.

In other words, as followers of Jesus we join with Jesus in calling others to follow. We may

be become leaders similar to how the first disciples became leaders, but our first calling and touchstone is always as followers.

Following Jesus, for example, we learn that investing time in relationships is a key to our mission impact. He hung out with all kinds of people in marketplaces, on beaches and riverbanks, and on mountainsides. It was the demonstration of his love for people that gave him the authority to speak into their lives about salvation and the Kingdom of God way to live. His death on a Roman cross, and his resurrection, became the channel of divine love for us all to experience new life with Jesus at the centre.

As we embrace the mission of Jesus as our own, we continue to mature as followers ourselves. We're becoming Jesus-centred people. We realise we have set out on a lifelong journey with the amazing Son of God and that it's the best decision we could ever have made.

## Application

One of the most well-known hymns of the church begins with the word 'amazing' – Amazing Grace. May we never stop being amazed with who Jesus is and the fact that he has called us to follow him. Let's nurture our amazement and share it around through an alive 24/7 walk with Jesus as the Lord of life and the Holy Spirit as our source of spiritual renewal.



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## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we stand in awe of you and amazed that you have redeemed our lives and chosen us to follow you. May we follow you holding nothing back and giving our best to your mission of transformation in the world.

Holy Spirit, come and fill our lives today, and every day, with your presence and power, and fresh passion to follow Jesus.

## Songs

- Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)
- I stand amazed in the presence
- Christ is Enough



**Peter McGuigan** describes himself as a 'communicator and collaborator for a better world'. Peter has written a substantive body of opinion and feature articles, and books on leadership, mission and spirituality. Peter has also delivered award-winning journalism across several editorships and has led large and small teams in both communications and front-line mission work as a Salvation Army officer, including internationally. Peter has served as President of the Australasian Religious Press Association and Chair of The Salvation Army's Moral and Social Issues Council. Peter has a Master of Arts (Writing).

Peter's latest book is titled: *A New Day: Writing During the Pandemic on Relationships, Responsibility and Spiritual Renewal*.