



Jesus-centred
Spirit-led
hope revealed

Small group series

Jesus-centred

Commissioner Miriam Gluyas (the leader of The Salvation Army Australia) has issued a rallying cry to all Salvos: *Jesus-centred, Spirit-led, hope revealed.*

Over the coming weeks, we are going to explore what this means for us as individuals and as a church. We are going to start by considering how we can be 'Jesus-centred'.

Share

- Who is someone who you consider to be Jesus-centred? (It could be a famous person or someone you know personally).
- What do you notice about how they live, speak or behave?

Today's scripture passage is filled with advice to help us stay Jesus-centred even when it is tough. Before we read it, let's pray together.

Pray

Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak through God's word.

Read

Read Hebrews 12:1-3.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (New International Version)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (Contemporary English Version)

1 Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. 2 We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side[a] of God's throne! 3 So keep your mind on Jesus, who put up with many insults from sinners. Then you won't get discouraged and give up.

Share

- This passage was written for the Hebrews at a time when they were finding it hard to live for Jesus. They were being heavily persecuted. When do you find living for Jesus easy or hard?
- The writer, Paul starts with a reminder that we are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses". Paul is talking about the heroes of the faith – people who have gone before us and lived faithfully for Jesus. Can you think of a time when you drew strength from thinking about Christians who have gone before you?
- In these verses, Paul encourages us to be like a runner who is incredibly determined to run well. Can you share about a time when you were very determined to do something. (E.g., Pass an exam, get concert tickets, win a competition). How did your determination impact your behaviour?
- Just as a runner takes off heavy clothing before a race, Paul says that we should throw off the things that get in the way of us living for Jesus. This includes sin, but also other things that "easily entangle". What sorts of things do you think he is talking about here?
- If you feel comfortable, share something that sometimes pulls your focus away from Jesus.

- In verse 2, Paul says that we should, “Fix our eyes on Jesus.” Can you think of a time when keeping your eyes fixed on something was really important? (E.g., Walking along a balancing beam, driving a car, cooking a challenging recipe.) What would have been the result if your eyes got distracted?
- What are some practical things we can do to fix our eyes on Jesus? What daily habits help you?
- There is a well-known song that says,

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace
(Helen H Lemmel)*

Can anyone share about a time when these lyrics were true in their life?

- How/why does looking at Jesus change our perspective?
- Read verse 3 again. What is this verse speaking into your personal situation today?
- How have you felt challenged to apply this passage in your life?

Spirit-led

We began this small group series by looking at what it means to be 'Jesus-centred.' We now move to the second part of our rallying cry, which is 'Spirit-led'.

Share

- Have you ever had a gut feeling about something? How did you respond to it?
- What comes to mind when you hear the term "Spirit-led"? How would you define it in your own words?

Today's scripture passage is from the book of Acts. Acts is full of amazing stories about the early Christians and the spread of the church, led by a man called Paul.

Some people have suggested that a more appropriate name for this book of the Bible could have been, 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit'.

The passage we are going to look at today tells the story of how the Spirit led Paul and his companions. First, the Spirit blocked them from entering some towns.

Then the Spirit opened the way for them to visit a different place. Before we read it, let's pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to us.

Pray

Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak through God's word.

Read

Read Acts 16:6-10

Acts 16:6-10 (New International Version)

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6-10 (The Message)

6-8 They went to Phrygia, and then on through the region of Galatia. Their plan was to turn west into Asia province, but the Holy Spirit blocked that route. So, they went to Mysia and tried to go north to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them go there either. Proceeding on through Mysia, they went down to the seaport Troas.

9-10 That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans.

Share

- Reflecting on Acts 16:6-10, describe a time when you felt guided by the Holy Spirit in a specific decision or direction in your life. What was that experience like for you?
- What are some of the ways that you see the Holy Spirit leading Paul and his companions in this passage? What are some other ways that you have seen the Holy Spirit move?

- To be led by the Spirit, we need to understand the different ways that the Holy Spirit can lead us (e.g., through the Bible, circumstances, worship and prayer, the supernatural, our conscience and through people). However, we also need to be willing to follow the Spirit's leading. What can block us from doing this in our lives?
- Paul and his companions were eager to spread the gospel and yet – twice – they hit dead ends. The Scripture says, "the Holy Spirit blocked that route." How do you think they felt when this happened? Have you ever had a moment like this, where the Holy Spirit seemed to shut a door on something that seemed good and exciting?
- How can we learn to embrace unexpected changes or detours in our own lives? How can we learn to see these as opportunities for God to work his purposes?
- Paul's trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance led to amazing growth for the early Church! The Church expanded into new territories. Vibrant Christian communities sprung to life, and many people heard the Gospel for the first time. This story shows how powerful it can be when we obey the Spirit's leading. God can do incredible things through willing people. Where have you seen amazing things happen because of people's obedience to the Spirit?

- How can we distinguish between the voice of the Holy Spirit and our own thoughts, desires, or external influences? What practices or disciplines can help us discern his leading more clearly?
- Check out Galatians 5:25. This verse talks about keeping “in step with the Spirit”. This conveys the idea that the Holy Spirit isn’t stagnant but rather dynamic and active. With this in mind, where do you see the Holy Spirit being alive and active – in your life? In your church?
- What steps can we take to establish a lifestyle of being Spirit-led (with our thoughts, decisions, and actions surrendered to his guidance)?
- What would it look like if every person in your church and in The Salvation Army understood and experienced more of being Spirit-led?

Pray

Spend some time thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What’s something you might pray differently for your life after looking at today’s topic?

Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and guide you so you can listen and obey.

Hope revealed

We have looked at what it means to be 'Jesus-centred' and 'Spirit-led'. To conclude this series, we are going to look at the third part of our rallying cry, which is 'hope revealed'.

Share

- What pictures or ideas come to mind when you hear the word "revealed"?
- Share about a time when something was revealed to you.

Today's scripture passage is a prayer, written by the apostle, Paul for the church in Ephesus. Before we read it, let's pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to us.

Pray

Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak through God's word.

Read

Read Ephesians 1:17-19a

Ephesians 1:17-19a (New International Version)

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:17-19a (Contemporary English Version)

17 I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God. 18 My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and you will understand the hope given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all God's people.

19 I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers.

Share

- In these verses, Paul is praying for people who are already committed Christians. And yet he says, "I pray that you will understand the hope to which you have been called." If they are already following Jesus, why does he pray this prayer?

- At the end of verse 17, Paul prays that the people would have the “spirit of wisdom and revelation.” The word ‘spirit’ here translates to ‘disposition’. He is praying that their attitude would be open and receptive – ready for new things to be revealed. Describe what someone with this kind of attitude might say/do/think.
- What sorts of things keep people from being open to a fresh revelation from Jesus?
- Verse 17 says, “I keep praying”. Some translations say, “I pray continually.” Think about some people in your life who don’t know the hope of Jesus. How easy/hard do you find it to keep praying for them?
- Can anyone share about a time when you grew in your understanding of the hope we have in Jesus?
- Share about a time when Jesus brought you hope in your day-to-day life.
- Jesus also gives us hope for the future – for an eternity where he will reign with perfect peace and justice. In what ways does this bring you hope?
- Where do you see the hope of Jesus at work around you?
- Where do you want to see the hope of Jesus at work in the world?

- What would it look like if every person in your church understood and experienced more of the hope we have in Jesus?

Pray

Spend some time thanking God for the hope we have in him.

Take turns praying these words of Scripture over each other. Your group might choose to lay hands on each other as you do this.

I pray that light will flood your heart and you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you.

Notes
