Women's Ministries Resources 2022-23



Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11



Women's Sunday



Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11





Women's Sunday

Women's Sunday 2022 – Enrollment Service

October 1, 2022 By Sharon Malane

Woven Together in Ministry

Decorate the Room for a Tea Party

- Set up tables around the room
- Place vases of flowers on the tables
- Borrow tea pots from the women to use on each table
- Check thrift stores for china cups and saucers or use clear plastic cups
- Designate a corner of the room for individual and group photos. Consider purchasing a fun back ground and provide a variety of props.

Refreshments

- Finger sandwiches
- Small cakes or cookies
- Fruit salad
- Tea and coffee

Send out invitations to everyone. Encourage the women to dress for a formal tea party. A fun addition would be hat fascinators that are available for purchase at a number of online sites including Amazon. Assign a hostess to each table.

Speaker

Today we are going to enroll women to be a part of The Salvation Army's Women's Ministries programs. The Salvation Army Home League/Women's Ministries is one of the largest organizations for women in the world.

The purpose of Women's Ministries is to encourage women to be:

Transformed and empowered by the gospel to lead a Christ-like life

Engaged in social justice and action to positively impact our world

Equipped to fulfill their potential through life-long learning and development

Enriched mutually through local and global connections and support

This four-fold purpose is not something that we are able to accomplish alone. We need others to join us in this vision. We have gathered today to enroll new members who will join us in worship, fellowship, education, and service to make our group into a beautiful, God-created masterpiece.

We read in Romans 12:4-5 (TPT), "In the human body there are many parts and organs, each with a unique function. And so it is in the body of Christ. For though we are many, we've all been mingled into one body in Christ. This means that we are all vitally joined to one another, with each contributing to the others." As part of this group, you have an important role to play that cannot be fulfilled by anyone else. You are not ordinary. You are a work of art, beautifully created in God's image. Look around you—you are all His treasures. Where one of us hurts, we support and help her to find healing. Where there is misunderstanding, God helps us to spread love through fellowship. Where there is division, we strive to understand so that we can be united as one.

The mission of our group is to bring women into the knowledge of Jesus Christ, encourage their full potential in influencing family, friends and community; equip them for growth in personal understanding and in life skills and to address issues that affect women and their families in their world.

Prayer

Let's pray as Paul prayed for the Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV), "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with all power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Lord, I thank you for each woman who has come here today and is committed to advancing the mission and vision of Women's Ministries of The Salvation Army. Today we pray for women across the nation and for one another. I ask, Lord. that you continue to mold us, strengthen, and guide as we strive to up uplift our community and world to the Glory of God our Creator.

We are glad to welcome each of you to this fellowship. May you find love, encouragement and fulfillment as you join with many women here in this community and throughout the world.

Microsoft Word Document

About author



Sharon Malane
USA Central Territory



Women's Sunday

Women's Sunday 2022 - Make Connections - Outline

October 1, 2022 By Captain Chrissy Cooper

Contributors:

Drama - Major Amy Jo Ferguson

Project Manager - Major Jolene Hull

Sermon – Captain Chrissy Cooper

Formatting/Editing – CSM Mark Bender

Microsoft Word Document

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE

This worship outline contains all elements needed for the worship service. The order of the service presented is only a <u>suggestion</u>. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outline is flexible and allows opportunities to "cut and paste" as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon materials are included as <u>samples</u> and not to be preached verbatim.

Key to Songs:

- **SB** = The Song Book of The Salvation Army
- HC = Hallelujah Choruses
- **SS** = Songs of Salvation
- TB = The Band Tune Book of The Salvation Army
- **HT** = Hymn Tune Accompaniment CDs
- Blue Text = Lyric Video on the Worship Services Video Resources website: http://wsvr.viscomapps.com/

Preliminary Music Video

Woven Together (Psalm 139) – Stuart Townend	https://youtu.be/m5FQXAhG3Xk [4:51]	
Additional Optional Music		
Raise a Hallelujah w/Lyrics – Bethel Music	https://youtu.be/FRo7kFl7hBw [4:24]	
Good Good Father w/ Lyrics – <i>Chris</i> <i>Tomlin</i>	https://youtu.be/-ak0OoFBw3c [4:49]	

Drama - "Love Connection"

Welcome, Announcements and Offering

Call to Worship

Being connected is a longing of the human soul. By definition, *connection* is "a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else." As individuals we look for those who share similar life stories and experiences. At times feelings of loneliness, doubt and a sense of being incomplete can override the truth of what it is to be united in

Christ, both individually and corporately. So today, let us seek out Christ as He reminds us how we can be woven together in a deeper connection with Him.

Praise and Worship

HC#135/SB#270/SS#130 – Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord	HC-135 TB-792 – same SS-130	HCD12-T15
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#250 – Hear the Call of the Kingdom	HC-250	HCD23-T20
HC#203/SB#935/SS#61 – They Need Christ	HC-203 TB-886 – same SS-61	HCD19-T13

Choric Reading – "While I Speak to Thee"

Reader 1: Before Thy face, dear Lord, Myself I want to see. And while I every question sing,

I want to answer Thee. [pause] While I speak to Thee.

Reader 1 & 2: Lord, Thy goodness show.

Reader 1: Am I what I ought to be? O Savior, let me know.

Reader 2: Am I what once I was? Have I that ground maintained, wherein I walked in power with Thee. And Thou my soul sustained? [pause] While I speak to Thee.

Reader 2 & 3: Lord, Thy goodness show.

Reader 2: Am I what I ought to be? O Savior, let me know.

Reader 3: Have I a truthful heart? A conscience keen to feel, the baseness of a false excuse. The touch of aught unreal? [pause] While I speak to Thee.

Reader 3 & 4: Lord, Thy goodness show.

Reader 3: Am I what I ought to be? O Savior, let me know.

Reader 4: Have I the zeal I had, when Thou didst me ordain. To preach Thy Word and seek the lost. Or do I feel it pain? [pause] While I speak to Thee.

Reader 4 & 5: Lord, Thy goodness show.

Reader 4: Am I what I ought to be? O Savior, let me know.

Reader 5: O Lord, if I am wrong, I will not grieve Thee more. By doubting Thy great love and power, to make and keep me pure. [pause] While I speak to Thee.

All: Lord, Thy goodness show. Am I what I out to be? O Savior, let me know.

(by Herbert H. Booth, *The Song Book of The Salvation Army*, #697)

Testimony

[Select someone who can speak on the theme of connection and its importance to self, community, and God]

Congregational Song

SB#838 – How wonderful it is to walk with God	TB-463 – Abide with me	HTD6-T1 (4 vs.)
Additional Option	nal Songs	
SB#815 – Help us to help each other, Lord	TB-57 – Amazing Grace!	HTD3-T2 (4 vs.)
SB#795/ HC#114 /SS#145 – What a friend we have in Jesus	TB-385 – What a friend HC-114 (Hyfrydol) SS-145	HTD7-T21 (3 vs.) HCD10-T14

Scripture Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11

Message – "Woven Together"

Time of Reflection (Video)

So Will I (100 Billion X) Lyric Video – <i>Hillsong United</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=C2U7ffUM5Ec [06:51]
Additional Optional Song	

SB#1031/ HC#283 – Lord, if Your presence	TB-740 – same HC-283	HCD27-T13
SB#568/ HC#30 /SS#117 – All that I am	TB-546 – same HC-30	HCD2A-T20
	SS-117	

Benediction

Lord, we thank You for this time spent together—together with each other and together in Your presence. As we go from this place today, help us to be encouragers. Help us to build each other up in ways that carry over into our private moments when we are doubtful and lonely. Help us to feel complete, knowing we are part of a body of people who long to make each other better, becoming more like Christ.

And so now, "just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Col. 2:6-7, NIV). Amen.

Postlude Music Video

Woven Together (Psalm 139) – Stuart Townend	https://youtu.be/m5FQXAhG3Xk [4:51]
Additional Optional Music	
Raise a Hallelujah w/Lyrics – <i>Bethel</i> <i>Music</i>	https://youtu.be/FRo7kFl7hBw [4:24]
Good Good Father w/ Lyrics – <i>Chris</i> <i>Tomlin</i>	https://youtu.be/-ak0OoFBw3c [4:49]

DRAMA

Love Connections

by Major AmyJo Ferguson

Theme:	Connection and Community.
Scripture:	1 Thessalonians 5:10-11
Synopsis:	Game Show contestant looks for a church love connection.
Characters:	 Host – Bubbly and overly energetic game show host. Contestant – A bit confused; not where she wants to be, but knows she wants love and acceptance. Gladys – A very busy church lady with a huge schedule trying to meet everyone's needs, but not really helping anyone. Taylor – Says a lot without meaning much. Very educated and out there, but never quite grounded.
Props/Sound Effects:	Index cards for contestant. Very long sheet of paper with "SCHEDULE" written on back so audience can see. Recording of Game Show music for intro and outro of scene.
Setting:	Set can be as simple or complex as one wants to make it. Three chairs are needed with some sort of divider (like on the <i>Dating Game</i>). Hang up large hearts and decorate with old Valentine's Day items to make the stage eye-catching.
Length:	3-4 minutes.

[Host enters bantering with the audience and very enthusiastic.]

Host: Hey everybody! Those old pews giving you splinters? That new drummer on the worship team just a little too enthusiastic? If you are looking for God in all the wrong places, you have come to the right place on the All New "LOVE CONNECTION!"

[Game Show music plays intro]

Our first contestant is a single mother of three who...

Contestant: [enters looking around bewildered] Ummm...I'm sorry. I thought this was a dating show.

Host: Sort of. I mean, you don't attend church, do you?

Contestant: Well, no, but I... Isn't that a little personal?

Host: You mean going on TV to discuss your love life and date complete strangers is less personal than talking about church?

Contestant: When you put it that way, I suppose it's not.

Host: Great! Let's welcome our churches. First, representing the First Church on First Street, Gladys Smith. And representing Skyward Church, Taylor Thompson.

[Gladys and Taylor enter from the opposite side of the stage from Contestant and take their seats.]

Taylor: It's just Sky-ward [makes expansive motion with hands].

Host: Oh, my apologies. Representing Skyward Church is Skyward.

Taylor: No, my name is Taylor Thompson, but we prefer not to use the "C" word, it tends to give people the wrong impression.

Host: The "C" word? You mean you are not a church?

Taylor: Oh no! We are. We just don't call ourselves that.

Host: Ohhhhhh Kaaayyy. [*Turning to Contestant*] Well you know how this works. You have three questions to put to our eligible churches and then you get to choose which church you would like to worship in.

Contestant: Well, I thought this was a dating game, so.... [Looks down awkwardly at cue cards.] Umm...ahh...church #1, you invite me over for a romantic...I mean...regular dinner. What do you fix?

Gladys: [produces VERY long sheet of paper with SCHEDULE printed in large letters on back for the audience to read] Oh, honey, you're going to need to be more specific. Do you mean "Pie, Pastry, and Praise" on the first Monday of the month, or "Diets and Discussions" on the first Friday, or "Lunch and Learn" on the first Saturday, or my personal favorite "Bacon, Breakfast and Brunch" on the second Tuesday after the first Monday–so sometimes it's actually the third Tuesday of the month. Or if you're that kind of person, there's always "Fruit it up Fridays."

Contestant: What kind of person?

Gladys: Well, you know a "fruity" person.

Contestant: Okay?! Same question, church #2.

Taylor: We prefer fellowship to take place synergistically within the incomprehensible movements of God's ethereal Spirit.

Contestant: WHAT?

Taylor: We don't schedule dinner, but we do have coffee bar open before and after service.

Contestant: Oh, that sounds nice. Church #2, what would we do on a date? I mean church date...ahem...day.

Taylor: We worship.

Contestant: Could you be more specific?

Taylor: No.

Contestant: Ummm...okay... Church #1, I really want to feel secure and at home in a relationship. Oops, that really doesn't make a lot of sense.

Host: No, continue.

Contestant: Well, I mean, it's sort of silly to say it to a church that all you really want to do is feel comfortable and like you belong there.

Host: You mean living together and sharing in life, making deep and meaningful connections – "LOVE CONNECTIONS."

Contestant: Exactly.

Taylor: Didn't the Apostle Paul say something along those lines? "We might live together with Him and share His life." (1 Thessalonians 5:10b)

Gladys: I think he did, and something about "encouraging each other and building each other up." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Contestant: Do either of you do that?

Gladys: Well, it's not on the schedule, [hesitantly] but I'm sure we do...sometimes.

Taylor: Yeah, it's totally what we do. I mean [hesitantly] that's what we are supposed to be doing.

Host: Well, that's all the time we have today, but join us tomorrow to see if maybe YOU can make a LOVE CONNECTION!

[Game Show music plays outro and contestants leave; blackout.]

Women's Sunday

Make Connections – Sermon

October 2022

WOVEN TOGETHER

by Captain Chrissy Cooper

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; James 3:5-12

Introduction

Ever since I was little, I wanted to do things on my own. I pride myself on being a strong independent woman. Even though this is true for me, more often than not I instantly regret it. And even though I think of myself as independent, I quickly learned in the last year that I need others around me. The year 2020 was an extremely difficult—yet powerful—year for me. As an extrovert, staying at home was not an easy feat. I was devastated as the events and camping season were canceled. I live to be with people. I live to pastor. I live to teach others about Christ. I felt like my purpose was being ripped away from me by something I could not control. It only took about three days of the stay-at-home order to realize I was not made for isolation.

We, as people, are not made for isolation. We are made to live together. Life is better together. This experience called life is so much richer when you have a little tribe around you who helps you, encourages you, keeps you sane, bails you out, gives you grace, and holds you together. Togetherness is part of God's design.

If you look into 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul gives us great insight into how we are to live in community. Here we see Paul writing a letter of encouragement to the church in Thessalonica. I love this letter because even though this church is far from perfect, he instructed them and encouraged them to be more like Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) says, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Encourage One Another

This brings us to the question: What does it mean to encourage one another? First let's look at what encouragement means. Encouragement means "the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope. Persuasion to do or to continue something. The act of trying to stimulate the development of an activity, state, or belief" (*Lexio.com*). It doesn't mean that we should simply butter each other up or praise people to get their approval. It doesn't mean we should

only send each other motivational texts or screenshots of Bible verses. It means we come alongside each other in the hard times.

One of the biggest ways God shows Himself to us is through our friends. Friends who are the hands and feet of Jesus. When I say it's better together, that doesn't mean that you should just spend time with your friends. It means to be honest with each other, and that's a different thing. It's so easy to show each other our fancy Facebook-selves. You know what I mean when I say, "fancy Facebook-selves," right? Facebook is the place where we post pictures of our kids with clean faces, and vacations, and all of the good things that are happening in our lives. It's not lying necessarily. Maybe a better word for it is selective truthtelling, where we share only the positive, only the easy, the darling, the good things. And really, that is what Facebook is for! It's not an appropriate place for struggles, disagreements, or deep truth telling. Although let's be honest - we all have that one friend who totally uses social media inappropriately. It isn't the place to tell the whole ugly weird truth. But that whole ugly weird truth has to get told somewhere. That's why you need your own little tribe - a place where you can share the good, but also the ugly and weird. A place where you can say, "You know, I really wasn't a good mom today," or a place where you can say, "my marriage is harder in this season than before." A place where you can say, "I'm not okay, I'm scared, I'm tired, I'm broken..."

In my experience you either choose honest connection, or you choose competition, comparison and isolation. It's so easy to find yourself competing and comparing, and the only way through this is honesty. When you let someone into your life and let them see behind the perfect Facebook exterior. There is no secret formula, but they do include two things: time and guts. Friendship takes time. And at least for me, I feel like I rarely have time for anything, so my time with those closest to me only happens when I get it on the calendar and treat it like a work meeting. If your life feels anything like mine, weeks fly by and the weekends go even faster. All of a sudden, a month has passed, and I haven't spent any time with the people who I most need to connect with.

Friendship takes guts—willingness to be vulnerable and to engage in conflict. Making new friends is kind of like dating. It can be awesome, but mostly it's nerve-wracking. You are putting yourself out there and taking risks. I could tell you so many stories of trying to be someone's friend and they weren't mean about it, but they made it pretty clear that they weren't accepting applications for new friends. It's hard, but the alternative is harder, because the alternative is isolation. My best friends are not my best friends because we *avoid* conflict. They are my best friends because we talk about it. We have hard, honest conversations with each other. We cry, we discuss, we apologize, and we make up. Sometimes we get into the mindset that if something goes wrong in a friendship, it's over. The opposite is true: when something goes wrong in a friendship that means it's a normal friendship. That's when we have the opportunity to build something beautiful with each other.

Encouragement

Biblical encouragement does not mean we let people continue in their sin. Biblical encouragement always, *always* points us to Christ. The Bible is full of scriptures that tell us to guard our tongues. James has a lot to say about this in James 3:5-12. He writes:

⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water" (ESV).

The tongue is a powerful tool that we can use either for good or for evil, to encourage or discourage. Sometimes people use this idea of not allowing others to sin, in the opposite direction, where they discourage them from even trying. It is incredibly easy to become a discourager. Think about this in your own life. When you open your mouth what flows from it? Is it negative? Is it discouragement and frustration? Is it always a complaint? It is all too familiar to praise God through worship on Sunday morning, and then talk bad about the people who are worshipping with you. Just like water cannot be both fresh and salt, we can either be an encourager or a discourager. We can't be both. The Bible tells us to encourage each other and build each other up. Not pick apart about what could have been done better. Be an encourage each other to be better. Do not discourage each other.

Choose Togetherness

My husband and I had been married a little over two years when I miscarried for the second time in four months. I was devastated. The only thing I ever wanted since I was a little girl was to be a mother, and I felt like that was never going to happen for me. I had lost two babies and I wasn't willing to try again. I felt like everyone around me was pregnant, and here I was, doing exactly what God had asked me to do, and yet, I could not sustain a pregnancy. I was crushed and I was angry. Specifically angry with God. I was at the College for Officer Training (seminary) at the time, and I had a close group of friends who surrounded me in prayer. I remember one specific meeting where I couldn't even get through a praise and worship song without crying. I felt like the whole world was on my shoulders, that life wasn't fair, and that God didn't care. This group of ladies surrounded me, brought me once again to the feet of my Savior, and helped me through those dark few months. They very easily could have let me suffer alone, not allowing me to ruin their happiness and their joy, but they didn't. They chose to mourn with me while I was mourning. Our unwillingness to reach across our own happiness or our own pain ruins relationships. I know friendships that have ended because of

a failure to comprehend the complexity of joy and pain, because someone wasn't there when a friend needed them the most.

This is the heart of friendship. Rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn. If you can't enter into other people's pain when everything is going well for you, then you will never experience transforming friendships. If you can't celebrate with someone when your own heart is breaking, that means that you will miss out on the best that friendship has to offer. I'm not talking about faking it or pretending your pain isn't real. I'm talking about acknowledging the fact that joy and loss are both real. Both are happening all around us. They are unavoidable parts of life and unavoidable parts of friendship.

Conclusion

What I know about life is that it's better when we do it together. Better when we share, better when we tell the truth, better when we are in it together. Let's work, on God's behalf, to be the kind of friends who consistently point each other to Christ and not to the world.

Sermon Outline

Introduction – illustration of a time where even though strong and independent, being community made you better, stronger and have a deeper relationship with others and Christ.

- Encourage One Another
 - Definition of encourage
 - Social Media (being genuine)
 - Personal Perception (not putting yourself down; being true)
 - Friendship takes time and 'guts'
- Do Not Discourage
 - Beware of the tongue
 - Self-check
 - Encouragement in Christ is ...meeting people where they are and pointing them to Christ
- Choose Togetherness
 - Illustration of a time when you felt alone or unworthy
 - Surround yourself with loving and compassionate people
 - Take time/offer to walk the path of loneliness/hardship with others, draw close during times of sorrow and lament

Conclusion – summarize the idea of encouragement and togetherness. Challenge the congregation to identify how they can be woven together (with each other and with Christ).

Microsoft Word Document

About author



Captain Chrissy Cooper
USA Central Territory



Women's Sunday

Women's Sunday 2022 – Recognition of Leaders Ceremony – Make Connections

October 1, 2022 By <u>Heather Hanton</u>

The Cupcake Connection...Connect Up!

Suggested Décor and Supplies

- Gifts of appreciation and certificates for leaders
- Tablecloths in varied colors
- Dollar store white doilies for each place setting
- Cupcake decorating supplies for each table (frosting, food coloring, cupcake holders, confetti, toppers)
- An unfrosted cupcake for each person
- Decorate smaller tables with the leaders' photos and titles and set them around the room
- Photo booth supplies

Best Cupcake Theme Challenge

Have each table work together as a team to decorate their cupcakes. Award prizes for each table and declare one table the winner. Possible themes include: unicorns, circus, flowers, patriotic, baby, beach, holidays, ice cream, sports, snowflakes. Invite a guest soloist, or ensemble from the corps to provide background music during the event. Place conversation starter cards at each table.

Welcome (15 minutes)

Welcome to our cupcake party! There are conversation starter cards at each table. Take a minute to chat with one another to get better acquainted. Don't eat your cupcakes just yet. Connect and enjoy each other's company.

Cupcake Challenge (10-15 minutes)

Work together as a team to decorate your cupcakes based on the theme assigned to your table. You will have 10 minutes to complete the challenge. When the challenge is over, the judges will come around and look at your creations. There will be an award for best cupcakes at the end of the event.

Recognition of Leaders (15-10 minutes)

This should be handled by both the WM Secretary and the Corps Officer. Call each person to come up individually and present them with their certificates/gifts. Use the following as a guide, but be sure to personalize this recognition, giving specific examples of ways each leader has demonstrated her service to Christ and members of your group.

Membership Chairperson

An important role of women's ministries is to maintain member information, recruit and engage members, and help them understand and experience the benefits of belonging to this fellowship. You help us stay connected by keeping detailed records of our members and weekly statistics. Thank you for this unique expression of God's love to the women in our fellowship.

Welcome Committee/Greeters

Another important position in our Women's Ministries is the head of our Welcoming Committee and our team of greeters. It is vital that the women feel welcome, connected and know that they belong to our group. As the head of this committee, we thank you for organizing the greeters each week. You are intentional in selecting individuals who will create a warm, social atmosphere to promote camaraderie in our fellowship. Greeters, you are the first persons the women see when they enter the building. You offer smiles, words of welcome, handshakes, and hugs. Thank you for your example of hospitality and welcoming attitude of love.

Chaplain

One of the key roles in connecting us together is our chaplain. Thank you for your encouraging and uplifting words in the devotions you have prepared. Thank you for interceding on our behalf, for remembering us in prayer. You help us connect to the Father

and to one another. Thank you for your spiritual leadership and sensitivity and for guiding us toward a better understanding of who Christ is.

Sunshine Sergeant

This is a very unique job in maintaining our fellowship. You help our members stay connected by sending cards of encouragement, making phone calls, sending emails, and making inperson visits to those who are not well or who are unable to attend for various reasons. You are our resident prayer-warriors. Thank you for your beautiful testimony of God's love by sharing that love with others.

Treasurer

A less visible, but no less important role—we say thank you to our Treasurer. Thank you for your service to us by keeping our financial records organized and helping us to be good stewards of God's funds. You connect us by spurring us on to use our resources to bless and serve others.

Program Chairperson and/or Committee

We would like to say a big thank you to our Program Chairperson/Committee. You have done an amazing job coming up with creative ways to keep us connected, growing and learning. Thank you for your vision and leadership, for helping us address needs through the women's ministry programs.

Focus Group Leader(s)

(If you have multiple focus groups, call each one individually and be specific to their leadership for their particular group.)

The next leader we would like to recognize has been responsible for the ____ group. She has brought others alongside her to run this group and brought others into women's ministries through their participation. Thank you for seeing this need and for helping others by your leadership.

Outreach Leader - Evangelism

Thank you for creating special programs to attract women from the community into our corps fellowship. You help women connect and find spiritual comfort, fellowship, and purpose through The Salvation Army.

Hospitality and Food Service Support

We are so blessed to have coffee, tea, and various other refreshments and snacks provided for us each week and for special events like this. A lot of work goes into the set-up, service, and clean up each time we meet. We want to thank our head of hospitality and food service

and crew members who help with this important ministry. Thank you for connecting us through hospitality.

Additional: Insert here any other Local Officer positions specific to your corps Women's Ministries.

Women's Ministries Secretary

Last but not least, we say thank you to our Women's Ministries Secretary. You connect us all together by encouraging the growth of our programs. You bring us all together to be unified in our purpose of serving Christ. You help to plan and coordinate events, and you lead us by your example of service. Thank you for your passion for the growth of the women in our corps and community.

Conclusion

Thank you all for your wonderful love and support of Women's Ministries. We are so grateful for you, our members, who faithfully attend each of our programs as together we bring honor and glory to God.

Prayer of Dedication

Connect Up!

Devotional (10 minutes)

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Have you watched the Great British Baking Show? This is a television series that features some of the best bakers in the UK. They come together in a tent on the grounds of Welford Park in Berkshire, England and compete for the title of Champion Baker.

Each day they are tasked with completing three baking challenges: The Signature, The Technical, and The Show-stopper Challenge. To say that these bakers are tested is an understatement. The pressure for perfection is very high. If the desired result isn't reached, it could mean that they are out of the running for "star baker" or worse, sent home and forfeit the title all together. Very few ever receive the coveted "Paul Hollywood Handshake." It is intense.

All of the bakers (even the champions) have struggled through one or more challenges. They rely on recipes and years of practice. They follow the instructions very carefully. If one or more ingredient is off even a little, it could result in a disastrous bake.

Most of us may have never been a "star baker" except maybe in our homes. But if you've ever attempted to bake something, you know there are many steps involved in making a recipe come together to create the perfect bake item, including the correct temperature, careful measuring, the right ingredients and method.

On their own, some ingredients taste sweet, like sugar or vanilla. Others taste bitter like salt or baking chocolate. Still others can even be harmful if eaten raw. But when you put them all together and bake them, they connect and make something incredible. The same is true of our lives. The Bible tells us in Romans 8:28 that God connects all things together for something good. God is our "Master Baker" and He works in us to create something wonderful.

Thanks to Jesus, we don't have to worry about perfection. His sacrifice on the cross provides us with the perfection needed to complete the recipe. The Holy Spirit guides us through the sweet and the salty ingredients of life and keeps us on track during those "technical challenges." Following God's plan doesn't mean there won't be any difficulty or pain, but it does mean that we can trust that good will come out of it. Our job is to stay connected to God through Bible study and prayer. We "connect up" to God so that He can connect everything in the recipe of His plan for our lives.

The point to remember is that God is doing the work. The "good" comes as He combines and connects all of the "ingredients" of our lives—the good, the bad, the bitter, and the sweet into one beautiful bake—His perfect will for our lives. Now that is the ultimate handshake—a "Holy Handshake!"

Closing Prayer

Announce the winners of the Cupcake Challenge.

Microsoft Word Document

About author



Heather Hanton
USA Central Territory

Education Programs



Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11





Education Programs

October 2022 - Make Connections with God through Nature

October 1, 2022 By Lt. Carla Lawson



Luke 5:16

Program Ideas

Do you know how many trees there are in the world? Multiple sources state that there are over three trillion! God created them all and we can see Him through them. Discover nature

with the following program ideas.

- Look outside where you live, where you gather at the corps, or even just drive around. How many different types of trees can you identify? Collect samples of leaves from the trees you find. Some leaves are complex while others are simple. With your group, research the types of leaves you find and where the trees they come from originate. Are they from your area? As you research, I am sure you will be astounded at the nature around you and how God has created you in His story.
 https://www.treemusketeers.net/tree-identification/ is a great site to identify the leaves and get information.
- Give each group participant a leaf (artificial or real). Invite them to write their favorite outdoor space or activity on the leaf. Invite everyone to share.
- Nature String Nail Art: Draw nature design on a piece of wood (i.e., leaf, tree, plant, sun, flower) Hammer in small nails around your outline about ½ inch to an inch apart. Use colored string and wrap around the nails. Check Pinterest for tutorials.
- Set up a Geocaching by putting clues around the community. Divide the women into teams to find the clues. Have prizes for the winning team. For instructions check the website https://www.geocaching.com/play
- For those with physical limitations host an indoor scavenger hunt with items from nature.

11

"I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station,

through which God speaks to us every hour if we will only tune in."

—George Washington Carver

Finding God through Nature

As a very young child I could always be found outside. Growing up in Northern Virginia, we enjoyed all four seasons. But that never made a difference to me. Six feet of snow or scorching hot days, I just wanted to be outside. I would beg my mom to let me go out in our backyard day in and day out while my mother watched her favorite soap operas.

As a four-year-old, I didn't have anyone to play with during the day. My older sister was at school, so I was alone. I would sit on the swing set or in the grass and just look up at the tree line and the sky. It may sound arbitrary, but I felt the presence of God through the cool breeze, the tingle of snowflakes resting gracefully on my nose, the tall firm protection of the

trees, the soft comforting pillow-like clouds and the sounds and smells of nature around me through any given season. I found God through nature.

In Luke 5:16, Jesus also communed with God in nature—in the wilderness. Jesus was surrounded by noise and people clamoring for His attention. They congregated around Him to hear Him preach, teach and to heal their ailments. Maybe you feel that way too? There are so many distractions and daily responsibilities that pull us in all directions. We must make sure our children and our families are taken care of. It's time to do the dishes and laundry. We are needed to help with homework. Our job is to complete a certain project before the deadline, which is in ten minutes. Our corps is having a covered dish fellowship meal that we signed up for, and it's my week to lead the women's Bible study. These things are all important in our lives, but we still need the time and space to connect with God without distractions. Jesus knew that He needed to remove Himself from all the clatter and so He went to the lonely place (as it is worded in the NIV) to connect with God.

"Our strength comes from God." We hear it all the time and we even tell it to ourselves almost as a mantra. If we are honest, do we believe it and live it? If we do, we become strengthened by being in God's presence, by connecting with Him. I think the best way to connect with God is through nature. He is the creator. Jesus knew that for Him to be refreshed, renewed and reinforced to do His Father's work here on earth, He had to connect with the source. He found the wilderness to be the place of connection.

Just as in childhood, being in nature helps me turn off the distractions around me and connect with God. I can just be still and be in the presence of the Lord, renewing my strength. I am ready to take on my responsibilities through the strength I have in Christ. I challenge you to get away; to connect with God through nature. There are many ways we can do that, no matter the season or our physical limitations. Try taking your personal prayer and devotional time outside or use art to help guide your time. If being outside physically is not possible for you, there are many YouTube videos and even apps for your phone that provide an "outside wilderness" experience. No matter the logistics, take time to withdraw yourself from the crowd and connect with God.

Pray With Me

Father in Heaven, wilderness Creator, my connection for strength—You are so good! Help me to get away to the wilderness to connect with You. Show me Your strength and reveal Yourself more to me through nature and all of Your creation. Amen.

8/19/22, 11:48 AM



Lt. Carla Lawson

USA Southern Territory



Education Programs

November 2022 – Harmony for the Holidays in Blended Families

November 1, 2022 By Lieutenant Emily Arroqui



Read Acts 2:46.

Room Set Up

Using seasonal decorations, create a warm, cozy space that depicts being home for the holidays.

Menu

Serve a simple meal of bread and soup with your favorite drinks. Hot cocoa would be an excellent option.

Icebreaker Activities

To enhance the theme of blended families, the following activities promote teamwork.

- Instruct women to stand in a circle holding hands. Give them a hula hoop. The object of the activity is to get the hula hoop all the way around the circle without breaking hands.
- Create a simple obstacle course with an X at the end. Divide everyone into pairs. Blindfold one person. The one who is not blindfolded must get their partner across the obstacle course and to the X using verbal instructions.
- Divide your women into teams. Give each team 20 sticks of spaghetti, a yard of tape, a yard of string, and a marshmallow. Challenge them to build the highest tower with these supplies in a certain amount of time. The team that builds the highest wins.

Food for Heart and Soul

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46).

Growing up in the South, you quickly come to find out that any and every event will include food. Every holiday is usually spent around a table with lots of food, laughter and love. Growing up, my own family made even the "small" holidays a celebration at my Grandmother's house. We spent Christmas and every other holiday at her house. And there was an abundance of food on the table at each of these gatherings. The act of breaking bread together brought us closer to one another.

Now that I am older, I strongly consider food to be one of my love languages. There is just something holy about preparing a meal and sitting together at a table with people you love, whether they are friends or family. Even when a very simple meal is shared, I can feel the warmth emanating around the table. When I got married, I embraced any opportunity to cook for my husband's family. These precious moments of sitting at the table together are moments I won't forget.

When we had our first child and he began eating solid food, we made it a point to eat at the dinner table together as much as possible. I believe that God intended for food to nurture not

only our bodies but our souls as well. I also believe that food is the way to a person's heart. It's what can bring us together in ways many other things cannot.

For many people who did not grow up in a blended family and who do not have one now, it can be difficult to understand why holidays can be so difficult. You often can't just continue the same traditions as before. Having a blended family takes a lot of work, especially during the holidays. It is difficult during that first holiday season when you are trying to forge new traditions not to step on anyone's toes and to learn what makes everyone feel welcome.

Because food is my love language, I really do think there's a recipe to help most anything. Think of it as chicken soup for the soul if you will. (Pun intended.) While this "recipe" for both blended families and nuclear families alike may not be the cure to all your family's unique situations, I believe it will certainly help.

- Begin with a cup full of grace. Remember that people will make mistakes. They will forget certain things, or they may not always hold the same traditions you do. In these moments, it is best to exercise grace. As women, we especially need to have a lot of grace for the children in our home, whether they are biologically ours or loved by choice. There will be moments of exhaustion, times of confusion and frustration as they try a new way of life with their new family.
- Add in a heaping two cups of humility. For as many times as you are frustrated with others, remember that you also will make mistakes. There will be many times that you will have to ask for forgiveness. Be prepared to do so. There is no shame in admitting when you are wrong, and it certainly teaches our children that they are worth an apology.
- Stir in respect. Remember that each person in the family is their own person, has their own thoughts, opinions, talents and abilities. Remember to respect and honor those in the best way you can. You will learn as you go, which is where the humility begins to really stand out in this recipe.
- Don't forget to sprinkle in a lot of communication. There will be bumps in the road, but they can be fewer with planning and communication.
- Cover all the ingredients in prayer. Spend time in prayer, studying God's Word and sharing in the celebration together.
- Slow cook these ingredients. A family coming together will take time and should not be rushed.

When we break bread together with glad and sincere hearts for all that God has done for us, we are doing something holy. This act of worship changes the hearts of those who sit around the table with us.

Closing Activity

Play the board game "Life," emphasizing that life does not always go as planned. It isn't always as pretty or nice as a board game. Remind women that acceptance is key, to be empathetic towards those whose lives are different than ours.

Resources for Blended Families

Here are some fantastic articles for blended families that may help them during the holiday season:

https://www.scarymommy.com/6-things-you-should-know-about-blended-families/

https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/blended-family/stepparents/stepfamily-living/8-tips-for-a-peaceful-stepfamily-holiday/

https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/blended-family/stepparents/stepfamily-living/a-time-to-grieve-during-stepfamily-holidays/

https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/blended-family/stepparents/stepfamily-living/navigating-the-holidays-as-an-adult-child-of-divorce/

https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/blended-family/stepparents/stepfamily-living/13-ideas-to-manage-holiday-step-stress/

https://www.familylife.com/familylifeblended/blended-families/

About author



Lieutenant Emily Arroqui Southern Territory



Education Programs

December 2022 – Making Connections through Global Sponsorships

December 1, 2022 By Captain Bethany Burns



Proverbs 11:25

Introduction

During the hustle and bustle of Christmas, we often find ourselves going from store to store trying to find the right gift for each person on our list. Some of us start early, and some of us start late. What would happen if we decided to skip purchasing gifts this year and tried something new and different?

Decoration and Food Ideas

Place lanterns or mason jars on a vintage world map or map scrapbook paper for centerpieces. Select foods that correspond with the featured country. If you have a guest, ask them for some local food suggestions from that country that you could replicate.

Ice Breakers

- What is your favorite thing about Christmas?
- Have you every traveled at Christmas?
- Have you ever traveled overseas for Christmas?

Education Ideas

- Contact an officer serving overseas, via Zoom or Teams, to speak to the women about how Global Sponsorships make a difference in the overseas country where they are serving.
- Invite a young person who has served on a summer mission service team to speak about the impact it had on their life. Have the person also talk about how the support from home is so important.

Global Sponsorships

Are you looking to change the way that you give this Christmas season? Here are a few ideas to make a difference at home and globally.

- Adopt a local angel: Ask the corps officer for a family to adopt.
- Pack a box for Samaritan's Purse: https://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/
- Contact the Overseas Project Officer at THQ to adopt a child or family internationally.

Craft Ideas

Purchase clear Christmas bulbs from Hobby Lobby or Walmart. Provide old world maps or scrapbook paper with maps on them. Mod podge the paper onto the bulbs to make world map bulbs. You could sell the bulbs to raise money for World Services.

Notes of Encouragement

Send notes to officers who are serving overseas. You can find the current list at your territorial headquarters.

Overseas Missions

Many years ago, my husband and I felt the calling for overseas missions. After years of praying, the Lord granted us our hearts' desire. In 2016 our family had the adventure of a lifetime as we served in Lisbon, Portugal. The excitement was unbelievable. We learned so much during our time in there, and our children thrived. It was a beautiful time of ministry. As we returned to the States after our appointment ended, there was a renewed sense of the importance of supporting our Salvation Army globally.

While in Portugal, we randomly received notes of encouragement and smalls boxes of treats from various corps in our territory. It was like Christmas morning receiving those small reminders and encouragements from home. I can't help but think about the verse in Proverbs 11:25 that reads, "A generous person will prosper, whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."

A generous person will prosper. I love this statement. Generosity is such a strong act of kindness. No matter how big or small the act of kindness, it has such power. I believe that God wants us to be generous with what He has given us. He wants us to use the gifts and talents that He has given us to be a light to others. And when we do that, verse 11 tells us that "whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." When we are generous with our time, our money, our things, we will be refreshed ourselves. It feels good to give. It feels good to go to the store and pick up a gift for someone or send a small note of encouragement. It feels good to be a light in the darkness. This Christmas season, we all can be generous. Whether it be with our time or money or talents, let us be used by God to bless others.

Blessing Others

What can you do this Christmas season to bless others? The Salvation Army has many officers serving overseas who could use encouragement. There are also opportunities to adopt children through our global sponsorship. I will never, ever forget the generosity of others during our time overseas. Will you seek the Lord in this moment and ask Him to show you how you can be a blessing to others? Will you be the one today who will bless another?

December 2022 - Making Connections through Global Sponsorships - The Salvation Army USA National Women's Ministries



Captain Bethany Burns

USA Southern Territory



January 2023 – Making Connections through Shared Goals

January 1, 2023 By Captain Marion Durham



Creating a Vision Board (Dream it. Believe it. Do it.)

Scripture: Proverbs 29:18

Dream It

What dreams and visions do you have for your women's ministries in the coming year? Where do you spiritually see the women in the future? What plans and goals have been set?

Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction." Women need spiritually minded leaders to cast a vision for the future, laying out expectations and biblically focused dreams for their corps groups.

As a leader, it is essential to begin with prayer. Don't begin with Pinterest or an article from a women's magazine. You can get creative with the details later, but if we want results for the kingdom of God, we must seek the Spirit of God in these matters.

Pray as a leader for your group, asking God to speak to your heart concerning where He desires to take the group. Meet with key women to pray and review last year's goals, accomplishments and unfinished items. Toss out anything that did not come to fruition that the Lord is not urging you to complete or do in the coming year. It is okay to have unfinished goals when you are in tune with the Holy Spirit.

Believe It

It takes a measure of faith to seek God's Holy Spirit for revelation concerning women's ministries and not to move solely from our own agendas or what is popular in today's culture. As we grow in Christ and know Him and His dreams for our people, we as leaders can believe in faith that He will show us His ways.

Sometimes we do not know what to do and end up just doing things the way we have done them in the past. To breathe fresh ideas in our programs, it's vital to seek God's Holy Spirit. Hosea prophesied that "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6 (NIV). Let's walk in faithful obedience as we seek God's plans for our women.

Do It

After praying on our own and with key women, it's time to create a vision board that uses key words and pictures to cast a vision for our corps women.

Ephesians 1:18 (MSG) paraphrases, "I ask ... to make your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is He is calling you to do."

What is God calling your women's ministries group to do this year? Begin with big picture thinking. Make broad strokes. Using a whiteboard or giant post-it notes, write down some of those concepts. These could be spiritual growth, more ministry to younger women, or supporting your community.

Then break down these large ideas and dreams into attainable goals. Using the previous thoughts: Video Bible Study (spiritual growth), babysitting for the Young Adult Fellowship

Group (ministry to younger women), attending a local Human Trafficking Prayer Vigil (supporting our community).

Using clip art or magazines, cut out images that signify or convey these goals. For example, if reaching out to Spanish-speaking residents at The Salvation Army's Senior Apartments is the large idea, use a picture of a Spanish Bible to symbolize the Spanish-language meeting or Bible study that will be held there in the coming year.

Take these pictures and mount them on posterboard or on a bulletin board. You could also use a corkboard covered with wrapping paper. Add items like teacups to signify the upcoming Spring Mother/Daughter Tea.

As a corps group, we wanted to support women in our Salvation Army Center of Hope. We decided to each donate a pack of new underwear, bras, or undershirts. To make it fun we called it "Drop Your Drawers." The program titled attracted women from the corps who don't normally attend the group and we had a terrific response. The next year we made "Period Packs" and the women enthusiastically brought in tampons, pads and incontinence products for women staying at the shelter.

Another broad idea that we had was to increase attendance at our Divisional Women's Retreat. The expense was too much for some of our women, and although our corps had the funds, we wanted the women to have a "buy-in" to the event. We didn't want to just subsidize the trip. We came up with several methods whereby the women could earn their way to the retreat—attendance, paying club dues, bringing a friend and participating in or leading a weekly meeting. On our vision board we placed photographs of the guests who were speaking at the retreat along with the dates and parameters of helping to pay for the event. Women wanted to attend the Women's Retreat and we showed them how it was possible through our vision board that was placed in the fellowship hall.

When we seek God in these matters, He will speak to us. He will give us the revelation or vision. He will place God-centered dreams in us, in our local leaders and in our women. Then, it's our turn to believe and obey them.



February 2023 – Making Connections through Global Friendships

February 1, 2023 By Major Angela Repass



Finding a Modern-Day Pen Pal

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Introduction

Pen pals are long-distance friendships maintained by writing letters to each other. They provide an opportunity see the world through another person as you learn about their culture and language on a more personal level. Pen pals are for anyone wanting to learn a new language or culture. You don't have to travel as you can see the world through a pen pal.

The Daily Californian published a list written by Melissa Boling of reasons why you should have a pen pal.

- Create a connection with someone new.
- Learn about a world outside of our own.
- Writing letters improves your skills.
- It encourages patience and provides a way to slow down.

This is the link to the full article https://www.dailycal.org/2020/06/24/reasons-why-you-should-get-a-pen-pal/

Program Idea

The Salvation Army has partnering territories throughout the world and officers from our home territories serving globally. Reach out to a global officer from your territory in advance and ask them to connect you with women's ministries members in the country where they serve. Use the corps address at both locations to help protect privacy. Be cautious not to send packages with items, because there is often a fee charged in other countries to receive packages.

Offer guidance on how to write the first pen pal letter from: www.thepencompany.com blog blog write-first-letter

Here are a few of their suggestions:

- 1 Tell your pen pal where you found their details.
- 2 Keep it personalized.
- 3 Don't overdo it.
- 4 Askyour pen palsome questions.
- 5 Mention what you have in common.
- **6** Tell them a little about yourself and your family.

Decorations

Cover tables with multicolored tablecloths and use globes as centerpieces. If possible, place a stationary set at each chair that they can use to write their first letter.

Food

Serve global cuisine from countries represented in your pen pal exchange.

Away from Home

My husband and I left the United States in 2003 to serve in Mexico. It was not an easy transition for me because I did not speak Spanish. I quickly found a friend in our building where we lived who spoke some English. I was so thankful for Rocio because I needed that personal connection. However, I felt so alone when I went to the office and corps building because I could not communicate with people. I quickly learned that I had taken for granted the ability to communicate with people and the power of words.

I remember receiving my first piece of mail about a month after our arrival. It was a card from a corps in the United States. As I read the card, I sat in tears because of the words that strangers wrote to encourage me. Over the years that we served in Mexico my favorite thing was opening mail. It seems so simple, but that mail included encouraging words in a language that I could understand. Those words were powerful.

We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "Therefore encourage one another with these words." It is a short verse and seems simple, but it is powerful. Our words have power. They can encourage people or tear them down. They can give people hope or make them feel hopeless. They can bring light into someone's day or cause them to feel lost in the darkness.

Whether it is through a text, phone call, social media, or a letter, I urge you to encourage people with your words. I know a text is easy, but a card or letter is something that shows extra effort and something they can touch, feel, and even keep bringing out again when they are feeling discouraged.

Our words are powerful, use them to encourage someone today!



March 2023 - Make Connections Through Shared Interest

March 1, 2023 By Major Loretta Gilliam



Crafternoon Tea

Scripture: Matthew 18:20

Introduction

Crafternoon Tea is a gathering designed to make connections through crafting and afternoon tea. There are women in your community who love crafting. It would be great to invite them to this event.

Ideally, the project needs to be simple enough to make while talking, but don't shy away from learning a new skill, particularly if this is a group of old friends. You will be comfortable enough with each other to relax as you work.

You can find delicious recipes and unique crafts for all occasions on Pinterest. Search topics such as Crafternoon Tea and Women's Ministries Toolkit.

You will discover that there is something special about getting a group of likeminded women together who want to have fun, learn a new crafting skill, relax with a cup of tea, and enjoy delectable treats.

Allow plenty of time to complete your projects—a good two to three hours plus run-on time for more tea and socializing.

Icebreaker Activity

Tell us a little about yourself by answering the following questions:

- The first thing I do each morning is...
- Breakfast consists of...
- If I have 30 minutes to myself, I...
- I love to wear...
- My favorite place to have lunch is...
- I never miss an episode of...
- My favorite hobby is...
- My favorite tea is...

Craft Idea

Drop blobs of paint anywhere you like on a canvas or piece of cardstock. It can be different colors, same colors, or mixture of many colors. Placing different color circles on the paper and let them dry. There is no certain order, but it looks better if you use odd numbers of "blobs." Use watercolor sketch book, watercolors, (children's paint work great) and felt pen, with fine point to doodle around in the blobs of paint. Let your imagination flow as you create. The object is to be creative and to have fun.

Afternoon Tea

Did you know that afternoon tea is relatively new? Drinking tea has been around for a long time but the art of afternoon tea has only been around since the mid–19th century.

Afternoon tea was born out of necessity. Anna, the duchess of Bedford became extremely hungry in the midafternoon because dinner wasn't served until 8 pm. She asked the kitchen staff if they could bring tea, cakes, and sandwiches to her room in the afternoon to hold her over.

Soon, she began to invite friends over to join her. Over time, afternoon tea became a fashionable, social event. Ladies changed into lovely long gowns and gathered for tea. I'm sure that they just didn't drink tea and eat sandwiches. I could almost guarantee that they began to share together about their lives and what was going on with them.

It's always wonderful to get together with those who are likeminded, to enjoy each other's company and to lift each other up. My sister and I love the opportunity to craft together. It is good for my soul when we are together. We may laugh, cry, or solve the troubles in the world. Whatever we come up with is a byproduct of spending time together. Sometimes we have a mission, and sometimes we just see what we can come up with.

While Matthew 18:20 doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus is only with us when two or more are gathered, but it is wonderful to know that "when two or more are gathered in my name, there am I with them."

During Crafternoon Tea, we are going to eat, drink tea and have fun. But we also are going to be together in the name of Jesus. If anything hinders us from loving each other and from fully loving Jesus, we can share, pray, and rejoice because God is here and wants us to be in one accord.

For a short while, we are going to take in all that God has for us without worrying about things around us. We are going to soak up God's love for us like the treats that we are going to have soak up flavor. We are going to create some beautiful things together. All of it reflects what God wants for us and is doing for us.



April 2023 - Make Connections through Global Diversity

April 1, 2023 By Major Everette Platt



Embracing Diversity

Scripture: Romans 12:16

Program Ideas

The following resources provide activities for diversity education.

- Song in support of UNICEF: https://youtu.be/wXLumLvHWfA ("One Love" by Bob Marley)
- Diversity Calendar: https://www.diversityresources.com/diversity/calendar
- Salvation Army Fight for social justice: https://docs.google.com/document/d/17T0huzE9XYrwr0vPSsL2xydWj6RwNX6EX2UdmT5h
- Christian Games: https://ourpastimes.com/workplace-diversity-games-6730612.html
- Diversity Bingo: https://creducation.net activity > diversity-bingo
- Arts and Craft Activities: https://kidactivities.net/diversity-through-food-and-other-activities/

Refreshment Ideas

If you have women in the group who come from another culture, ask them to bring a snack typically enjoyed in their country. Purchase snacks from other countries from a store such as World Market for the women to try.

Imago Dei: One Love, One Heart

We live in a world that is broken and hurting. We are divided by religion, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, and the color of one's skin. It is a world that often chooses to ignore *Imago Dei*, which is Latin for "image of God." Every person is created in God's image—His likeness. The value of every individual is not assigned through success, popularity, or assets. The value of everyone comes from the Creator of heaven and earth.

We read in Romans 12:16, "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." We can view this as an anchor verse for how we live our lives today. If we look at the preceding verses, we will see the connection to verse 16. Verses 14, 15: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." As followers of Jesus Christ, we should: love sincerely by hating what is evil and clinging to what is good; be devoted in love by honoring others; share with people who are in need; empathize with others in their and losses and celebrate their victories. In doing what has been listed in verses 9 – 15, we acknowledge the directive given to us in Romans 12:16: "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.[a] Do not be conceited," and Imago Dei.

Christ followers recognize the value of every human being. We accept the Christian conviction that every person is created in the image of God. Every person, without exception, is marked with God's beauty. Consequently, every person is to be treasured and treated justly.

John 3:16-17, states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son

into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." This scripture that we all love to say from memory has a key noun and pronoun, "world" and "whoever." Merriam-Webster defines the world as, "the earth and all the people and things on it, the people in the world."

McNeil (2020), in her book *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, references Revelation 21:24: "When we travel down the road toward reconciliation, this is what awaits us: the colorful tapestry of humanity in all of its rich, God-breathed beauty. This innumerable crowd of cross-cultural witnesses foretold in Revelation will bring the glory and honor of their nations into the city of God." McNeil further encourages our collective calling to make the kingdom of God visible on earth. Every time we bridge racial, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic divides, we become prophetic witnesses to the reality of the kingdom of God.

Regardless of our gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. We are covered by the same blood, we can all have the hope that Jesus provides. We proclaim that the Holy Spirit is within us, and we read from the same Holy Word. May we receive God's Word that is meant to give dignity, equality, and one love to everyone because of *Imago Dei*.

Challenge:

- Evaluate who you are in Christ.
- Understand your culture and how it defines you.
- Assess your cultural biases and assumptions.
- Consider your actions and reactions to other cultures and races.
- Above all, filter everything through the lens of the cross and what Christ did for us. (Wong, Multicultural Women's Ministry.)

"Treat everyone like Jesus died for them because He did." ~ Dr. Derwin L. Gray

Prayer

Lord, may we be transformed by Your love for us and in turn become a reflection of Your love to those who don't look like us or share the same background as we do. Forgive us for passing judgment on people based on their appearance, ethnicity, economic status, or religious affiliation. May we walk in love and unity with one another (Morrison, 2019). Amen

References:

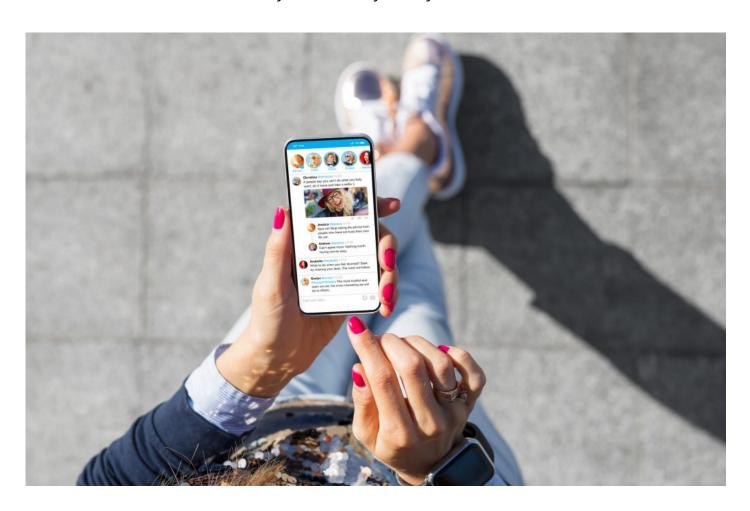
- McNeil, B. (2020). Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press.
- Morrison, L. (2019). Be the Bridge. The Crown Publishing Group.

Wong, A. (2015). Multicultural Women's Ministry.
 https://womensministry.lifeway.com/2015/09/02/multicultural-womens-ministry/



May 2023 - Making Connections Through Social Media 101

May 1, 2023 By Ashley Escobar



Scripture: Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)

Social Media has captured the attention of the world. This ever–evolving platform that started out as a way to simply stay connected with friends has quickly become a world–stage for businesses and corporate giants to advertise to the consumer.

Social media takes on many roles. It is the master chameleon, taking shape as anything you want to use it for. While social media has become congested with unsolicited sponsored ads, there is much to be said about the great opportunity we have as partners in ministry when it comes to this platform giant.

Hebrews 3:13 says, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." While social media has been around for over a decade, the year 2020 was when we realized how necessary the platform had become, not only to keep in touch with one another but to encourage each other and do ministry together virtually. That being said, the need for us in leadership is to gain some level of proficiency in social media. Instead of building programs for people to go to, why don't we take ministry to the places where people already are—online?

Here are some key rules when starting, maintaining, or building a social media platform for your ministry:

- Attention is the most valuable commodity. Social media gives us an opportunity to have world-wide attention, which also means cultural reach. According to Statista, seven out of ten Americans are active on social media and have several social platform accounts
- Use social media to start meaningful conversations. Creative and encouraging content brings meaningful interactions with those who follow your account. Conversations through a direct message on Instagram holds value but not as much as a face-to-face conversation.
- Provoke spiritual practice. Don't just invite people to a prayer event, invite your
 audience to stop the scroll and pray right then and there. One way you can do this is by
 posting a graphic like the one in this link: https://www.instagram.com/p/ClyeG5mDX_t/
- Social media can be used as a tool for biblical literacy. For example, create a post about "Three ways to easily read more Bible" or "Here are eight Bible verses to help deal with disappointment." Give your audience an opportunity to dive deeper into the Bible and its context.
- Hold tightly to the "deep, then wide" method. While you might feel the pressure to get all the latest social media platforms, we must remember to go deep before going wide. Work on building the platform you have before trying to juggle five different social media accounts.
- Social Media is not your digital billboard. While social media can be a great space to roll out new initiatives, resources and programs, it shouldn't be used solely for that purpose. If you are only using your social platform to promote, you will lose engagement and your audience. A way to navigate how much is too much with promotional content is to follow the "1-in-5" rule. It is acceptable to promote new resources, initiatives, or events in one out of every five posts you make on your account. The other four posts should be creative content, such as a Bible verse in a trendy lettering graphic. Or a graphic of a text message that says something encouraging. But don't limit yourself if there is content you enjoy on

your personal social platforms. Ask how might you be able to replicate that content in a way that will engage your ministry-driven audience?

Preparation

By earthly standards, David was unprepared to take on Goliath. The Bible says Goliath was over nine feet tall and covered in more than 125 pounds of armor. Goliath had the definite advantage against David from a human standpoint. But Goliath didn't realize that in fighting David, he also had to fight God. Most of the onlookers saw only a giant. David saw a mortal man defying almighty God.

We all face different giants in our lives. Viewing impossible situations from God's point of view helps us put giant problems in perspective. Once we see more clearly, we can fight more effectively. Social media can be daunting, but it doesn't have to be an impossible giant that is hard to figure out. In the hands of God, it can be the slingshot that enables you to live out Hebrews 3:13: "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" in the current culture.

God specializes in helping amateurs like David make their aim sure. If David, did it with one stone and the power of God, we can too.

Lean into social media and start posting.

About author



Ashley Escobar
USA Southern Territory



June 2023 – Make Connections through Shared Story

June 1, 2023 By Major Susie Erickson



Family Genealogy - Passing on Our Faith

Scripture: Psalm 145:4

Program Ideas

Throughout history, the family table has been the center of relational life where family stories were served alongside heaping bowls of mashed potatoes. The tradition of oral storytelling of family tales is becoming obsolete. What family heirlooms of truth do you want to pass on to the next generation before they fade into forgotten history?

Here are some engaging and fun ways to preserve your family genealogy as you tell your story of faith.

- Family Bible: A family Bible is a treasured keepsake handed down through generations, with each successive generation recording information about the family's history inside. Typically, this information consists of births, deaths, baptisms, confirmations and marriages. Other items, such as letters, newspaper clippings, and photographs might also be placed inside a family Bible. In past years, they were used as sources for genealogical research. It's never too late to start a new family tradition.
- **Bible Journaling:** Bible journaling is a hybrid diary where you keep both notes on your study of the Bible and a record of things that happen in your everyday life. Over time, as you analyze and study the Bible, you can apply what you've learned to your life experiences, which may make it easier to overcome difficult situations. What a treasure to pass on to the next generation. Secure a local craft vendor to teach a skill class on Bible journaling.
- Scrapbooks: Scrapbooking is a method of preserving, presenting, and arranging personal and family history in the form of a book, box, or card. Typical memorabilia include photographs, printed media, and artwork. Scrapbook albums are often decorated and frequently contain extensive journal entries or written descriptions. Scrapbooks are a trendy, visual way to share your family history. Secure a local scrapbook vendor to teach a skill class or present a tutorial on digital scrapbooking.
- Family Cookbooks: Heritage cookbooks are a perfect way to share knowledge of family history with those who may not be drawn to genealogy. Stories presented in an accessible way can benefit your family, nourishing both heart and body. Provide art and craft supplies for participants to create a recipe book or card box with treasured family recipes and stories.
- Genealogy Jewelry: The work of genealogy goes far beyond dates and names. When you
 dive into your ancestry you learn more about yourself. Turn your collection of an
 ancestor's old photographs into wearable pieces of art by transforming old costume
 jewelry into one-of-a-kind heirlooms.

Memories in Smells

Do certain smells stir memories for you? I can still smell the dirt road leading to my grandmother's house. Every season brought its own fragrance. A crispness mingled with the smell of a distant fire in winter, calling me to warm my frozen toes by the fire. Spring brought

the smell of honeysuckle. The fragrance of gardenia permeated the summer air. The aroma of harvest beckoned us to eat scuppernong (species of grapes native to the Southern United States) straight from the vine. What a delight to smell fruit cocktail cake baking in my grandmother's kitchen and hearing those sacred words: "Come to the table, supper is ready." Those words were so much more than a call to eat. They were a call to slow down from the demands of life, gather with loved ones, and enjoy a meal around the family table.

Throughout history, the table has been the center of relational life. It is a place to go and be yourself. A place to learn about family history as stories are passed along. The table reminds us of the joy we find in connection and relationships. It is about hunger, both physical and spiritual, and the connection between the two.

Time Chester writes in *Meals with Jesus*, "When Jesus came to seek and save the lost, He came to eat and drink with sinners. Jesus' mission strategy was a long meal." Jesus understood the connection between food and human hearts. Food has the ability to connect us with people and cultures and to connect us with our story. When we gather around a table, we certainly enjoy the food, but what we really savor are the people around the table, the stories told, the laughter shared. These are ingredients in a recipe for a rich, full life—a relational life lived in community.

Scripture teaches us to push the pause button on life, remember the past, and celebrate God's goodness. God instructed the Israelites to celebrate Passover to remember the struggles they had been through and tell those stories of God's faithfulness to the next generations.

The story of my heritage was shared over a plate of homemade biscuits. My sisters and I have families of our own, but there is no bond stronger than the bond we share as sisters. We survived childhood together in the home of a widow by leaning on each other and our faith in God. We gather as much as life allows, and we eat biscuits to remember. My eldest sister carries on the family tradition of biscuit making, tenderly hand-forming each biscuit with the same skill and love as our mother. With each bite, we tell stories. Stories we have told a thousand times still make us laugh until we cry. After we have gone through the funny stories, we tell the ones that leave the deepest ridges. As laughter fades to silence, a holy hush falls over the dinner table. We remember the years God walked with us through the valley of the shadow of death named childhood.

As we scraped the bottom of the valley, we learned all things are possible with God. On the journey, we learned God works all things for good. This foundation of faith has taught us to wink at the trials of life. We know if we survived childhood, we could survive anything.

The first biscuit takes us back to the stories that formed our faith. By the last bite, we remember nothing but wholesome goodness, and God's faithfulness. It is a story worth sharing with the next generation. "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).

Resources

11 Creative Ways to Share Your Family History, Published by Prudence – June 15, 2018, online article found at http://artoffamilyhistory.com/family-history/

Devotional excerpts from *Gather* – Guide for Women in Mission and Ministry by Major Susie Erickson. Produced by The Salvation Army USA Southern Territory.

Devotional excerpts from *Barefoot Cinderellas – Set the Captives Free* by Susie Erickson, Copyright 2020 by The Salvation Army USA Southern Territory.

About author



Major Susie Erickson
USA Southern Territory



July 2023 – Making Connections through Global Partnerships

July 1, 2023 By Major Joy Robbins



Scripture: Proverbs 16:3

Introduction

Can you imagine that your only option to provide for your family meant working in the local brothel or sweatshop with long, hard hours in terrible working conditions? In return for hard

work, you might get paid pennies a day. Unfortunately, this is the reality for many women around the world. They work daily in conditions where they are exploited. It's their only option to keep a small amount of food on the table for their family. We can make a difference for these women by supporting Fair Trade.

Fair Trade

Fair Trade ensures growers and producers receive fair wages for their products instead of proceeds going to distributors. It also provides a safer working environment. Fair Trade provides a sense of worth and enables workers to become independent of those who take advantage of them. It enables them to live with dignity, independence, and hope for a better future.

Salvation Army Programs

"Others" is The Salvation Army's Global Social Enterprise, using Fair Trade as a tool for job creation, empowerment, and poverty alleviation. Through this program, women in Bangladesh, Kenya, and other countries learn to make items that they can sell for a fair price to provide for their families. These women meet the Army through local programs and are taught a skill that helps them to become independent. Through the "Others" program they find dignity, and hope. By purchasing "Others" products, we are helping them become independent.

The following website is an educational tool for Fair Trade. (Www.tradeforhope.com)

Globally Minded Shopping:

While Fair Trade items are more expensive, the impact on the lives of women globally is a good investment. Fair Trade items such as clothing, coffee, chocolate, spices and tea can be purchased locally at the following stores:

- Aldi
- Amazon
- Costco
- HEB
- Kroger
- Publix
- Sam's Wholesale Club
- Target
- Trader Joes

Whole Foods

Below are some companies that use Fair Trade products:

- Starbucks sells some Fair Trade coffee.
- Dunkin' Donuts uses Fair Trade expresso in all its expresso drinks.
- Green Mountain Coffee uses Fair Trade beans.
- Ben & Jerrys Ice Cream uses fair trade ingredients in all of its ice cream flavors.
- Bark Thins Snacking Chocolate uses Fair Trade ingredients.
- Kashi uses Fair Trade ingredients in their products.

God Will Establish Your Plans

"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans," (Proverbs 16:3). As we spent time today considering the topic of Fair Trade programs that impact women globally, we have learned about woman who have been given hope. Women who will be given a chance to provide for the basic needs for their family without being taken advantage of. The Holy Spirt may have even stirred your heart and motivated you to want to stand up and fight for them. Some of us will want to go home and start clearing out everything in our houses that belongs to a company that does not treat others fairly. With everything within us we want to fight and make change.

Then reality sets in ... we start to become overwhelmed by the cost we will have to sacrifice to fight. The regularity of our own life gets in the way. We begin to become so focused on what we lack that we begin to ignore the Holy Spirit's promptings. We become blinded by the impacts we could make if we were not so focused on our own needs. We think only about our own security and our vision narrows. We forget that as a follower of Christ, we live life dependent upon Him.

Proverbs 16: 1-3 (ESV) provides us with wisdom for living dependent upon God. "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established."

The Holy Spirit has begun a stirring within you for a reason. He is leading you to sacrifice something to make an impact on the life of another; and through this scripture in Proverbs, He gives us a principle for living out this sacrifice.

Verse 3 states: "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." The translation for the word "commit" in Hebrew literally means "to roll." Think about it ... we are "to roll" our work over to the Lord. We are to completely give something over to God in

dependence upon Him. We are to commit these stirrings to the Lord and be dependent upon Him to create a plan that will allow you to make an impact on someone else's life through Fair Trade. That plan will only work or be "established" when it is "committed" to the Lord.

When our vision turns from our own inability to make change and focuses upon how God can use what you sacrifice as you depend upon Him, He will bring fruit in His way and His timing! Part of committing our work to God is seeking Him and His will. When our sacrifice aligns with God's will, change will follow.

Prayer

Lord, as we learn more about how we can make an impact on others, may we be open to Your leading. Help us to think outside ourselves and allow the resources You give us to be used for Your glory. Bless and protect those who are fighting hard to provide for their families as we work to provide for ours.

About author



Major Joy Robbins
USA Southern Territory



August 2023 – Make Connections through Online Community

August 1, 2023 By Ashley Escobar



Creating Virtual Women's Ministry Communities

Scripture: Hebrews 10:24

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we gather in community. Technology enabled us to stay connected to the people we love. In two seconds, I can facetime my mom, who lives in another state, so she can see her new grandson. Attending a church service in pajamas is now acceptable. It enables me to develop relationships from all over the world with friends I have met through various Salvation Army events.

While technology should never fully replace our need for physical interaction, we can embrace community through technology.

Before we throw ourselves into the digital trenches, we need to ask ourselves a few questions:

- **Who?** Identifying who you want to reach or keep in touch with is important for knowing how to move forward. Is it family members, friends from work, or a group of women from your corps?
- What? Here is a list of what you need to build an online community.
- A phone, tablet, or computer with internet access*.
- Text and video messaging apps such as Facetime (for iPhone), Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger.
- A calendar.

Once you have these items, you are ready for the next steps of organizing an online hangout.

Planning

If you are a millennial like me, your version of planning is waiting until the very last minute when you have finally gained a small burst of inspiration and motivation to get things done. However, successful hangouts do not happen organically. The most successful hangouts are scheduled and intentional.

Here are a few suggestions to consider when planning an online hangout:

- Be intentional. Building a community, whether it be online or in person, should always be based around intentionality.
- Be considerate of others' schedules and lifestyles.
- Set a time limit of one hour. It will be difficult to get people to commit to less or more than one hour.
- Honor time limits.

Consider your audience when building an online community. Who is attending? What are the age demographics? What type of group will it be—a discipleship group with biblical material to facilitate conversation or is this just a group that touches base with each other? Whatever the case, knowing *who* you are reaching will help you know what kind of structure is needed. For more information on best practices for virtual meetings, check out ministrytoolkit.org.

Building Online Community

Jesus was intentional about living life in community, whether it be in person or virtual. He wants us to have intentional relational living. The Internet provides a way by which we can build relationships with others for God's glory.

According to a study done by Barna group, only 33% of habitual churchgoers between the ages of 18 – 29 are connected to a community of Christians. With access to technology, we have a real opportunity to change that percentage. Here are some ways we can be intentional in our discipleship with others online:

Book Clubs: Book Clubs are a great way to build community as you walk through the content together. Below are some suggestions for books with study guides:

- "Emotional Healthy Spirituality" by Peter Scazzero
- "Faith for Exiles" by David Kinnaman & Mark Matlock
- "Battlefield of the Mind" by Joyce Meyer
- "Crazy Love" by Francis Chan
- "Goliath Must Fall" by Louie Giglio

Virtual Game Night: The app store offers group games to help you stay connected with friends. Pictionary, QuizUp and Jackbox are just a few of many options.

Virtual Bible **Study:** YouVersion Bible app offers group studies and reading plans.

Worship: The Holy Spirit is not limited to a space. It is possible to have meaningful virtual worship experiences. In my small group, one person plays guitar and leads worship while we all worship together. While it may seem awkward, there is something really special and memorable about those worshipful moments.

Helpful Suggestion: When playing any sort of audio online during a virtual meeting, be sure to ask everyone to mute their mics. This is crucial for everyone being able to hear without the audio breaking up or losing quality.

Devotion in a New Way

Life is very complicated—now more than ever. It can be easy to call oneself a Christian but much less common to find deep joy in Jesus. How do we become resilient disciples in these days? How do we go deeper when all that we have known as church is put on pause?

We have been faced with the putting away of "religious clutter"—the legalities, so to speak. No church building, no Sunday School, no pews, no brass band, no songsters, no uniforms.

Isaiah 43:18 & 19 NIV says, "Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

We have a real opportunity as an Army and as disciples of Jesus to open our eyes to see the NEW that God is wanting to do in and through us. Let's not dwell on past things or worrying about when we will "get back to normal," but let's have open palms, open hearts, and minds to the new way God is making for us in the wilderness.

About author



Ashley Escobar

USA Southern Territory



September 2023 – Making Connections Through Mentorship

August 1, 2023 By Captain Andrea Hoover



Women Mentoring Women

Scripture: Proverbs 17:17

Program Theme

Let's stick together and grow together utilizing a cactus theme.

Decorations and Room-Set-up

- Burlap rounds with potted faux or live Cactus centerpieces
- Green placemats with cactus design napkins

Themed Food Ideas

- Green, candy covered pretzel rods
- Cactus cupcakes
- Coffee bar with flavored syrups

Program Outline

Welcome and Prayer- Pray that the Holy Spirit will bring women together in your corps to foster spiritual growth and build unity in the body of Christ.

Ice Breaker – "What's on UR phone?" (https://womensministrytoolbox.com/icebreaker-game-whats-on-ur-phone/) This icebreaker will encourage conversation, interject some fun, and foster a joyful mood for your Women's Ministry gathering.

Getting to Know You Activity

From your local garden store, purchase mini terra-cotta pots, cactus potting soil and mini cactus for each participant. As the women pot their cactus, they can get to know each other by asking a few simple "CACTUS" questions.

- What do you CARE about?
- What makes you ANGRY?
- What CONCERNS are on your heart today?
- What are you THANKFUL for?
- What URGENT prayer requests do you have?
- What is your favorite SCRIPTURE?

Let's Stick Together and Grow Together! Proverbs 27:17 NIV

In the fall of 1997, I walked into the Home League for the first time in Kentucky. My husband's job had transferred us to a new town, and I had transferred my RN job to the local hospital.

My husband and I had been married five years, and our son was two. My family lived in Florida and I needed the Christian fellowship of other women. Having grown up in The Salvation Army, I knew I would be welcomed at this new Home League. Week after week, I attended with my little boy in tow, and was welcomed with open arms. I received godly advice and prayer from this varied group of older women. Without even realizing it, they mentored me and helped shape me, along with my Mother and Grandmother, into the woman I am today.

As I look back over the years, God has given me many mentors and has allowed me to mentor others. It's truly a beautiful thing to see how these relationships fostered spiritual growth in each of us. With this small group of women we studied God's Word, had fellowship, held each other accountable, celebrated milestones, and cried with each other during times of grief and crisis. We truly "stuck together." Women mentoring women is biblical, it builds and strengthens the Body of Christ. Scripture tells us "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the Word of God" (Titus 2:3-5).

Women mentoring women is about relationships and connectedness. Building relationships and intentionally connecting with others edifies the Church. In his book, *Social Holiness, The Company We Keep*, author Jonathan Raymond, says "growing saints requires small, socially spiritual settings of support and accountability not limited to small group Bible studies, prayer meetings, recovery groups, book clubs, and cooking classes." Raymond goes on to say that these groups hold us accountable and that accountability "involves caring enough about others to go deeper, below the mere surface of social life to true fellowship." True fellowship is God-honoring, and at its best, fulfills and grows us spiritually.

This reminds me of one of my favorite books in the Bible. Proverbs deals with life, principles, good judgment, perception, and relationships. Proverbs often draws distinctions between a wise person and a foolish person and gives a great deal of wisdom regarding relationships. Over 3,000 Proverbs were written by King Solomon who is the wisest man who ever lived. 1 Kings 4:29 tells us that Solomon received godly wisdom and insight which was "measureless like the sand on a seashore." God gave Solomon vast knowledge, regarding life and relationships.

Such wisdom is found in Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (NIV). Godly relationships improve and sharpen each other over time. Specifically, women mentoring other women in a God honoring manner is a process used by the Holy Spirit to shape us spiritually. In my study of this Proverb, I learned that a blacksmith uses one piece of iron to sharpen another piece through hammering and friction. The process involves two different types of iron. As the pieces of iron connect, they sharpen each other. The Message paraphrase says it this way: "You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another." The godly company we keep helps us grow spiritually. These relationships take work

and maybe even hard conversations of accountability for this sharpening to occur. Speaking the truth in love, demonstrating biblical care and concern for one another, and guiding each other are all part of God's refining and shaping process. Additionally, being open to feedback and guidance from others and giving a lot of grace helps us "stick together" and grow spiritually. It takes intentionality and nurturing.

Discussion Questions:

- Who are you allowing in your life to speak truth and love regarding your spiritual growth?
- Do you have a friend or mentor who provides spiritual support and accountability?
- Who are you mentoring?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you that your Word gives us godly wisdom for our everyday lives. We thank you for the relationships that You have given us. Help us, Lord, to go deeper in our love and concern for one another and to hold each other accountable to Your Word. Help us to speak truth and love to each other for the purpose of building and growing the Body of Christ. Help us to be open and our words seasoned with Your grace. In Jesus' Name! Amen.

Resources:

- Raymond, Jonathan S., Social Holiness, The Company We Keep. 2018. The Salvation Army Crest Books and Aldersgate Press.
- Lennox, S.J. (1999) Proverbs: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition, Wesleyan Publishing House.
- Holy Bible (NIV, MSG)

Fellowship Programs



Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11





October 2022 – Hopeful Harvest

October 1, 2022 By Envoy Tawnya Stumpf



Scripture

1 Corinthians 14:26; James 3:17-19; Romans 1:11-12

Decorations

Decorate the room with fall colors, leaves and pumpkins. Ahead of the meeting make some crafts to use as centerpieces for the tables.

Refreshments

You could serve anything using pumpkins. There are many recipes on the Internet.

Crafts

Fall Mason Jar Candle Holder

Supplies Needed: Mason jars, faux fall leaves (the flatter ones work better), mod podge, foam sponge brush, twine or raffia, candles (LED is always the safest).

Directions

Using the foam sponge brush, apply some mod podge onto the outside of the mason jar (do small areas at a time), and lay leaves over the glass jar. You can overlap the leaves or leave a little bit of space between to allow more candlelight to shine through. When done, spread a thin layer of mod podge over the top of the leaves and allow to dry. Tie a piece of twine or raffia around the rim of the mason jar for added decoration. Place a candle inside the jar.

You can put the leaves inside the jar; however, this is more difficult, and you should not use a real candle in the jar.

Window Art: Leaf Patterns

Materials:

- Light-weight cardboard (Cereal boxes work well.)
- Multicolored construction paper (2 pieces per leaf design)
- Clear contact paper (2 pieces per leaf, sized to fit leaf pattern design)
- Multicolored tissue paper (cut or tear into small pieces approximately 1" or less)
- Pen, scissors, tape, paperclips

Directions:

- 1 Cut the cardboard into leaf patterns for tracing.
- 2 Download leaf patterns from internet or use freehand designs.
- 3 Make sure pattern is approximately ½" to 1" wide.
- **4** Trace pattern onto the construction paper (2 pieces)

- **5** Tape 2 pieces of construction paper together.
- **6** Cut out inside of leaf pattern so that center of leaf is clear.
- 7 Cut outside of leaf.
- **8** (You should now have a border of the leaf pattern)
- **9** Take 1 piece of the clear contact paper and peal the backing off.
- 10 Place 1 leaf pattern on top of the sticky side of contact paper.
- 11 Take multicolored tissue pieces and place inside the leaf pattern.
- **12** Don't go over the borders... stay inside the lines.
- **13** Keep overlapping to a minimum but cover the clear contact paper inside the leaf pattern completely.
- 14 Put other leaf outline on top of tissued leaf, matching up the pattern as close as you can. Patience is required.
- 15 Put other clear contact paper over leaf. Make sure the "sticky" side is down complexly covering the leaf pattern.
- **16** Cut ¼ inch of the contact paper away from the leaf pattern to create a clear outline.

Harvesting Relationships

"When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church" (1 Cor 14: 26). There is a song that starts with the words, "What a fellowship, what a joy divine." I sometimes catch myself singing those words but changing the last phrase to "what a joy is mine." It's normally when I'm praying. I find that it better describes my relationships, not only with Jesus, but with my sisters in Christ. Being in a relationship means getting along with one another. That takes cultivation, time, care, and wisdom.

October is the time of year that often involves a visit to the pumpkin patch. I remember the year I was able to take my grandson to his first pumpkin patch adventure. We arrived at the patch thinking we were going to drink hot apple cider, pick our pumpkin and go home. It seems that there is a lot more to pumpkin patches that I thought. Did you know there are around 45 different types of pumpkins? That some are good for carving, while others are best for pumpkin pies? These are generally known as sugar pumpkins and are smaller, rounder, sweeter, and packed with more flesh. Carving pumpkins are larger in size and have a thinner shell. They have a grainier texture with less flesh, thus making them easier to carve.

Once we'd viewed the pumpkins, we proceeded to the hayride. Horses were hitched to a wagon, full of hay bales strategically located to seat about 25 of us. Parents, grandparents,

and children sat together, dangling our feet over the edge of the bales, sipping hot cider. As we went into and around the corn maze, we couldn't see over the top of the corn stalks or discern the way out. I'm sure that was strategically done to cause a little excitement for the adults. When we came out of the maze, we found ourselves in the apple orchard. There were barrels full to overflowing with ripe apples near each tree, just waiting to be purchased.

Then we saw the vegetable garden next to the two-story farmhouse with a swing on the back porch. It was a picture suitable for a postcard reading "wish you were here." I could hear the excitement of the children as we rounded the corner of the house and came to the pumpkin patch. Pumpkins that were white, orange, smooth, rough, oblong, round, all waiting for a child to run and pick it up, boldly declaring it "perfect!" Viewing the entire experience through eyes of wonder, as a child, reminded me of Jesus' invitation to "come unto Me."

When was the last time I had looked in wonder at what God created? How often do we view life through His lens? I was reminded that He is the Master Gardener. The book of James says, "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:18).

Paul tells the Roman believers, "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Rom. 1:11,12). Paul wanted to strengthen the believer's faith. He wanted to harvest spiritual fruit among the believers. Graciously He told them that this would also strengthen Him. Fellowship one with another... mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

What does it take to "harvest relationships?" James 3:17,18 tells us, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace–loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness." Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along, treating each other with dignity and honor.

This can begin by mutually sharing the Word of God and by listening. Sometimes after we have studied scripture, we are given the opportunity to share it with others. By sharing and by being willing to listen to others, we become the agents of encouragement. We can become "mutually encouraged by each other's faith." The experiences you have with others is important. Sharing what God is revealing to you, being vulnerable, helps to "harvest relationships."

Close in prayer.

About author



Envoy Tawnya Stumpf

USA Western Territory



November 2022 - Connecting with Hometown Heroes

November 1, 2022 By Lt. Sara Evans



Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Activity

Pick one or more people in your community who have been heroes in some way and show them your love and support.

- 1 Send them a gift basket. Find out what makes them smile and fill a gift basket with those things. Example: nail care basket, luxury bath basket, BBQ lovers' basket. Put a note or letter in the basket letting them know how much you appreciate what they have done to make a difference in someone's life.
- 2 Create a photo collage that depicts the person as a "Hometown Hero." Frame it leaving a thick white border. Invite those whose life they have impacted to write thank you notes on the border. Present the photos at a special dinner, lunch, or women's ministry meeting.
- **3** Write an article telling how the hero made a difference to the community and submit it to the local newspaper.
- **4** Set up a date night for them and their significant other.
- 5 Invite them to come and share something they enjoy doing.
- 6 Invite them to join the group for an outing at a local attraction.

Take time to get to know this individual. Learn what you might do to make a difference in their life. Be sure to include their family who is supporting them.

Hometown Hero Party

Set your meeting room for a "Hometown Hero" party. Choose colors they like or that represent them, along with decorations that represent how or why you see them as a hero. For example; if you are honoring a soldier, you could use camouflage colors, flags, a map of the places they have served, and/or medals. If the hero is a teacher, use primary colors and have a student's report card, a giant pencil or a school mascot. Research who you are celebrating so that you can make it personal. Know your subject.

Super Heroes

Spiderman, Batman, Superman are well known super heroes. People have been reading or watching their stories since the 1930s. Children in many countries pretend to be them, as they save the day with their chosen superhero's unique ability. Their images appear on shirts, cups, key chains and toys. There is no doubt that these superheroes are idolized for what they can do. They have qualities to admire—facing fears, overcoming challenges and helping others. However, these characters are just that—characters. They are make believe, not real. They have the advantage of possessing supper human abilities. Spiderman is known for his quick reflexes, which allow him to sense danger ahead of time, giving him more time to react. Superman is from another planet. Earth's yellow sun gives him several abilities such as flight and laser vision. Batman, though he has no superhuman abilities, seems to have an endless amount of money and resources that help him to create his amazing gadgets, like the suit that protects him from almost anything the bad guys throw at him. Each has an edge above the rest—something that is not available to us.

However, heroes are not limited to those we see in the comics. A hero can be defined as a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities. Heroes are the people who, by nature, help others live a better life. They are the soldiers who protect our freedom. They are the firefighters who put their lives on the line to protect ours. They are the police officers who make it their mission to protect and serve our community. The medical staff who not only work to cure our bodies but also to bring our minds peace. They are the teachers who go above and beyond to ensure that the struggling student is successful. They are the people who, despite the risk, kept needed supplies moving during the COVID shutdown.

These people, these real-life heroes, are rarely celebrated in the same or equal manner as the superheroes we see in the movies and comics. However, these real heroes are much more important. These are people that God has placed in our lives to inspire, protect, provide, comfort and encourage us. These people are one way that God shows His love for us.

There are countless scriptures that talk about how we should treat each other and how we should respond to how others treat us. Matthew 25:45 says, "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me." Whatever we do for others, good or bad, we do for God. When we neglect, mistreat or ignore someone, God feels that. When we remember, are kind, or include someone, God feels that too. We honor God when we treat others the way He wants to see us treated.

There are many in our community who need of a variety of things. Everyone needs something. Whether that something is big or small, we all have a need. God designed us to live in community and support each other to fulfill that need (1 Cor. 12:25-27).

Our real-life heroes pour themselves into the work they do for others. They act as the hands of God and need our support. They need to know that what they are doing makes a difference and that we appreciate what they have done. Showing honor and appreciation to those He has placed in our lives is a wonderful way to show God that we love Him.

Discussion Questions

- 1 When was the last time you went out of your way to express appreciation to someone for the difference they are making in the lives of others?
- 2 How has someone made a difference in your life?
- 3 Who in your life inspires you to be a better person?
- 4 Who in your community would you like to honor or show appreciation?
- 5 Why do you think the Bible tells many stories and has many commands about how we should behave toward each other? See the following scriptures for examples: Proverbs 16:28, 1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Luke 6:31, Ephesians 4:29-32, Ephesians 4:29-32, Romans 12:10, Proverbs 24:17, Philippians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 13:4-13.

About author



Lt. Sara Evans
USA Western Territory



December 2022 – Hallmark Christmas Movie Party

December 1, 2022 By Captain Heather Pope



Scripture: Luke 2:4-20

Introduction

It's that time of year again. The time when my husband will walk into the living room to find me watching yet another <u>Hallmark</u> Christmas movie. I have often thought about what draws

us to watch these movies year after year. I believe it's because they give us hope for love, happiness, overcoming life's obstacles and compassion. But we've already been given these gifts in a scene that was played out years ago. A scene that began with the Christ Child offering us hope, love, compassion, strength and everlasting life when He was sent as the greatest gift.

Games

Add some fun to your Hallmark movie party by printing games found on Pinterest and Etsy. Hallmark Movie Trivia Quiz and Hallmark Christmas movie bingo are some choices. Hallmark Christmas movie prizes can be found at your local Hallmark store and online.

Decorations

Make your room festive by adding printed titles of Hallmark <u>movies</u> for the walls, a small Christmas tree on the snack table, a manger scene to represent the greatest gift, green and red tablecloths and decorations.

Movie and Refreshments

Choose a Hallmark movie that goes along with the theme "When you care enough to send the best." Set out popcorn and hot cocoa. Provide the women with a bowl that states "This is my Hallmark Christmas movie watching popcorn bowl." Ask the women to bring their favorite movie candy to share.

The Very Best

It was the morning of December 25, 1986. I can still remember by brother running into my room and shouting "Feath, Feath, wake up. We ran out to the living room and found our stockings overflowing along with beautifully wrapped presents under the tree. The lights on the tree were sparkling alongside the silver tinsel. The cardboard Christmas village was atop the fireplace hearth, the manger scene with the sweet baby Jesus, which I always wanted to play with, was on the bookshelf. An empty plate of homemade sugar cookies was proof that Santa had indeed enjoyed our offering. I can still feel the joy from that morning almost 40 years ago.

We ran to Mom and Dad's room begging them to hurry and get up. My brother and I could hardly contain our excitement. As I tore the wrapping off a gift, there was the most beautiful doll I had ever seen—a red-haired corn silk cabbage patch kid with a beautiful pink dress adorned with eyelet lace. A doll whose hair I would spend countless hours brushing and braiding, who would lay alongside me at night and whom I would cherish for years to come.

It was the greatest gift. My Mom had spent hours in line to get the doll her little girl wanted more than anything. Dad working overtime to pay for the purchase of the gift. But the

reaction of that girl when the wrapping paper was torn away to reveal the precious doll inside was priceless.

That morning an eight-year old girl received her most precious gift not realizing that there was an even more amazing gift she had not yet heard about. It was a gift that was sent many years ago. My first picture of Jesus as a baby was in the little manger set that my mom would set out on a shelf every Christmas. To me the baby Jesus was the cutest and most special part of the Christmas scene. But I had no idea who He was or the impact He would have on my life. I wonder how many people truly understand the meaning of the manger scene. The tiny, sweet, helpless baby that lived an amazing life, died for sinners, and will return to earth as the Kings of Kings.

Read Luke chapter 2:4-20, The Christmas Story.

Do you still picture the most amazing gift sent to us as a sweet, helpless baby in a manger or is He your Lord? Have you allowed Him to grow up in your life? I was clueless to the sacrifice my parents made for me during my childhood. All they wanted was for their little girl to have Christmas joy.

May we be fully aware of the greatest sacrifice made so that we could experience joy, peace, love, forgiveness, and eternal salvation. God cared enough to send the very best—His Son, Jesus.

Prayer—Offer a time of reflection and prayer.

Resources

CANDACE CAMERON BURE: WHY I SUPPORT THE SALVATION ARMY'S RED KETTLE CAMPAIGN





Candace Cameron Bure

About author



Captain Heather Pope
USA Western Territory



January 2023 – Kale Get Enough

January 1, 2023 By <u>Captain Maryellen Walters</u>



Scripture: 3 John 1:2

"Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit."

Supplies

Pre-made bagged salad. Try to get some with various greens—kale, spinach, cabbage. Canned tuna/chicken, light mayonnaise, avocado, lemon juice, Doritos®, utensils and paper products.

Set Up

Mix the bagged salad before the women arrive. Take out any croutons or bread chips. Only use 80% of the dressing provided in the bag. Drain the canned tuna/chicken, place in a separate bowl, and mix it with a small amount of mayonnaise. Slice the avocado, add a hint of lemon juice and set it on a serving plate. Crunch the Doritos® into small pieces and pour them into a bowl. Have the serving utensils and paper products easily available.

Decorations

Decorate the table using colors and decor that inspire health and wellness. At each setting, place a note card with the Bible memory verse from 3 John 1:2. Print out inspirational quotes/posters and place them around the room. We want the women to feel inspired.

Activity: Did You Know?

Did you know that...

- 1 Kale is one of the healthiest and most nutritious plants on the planet?
- 2 Kale is a member of the cabbage family?
- 3 To ingest 3 grams of protein from kale you would only be eating 35 calories.
- **4** Many powerful antioxidants are found in kale that have numerous beneficial effects on your health.
- **5** A cup of raw kale has more vitamin C than a whole orange.
- **6** Kale can help lower cholesterol.
- **7** Kale is one of the world's best sources of vitamin K, which is critical for blood clotting.
- 8 Adding kale to your diet can help prevent heart disease and osteoporosis.
- **9** Kale is believed to have protective effects against cancer.
- **10** Kale is a good plant-based source of calcium.

https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-proven-benefits-of-kale#TOC_TITLE_HDR_12

Program

It's a new year. A perfect time to set new goals and adopt new habits. Would you expect your car to work without gas? Obviously not, so why would you expect your body to function at its best if you weren't putting in the right "fuel." Our fuel comes in the form of water, healthy food, exercise and connecting with Jesus.

Try to implement an exercise routine that you look forward to and establish healthy eating habits with food that you find tasty. When these factors are aligned, you start to see mind benefits, soul benefits and physical benefits. Once you see this for yourself, your perception on how these are connected will be changed forever.

We are all busy, so at first, set small goals. Once you attain that goal, set another and then another. Experiencing the victory of a small goal will motivate you to set more. Adopting healthy eating habits is easier said than done, but once you get moving and see the fruits of your labors, you will naturally want to eat healthier. Together, let's create an easy, healthy and delicious salad that you "Kale Get Enough of"!

Let's Dig In

Grab a bowl and fill it up with salad. Add half a cup of canned tuna/chicken, avocado and a splash of lemon juice. Sprinkle with a small pinch of Doritos for crunch and flavor and enjoy.

Healthy in Body

Imagine being greeted the way John greeted Gaius in 3 John 1:2: "Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit" (NLT).

The year 2020 presented us with spiritual and physical challenges. As Christians, we sometimes forget that God cares about the whole package—not just your spirit, but your body as well. Having a healthy lifestyle was something I always desired. Sometimes I did great and at other times it was hard to keep motivated. What I've discovered over the years is that when my health is prioritized, my worship and service to God as well as my relationships with family and friends are elevated. These connections benefit from a healthier me.

After my youngest daughter was born, I tried to go running with her a few times a week. The trail by my house sat along a beautiful ridge of mountains and every so often I stopped in awe of God's masterpiece that He created for us to enjoy. I always knew it was a beautiful view but enjoying it with the help of the endorphins pumping through me seemed to make it even more spectacular. In those moments I felt so connected and close to my Creator.

We all experienced the turmoil of the Covid pandemic in 2020, leaving us feeling anxious, defeated and perhaps far from enjoying a peaceful life. Our physical selves have taken a huge toll. If this is you, take a deep breath and say this verse with me, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, NLT)

When I was out jogging with my daughter, this verse often popped into my head. When it did, I paused my podcast and allowed the sounds of God's creation to speak to me. Visually I could experience God and His beauty, audibly I felt connected to Him, and physically I felt that a weight had been taken off my shoulders from the rest He gives.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 Paul says, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body" (NLT). Our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes up residence within us, making our physical bodies a holy space for His dwelling. We are God's masterpiece. He dwells within and He created us for a purpose. We each play a role in His big story. While physical temples are built by masters skilled in their area of expertise, our bodies were created by the ultimate Master. Have we been neglecting our bodies? We are His temple. So, let's honor Him by honoring the place where He dwells.

The theme verse this year is 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV), "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." Let's make this verse vibrant in our relationships. Let's cheer one another on so that we can see those fruitful mind benefits, soul benefits and physical benefits played out in our life.



February 2023 – Bonds that Last

February 1, 2023 By Captain Leilani Armendariz



Scripture: Col. 3:14

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity"

Decorations

Cover the tables with white cloths. Place yellow roses in the center as bright pops of color, symbolic of friendship, joy, and gladness. Ask the women to bring in pictures of their closest friends to share.

Refreshments

Invite a couple of women to bring in a dish that they serve when friends visit. Ask them to share why they serve them at their gatherings.

Activities

Photo Frames

Invite the women to bring a 4×6 picture of themselves and a friend. Purchase wooden frames from a craft store. Using paints, stickers, and other embellishments decorate the frames for the pictures. Suggest that they decorate in a way that represents what makes their friendships so special.

Three-cord Friendship Bracelets

Using embroidery thread, invite the women to choose three colors— two to represent themselves and their friend and one to represent God. Have them create two identical bracelets using the classic braid technique or the spiral staircase technique. They can keep one bracelet for themselves and give the other one to their friend.

Tutorials can be found at: https://friendship-bracelets.net/tutorials and on other YouTube sites.

Friendship Recipe

Invite the women to make "Friendship Bags" for younger girls in the corps using Lucky Charms cereal. Place a cup of cereal in treat bags and create a guide to be included. Each marshmallow represents an element of a lasting friendship. Star – compassion; Clover – kindness; Moon – humility; Rainbow – gentleness; Balloon – patience; Pot of Gold – bear with one another; Horseshoe – forgiveness; Heart – love of God and each other (Col. 4:12-14). As the women share the bags, they should indicate to the girls that they want to be there for them. That when facing problems, they can always come to them for help.

Time of Sharing

Friendships are unique to each person. Some are founded on a common interest, others are forged through a circumstance. Invite the women to share some things about their friendships, how they started and what has kept them going over the years.

Lasting Friendship

I recently had the opportunity to spend some time with my grandmother and my great aunt. These women have known one another for almost 70 years and have seen each other through joys and celebrations, as well as deep sorrow and heartache. I asked them to share some thoughts on their relationship.

"It was early 1952 when my 'sister from another mother' and I first met. Our close friendship really began when we became sisters-in-law in 1955. Our husbands were in the US Army, so I moved in with her and her girls to help share expenses. Over the years, we have remained close, whether we were living near one another or in different countries. We have always been there for each other—if not in person, over the phone and in prayer." —**Major Juanita Clevett.**

"First, we were friends, then sisters-in-law and then very quickly sisters. We were inseparable. Nita and I have experienced many things together. We've seen each other through a lot over the years. Our friendship is special. It is a lasting friendship, a caring friendship. One that we have worked at over the years. We love each other." —**Major Ruth Birks**

They are the best of friends, sisters, confidants and prayer partners. Their bond is not only lasting, but a foundation based on the love they have for the Lord.

You and I are relational beings. We were created that way by a relational God. We are wired to need one another, to fellowship with one another, to live with one another. When was the last time you watched children at play? Did you notice how easily they become friends, how much they want to know one another, and how fast they connect? Sometimes those friendships only last as long as the playdate, but other times they can spark bonds that weather the test of time.

Just as my Aunt Ruth said, those bonds require work in the form of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Those bonds call for forgiveness, an example of which we see in the Lord, and the foundation—the binding agent, love. Colossians 3:14 reminds us, "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Take some time to reflect on the bonds of friendship in your life. Whether it's a phone call or a coffee date, reach out and connect with your friends and thank God for them in your life.

About author



Captain Leilani Armendariz Western Territory



March 2023 – It's a Small World After All

March 1, 2023 By Major Tammy Ray



Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-6

Decorations

Pinterest has lots of ideas for decorations that include globes, world maps, and photos of children from around the world.

Refreshments

Serve charcuterie tray with cheeses, meats, and fruits from around the world or from different parts of the United States. Include unusual foods that will take a bit of courage to try, like pickled pig's feet and tofu, along with foods that you know would be enjoyable but that the women may not have tried.

Introduction

In the United States, we live in a melting pot of different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, races, religions, and traditions. These differences are created from ancestral countries of origin, parts of the country we live in, and sometimes for no reason. It is amazing to know that we are each unique and created specially to worship God. Celebrating diversity is important but so is celebrating what unites us as children of God.

In 1964, Walt Disney presented his new audio–animatronics ride "Children of the World" at the 1964-65 World Fair in New York. Audio–animatronics was a technology that enables animated characters to move in sync to music. Robert and Richard Sherman were staff writers for Disney and were tasked with writing one song that would be easy to translate into many languages. They worked together to write "It's a Small World After All." It is thought to be the most translated and performed piece of music in the world. The lyrics and recordings are available online at: https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/It%27s a Small World (song)

Discussion

Discuss what cultures you see in your community. What about in your corps? What challenges and opportunities do they present? For example: Farmington, NM is surrounded by the Navajo Nation, the Ute Mountain Reservation, the Jicarilla Apache Reservation and the Southern Ute Reservation. The culture of our community is Native American. We celebrate with Navajo Tacos (Indian Frybread), wearing silver and turquoise, native dress, ceremonies, and landscape. Native Americans are culturally challenged by alcohol and drug abuse, and many we minister to struggle with sobriety.

Activity 1

Each team will draw a slip of paper from a bowl that has a country, culture or an area of the United States on it. The object is to create something that represents the country that they drew. It could be a flag or a costume, a poem or song.

Needed:

- Slips of paper with names of different countries, cultures or parts of the country.
- Basic information about the various countries.
- Costumes, fabric, paper to assist in the creativity.

Feature that creativity on your corps social media.

Activity 2

Print signs reading "hello" in languages from around the world or local colloquialisms (ex. howdy, ola, bonjour). Guess what language or part of the country they are from. Use Google to listen to how each hello is pronounced and encourage the women to practice saying hello in different languages, or accents.

https://www.bemytravelmuse.com/how-to-say-hello-in-100-of-the-worlds-most-spoken-languages/

Diverse Yet United

Read Ephesians 4:2-6 in The Message.

Have you been to one of the Disney parks and enjoyed the "It's A Small World" ride? Back in 1964, this ride was a technological stunner at the World Fair in New York. Disney was way ahead of the times. It involved synchronizing music with the figurines' movements long before our modern-day computers were invented. The whole premise of this display was to celebrate different cultures around the world, showcasing clothing, ways of life and languages. The brilliance of this display was the depiction of children, because nothing tugs at people's hearts more than children—beautiful children in their native dress from all over the world singing the same song in their native language. Almost 60 years later, "It's a Small World" ride is still one of the most loved in any of the Disney parks. The song is so familiar that we can at least hum along when we hear it played.

Each of us has a family story. AncestryDNA and 23andMe DNA tests have become very popular in the last couple of years. You simply spit into a small test tube and send it in to a lab to be analyzed. From that small bit of saliva, a whole new world of who you are, where you came from, who you are related to is revealed. You can find out genetic biological features you may have, such as hair color, finger length, earlobe type, and body type. All from a few drops of saliva. We are all unique truly artistic masterpieces created by God.

We are living in a world where attention to diversity isn't always a celebration. It has become a fight. Racial profiling is rampant. Violence at churches, businesses, and neighborhoods towards people of color has escalated in the name of social justice. The political arena has become hateful causing people to turn against their Christian brothers and sisters. We hear nightly news reports on what is wrong with our world, and we rarely hear what unites us.

Paul wrote his letter to the church of Ephesus while he was in prison in Rome. Ephesus was a busy port city and the center of much trade. In the center of the city was the Temple of Diana (or Artemas), the deity worshipped in that city. Paul was kicked out of Ephesus because his preaching threatened the commerce of the city, which was the production of implements used in the worship of Diana. Many people were coming to faith in Jesus Christ and were no

longer purchasing those items. Paul wrote the letter to encourage the Christians in Ephesus who faced daily discrimination and violence because of their faith.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6.

This scripture indicates that unity, patience, love and peace were as much a challenge in Paul's lifetime as they are today. We are reminded that while we are all different and come from many walks of life, the One who created us is the same Lord that united the church of Ephesus. Celebrating our diversity can be a lot of fun, but celebrating what unites us is eternal. We are united in Christ when we accept Him as our Savior.

To close, gather in a circle and pray for unity in Christ for the women's group, the corps, city and our country.



April 2023 - Shout Out!

April 1, 2023 By Captain Tiffany Lawler



Scripture: Luke 19:39-40, Matthew 27:45-54, Psalm 34:3.

Introduction

This month we celebrate the death and the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That is something to "Shout out" about. It is the best news ever.

Decorations

Decorate larger sized rocks (see craft idea #1) and place as centerpieces along with megaphones. You can order a party pack of various colored megaphones from Amazon or Oriental Trading (item #13720145).

Refreshment Ideas

"Eat Like Jesus Ate!" Have figs, grapes, raisins, apples, olives, pomegranate seeds, and fresh (non-sliced) bread torn into pieces. Also have olive oil for dipping the bread. Serve grape juice and water as the drink choices.

Craft Idea #1

Invite the women to paint words of praise onto smooth rocks of various size to place around their community and neighborhoods.

Supplies needed:

- Smooth, dry rocks of various size.
- Various colors of acrylic paint.
- Fine point paintbrushes.
- Spray sealant (not necessary) like: Design Master DM-HDF 169 Home Décor Finish Aerosol Spray, Clear Matte (found on Amazon)

Craft Idea #2

If you don't wish to order megaphones, they can be easily made using construction paper or card stock and tape. Make sure there is at least a one-inch hole to speak through. If they wish, the women could decorate their megaphones using stickers, markers, or crayons with sayings of "Shout to the Lord," "Hosanna," or "Praise Him."

Here is a link to a sample megaphone pattern: https://myeyeqdownloads.shutterfly.com/152#144

Activity

Have women pair up, back to back, and have them take turns shouting, "He is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed!" Give each woman a megaphone and have them repeat the exercise to notice the volume difference. Each woman can take her megaphone home with her.

A Morning Like This

Every year on Easter Sunday I play the song, "Was It A Morning Like This?" by Sandi Patty. This is my tradition. My children generally roll their eyes when this happens, as it's not their choice in music. This song resonates deeply within me. The words pierce me!

Listen to: A Morning Like This https://youtu.be/cDYH9Ljldly

Jesus' resurrection happened on an ordinary morning, but there truly was nothing ordinary about it. A line in the song reads, "Did the grass sing? Did the earth rejoice to feel you again?" In Luke, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees when they tell Him to quiet the crowds around Him who shout out in praise. (Read Luke 19:39-40). "I tell you," Jesus replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40). I don't know about you, but if inanimate objects around me began crying out in praise to Jesus, I would definitely take notice. Thinking of the earth rejoicing because its Creator walked on its soil is a wonderful picture. The sand, rocks, and grass straining to tangibly connect with the Lord in praise—overjoyed as He walked among them.

When Jesus, was born as a tiny babe, a heavenly star changed its course and followed His path leading others to worship Him. Nature does not respond to anyone else like it does to its Creator. The power of God can cause nature to react differently than what is "normal." The seas' part, the sun stays fixed in the sky, lions' mouths close, and hearts radically change in a blink of an eye.

The supremacy that Jesus had over life and death, no human can emulate; for He was "truly and properly God and truly and properly man" (*The Salvation Army 4th Doctrine*). Jesus' divinity and power were revealed through His death and resurrection. The amount of power one man had as He walked upon the earth could cause the rocks to cry out in praise. When Christ was crucified on the cross, the sky blackened, rocks split in two, and the earth shook with His last breath.

(Read Matthew 27:45-54)

Whenever nature acts contrary to what is predictable, we are quick to justify and rationalize the reasons behind the change. We think of draughts caused by pollution, earthquakes caused from fracking, and flooding caused by the melt of polar ice caps. We do not usually think that any of those catastrophes could be in God's will for mankind. Nature is predictable. There is a cause and effect for each event that is scientifically backed. We find comfort in knowing the root cause for things. When a cause cannot be found, our minds have a difficult time believing in the supernatural.

God's power is not predictable, nor can we rationalize His reasons for His actions. When His people were fleeing from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, God caused the Red Sea to part so that they were able to walk across on dry land. God even took care to cause the ground to dry out so they wouldn't have muddy feet. The wonderment the Israelites felt as they stared at the walls of water while walking through the Red Sea should have caused extremely powerful emotions among them. They rejoiced when they arrived on the other side, safe from

Pharaoh's reach, but soon began their grumbling about not having enough of what they wanted when they wanted it. We often take for granted things that are provided for us by others.

Jesus, the Son, came to the earth to offer Himself as a direct payment for our sin, and to bring us into a reconciled relationship with God, the Father. Sin separates us from God, and there is nothing on earth that can fix that break. We need divine intervention. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus Christ took the punishment that we deserved for our sin onto Himself. He died in our place, so that we can choose His gift of eternal life in God's presence. Our souls are eternal, and God has given us free will to choose where we want to spend our eternity.

We honor heroes that save our lives from harm. We hold parades, build monuments, erect statues, and pay homage in celebration to those who sacrificed themselves for us. After time, we forget about the sacrifices made and go back to living our self-absorbed lives. This is why attending church services and fellowshipping with other believers is so important. Keeping God's sacrifice constantly in our minds helps to give us an eternal perspective. Living out our daily life in light of our eternal choice, will help us find joy in the mundane, mediocre and ordinary. Not every day of our lives will be spectacular, but when we recognize God's grace all around us, we see and react to situations differently. We feel secure, thankful and blessed.

During this Easter season, celebrate the fact that God has you written on His heart. His deepest desire is to be in a reconciled relationship with you. You are precious to Him. You matter to Him. He wants the very best for you. Psalm 34:3, "Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together." Don't let the stones cry out in praise before you—give it all that you've got. Honor Him with your voice and your life.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for the opportunity to drawn near to You today. We thank You for this time to contemplate the gift of Your Son. May we share with others Your gift of salvation. May we honor You with our lives. Give us the boldness we need to cry out in praise. May we help others to draw near to You. Thank you, Father, for Your love and grace upon us.



May 2023 - Linked In/Insta Connect

May 1, 2023 By Major Lawry Smith



Scripture: John 15:1-8

Decorations

Cover the tables with white cloths and use red or blue napkins representing the colors of Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. Print social media icons. Cut out, laminate, and scatter them

at the center of each table. Print a "profile" photo of each woman and use as a place card on the tables, along with their "bio." Ask the women to print off their favorite Instagram photos and display around the room.

Refreshments

Make cupcakes using the social media icons as toppers, with red or blue frosting. Serve blue Peeps (flavored marshmallow candy) to represent Twitter. Prepare beverages that are blue or red, representing Pinterest and Facebook.

Introduction:

Now more than ever, we live in a world where people crave connection. God created us to be in fellowship with one another, so it's no wonder that people long for social interaction. However, more and more, connection happens virtually, which is why we have so many social media outlets. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, and TikTok are just a few that come to mind. And while social media is a wonderful way to stay connected with old friends and loved ones, I believe that God created us for so much more. I think we can all agree that connection is important, but how we connect is crucial. Let's look at ways we can remain connected to one another and to the Father.

Ice Breakers

If we wish to build connections and relationships, we must get to know each other. Ice breaker games are a great way to do this. Here are some ideas:

- Ice Breaker Bingo: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/528117493775959954/?
 nic v2=1a6L6xdlp
- 2 Truths and a Lie: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/158822324347029834/?
 nic_v2=1a6L6xdlp
- "D-Ice" Breakers: https://www.pinterest.de/pin/36028865751904258/?nic_v2=1a6L6xdlp

Create a Women's Ministries Social Media Page

If you do not already have one, consider creating a women's ministry social media page on Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest. You can start a photo or scripture challenge where women post a favorite picture or verse each day. On Pinterest, women can share craft, cooking, vacation, or home decorating ideas. You can even create a unique hashtag for the women to share.

Invite a guest speaker

Invite someone knowledgeable in social media to tell about the pros and cons of social media. Invite a local blogger to share their experiences and some of their writings.

Prayer Chain

Ask for a volunteer in the group to coordinate and manage a corps prayer chain via email or social media.

Stay Connected! (John 15:1-8):

In John 15:1-8, Jesus makes very clear the importance of remaining connected to Him. In verse 5 He states, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (NLT). Did you catch that last line, "... apart from me you can do nothing"? In other words, Jesus is our lifeline, and unless we remain connected to Him, we are lost.

Recently, a friend commented to me that social media was her lifeline, as it kept her connected to family and friends during a very difficult period in her life. We can all relate. How many times have you reached out on social media when discouraged only to have friends, family, sometimes even strangers send uplifting words of encouragement that kept you going. Yet, as important as those lifelines can be, Jesus is our ultimate source of life, love, and connection.

Jesus longs for us to remain connected to Him and to the Father. When we do, we reap wonderful benefits. Bible teacher and writer Warren Weirsbe states, "Our union with Christ is a *living union*, so we may bear fruit; a *loving union*, so that we may enjoy Him; and a *lasting union*, so that we need not be afraid" (p. 355). When connected to Jesus, something wonderful happens in our lives—we bear fruit. We enjoy fellowship with Him, and we have the assurance that He is always with us. What beautiful promises. However, if we lose that connection, we will not survive. In verse 6, Jesus goes on to say, "Anyone who does not remain in Me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned." In other words, there are consequences when we lose that divine connection; our lives become unfruitful and useless. We must remember that we were created to bring glory to God, but we cannot to do that in our own power. We must rely on the strength provided to us through our connection to Christ. Just as the branch draws life from the vine, we draw our strength from the Lord. But for this connection to last, it must be cultivated. Weirsbe suggests that "Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God's Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service" (p. 355).

Have you ever had a friend "unfollow" or "unfriend" you from their social media account? Upon discovering this, how did you feel? Lost, disconnected, hurt, even devastated? Understandably we may feel isolated and abandoned because we have lost the bond we once had with that person. Well, just imagine how Jesus feels when we lose our connection with Him? He and the Father long to be in lasting fellowship with us. John 17:21 says, "I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one—as You are in Me, Father, and I am in You. And may they be in us so that the world will believe You sent Me."

We were created to be in relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and with one another. Let's not take any of these connections lightly, least of which the one we have with Jesus. He is the vine and we are the branches. And while social media is a wonderful outlet to cultivate our relationships with friends and family, let's make sure Jesus is always at the top of our "friends" list.

Closing Song #219, The Salvation Army Song Book – "Because He Lives."

Bibliography:

Wiersbe, W. (1989). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1). Illinois: Victor Books

About author

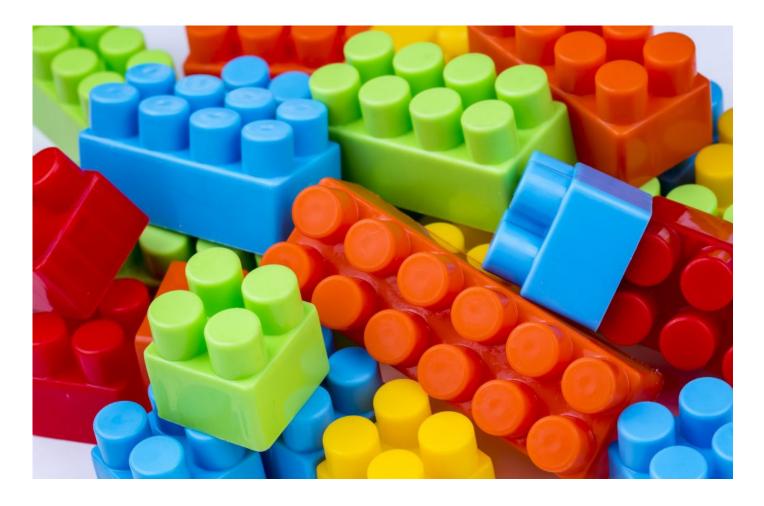


Major Lawry Smith
USA Western Territory



June 2023 - Creating Creativity Within

June 1, 2023 By Lt. Leah Fowler



Introduction

One way to connect with God and to each other, is through creativity. God is creative and He made us to be creative as well.

Program Ideas:

#1 LEGO Masters

When I think of connection and beautiful things coming from connections, I immediately think of LEGO. Normally the kids have all the fun with these little blocks. Today give the women a chance to unleash their creativity and celebrate their uniqueness as they build just for fun.

All this program requires is a small amount of LEGO pieces for each woman.

- Watch an episode of 'Lego Masters' (Fox, Hulu, YouTube TV). There are also a number of free clips available on YouTube.
- Show the images from the post '10 of the most amazing LEGO creations'
- https://www.insider.com/best-lego-creations-2019-1
- Provide each woman with a small bag of LEGO pieces or have a table with some available.
- Issue a creation challenge. This can be a specific item (flower, house, rocket, car, hat, or have a theme for them to interpret (Bible scene, my favorite food, a special place). This is flexible depending on the time available and the makeup of the group.
- Having 'inspiration' images may be helpful. For the women with limited fine-motor dexterity, they can 'team up' with another woman who can build what they describe, use other materials (play doh/pen & paper), or use large 'DUPLO' blocks to participate.
- Awards are optional. Participants can vote for best technical piece, most inspiring, tallest, or whatever comes to mind.
- The aim is to enjoy the opportunity to create together. LEGO is fun for all ages, so this is ideal for an all-ages fellowship to engage the span of generations at the corps.

Distance Mode

This is easily taken online by mailing bricks to the women. The program could then be run via Zoom or 'offline' with the women keeping what they built until the next meeting or by sending a picture.

#2 Piece of a Masterpiece

If your Corps doesn't have LEGO, or a budget that allows it, this is a group project that simply requires a printer, art supplies (whatever you have!) and \$8 for a download.

There are some amazing artworks in the world, and this activity allows the women to recreate Van Gogh's 'Starry Night'.

• Download the template at https://artprojectsforkids.org/product/starry-night-3/ There are also other templates to explore.

- Each woman takes a page or two to complete. This can be crayon, marker, paint, pastels, mixed media, whatever works for your location. The template has 24 pieces. This could be a multi-week project, or you could involve the kids to make a mural created by the whole corps.
- Once all the pieces are completed, they will come together to show a unique perspective of the original masterpiece.

Distance Mode

This project works perfectly if your whole group is apart, or if individual women are not able to make it to the meeting. Simply send one piece of the artwork to them along with a preaddressed and stamped envelope to return their completed part of the masterpiece.

Connection

Why is connection important? When connection happens well, something positive usually happens. An action begins or something beautiful is made. We connect a plug to an outlet—electricity surges through. We connect a key to a lock—a door opens. We connect bricks with mortar—a building takes shape. We connect a paintbrush to canvas—a masterpiece grows.

So often in our lives, we focus on the practical connections, but forget about the creative ones. We can trick ourselves into believing that creativity isn't important, that it certainly shouldn't be a priority, but in doing so, we miss out on one of the first characteristics of God described in the Genesis account.

The Word of God begins with what? Creation. Every part of existence was carefully breathed into being by a Creator who was determined to express the full beauty and grandeur of His love through every detail of our universe. This beauty was not single sided either, from vast golden deserts, to azure oceans stretching beyond the horizon; from grand snow–capped mountains to mammoth gorges carved into sandstone. They are each unique. Each has value, each is essential in the way our world functions and each shows a different element of God's masterful creativity. And where landscapes take our breath away, His greatest creation is expressed. We read in Genesis 1:27, "So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them" (NIV).

This is a truth we often forget. We were each created in the image of God. This doesn't make us perfect. This doesn't mean there isn't a whole lot we can work on. It does mean we are created with the characteristics of our Creator. God didn't simply make; He created, and this means that we are skillfully designed to need connection to creativity, each of us in a unique and different way.

Some people are blessed with the ability to make pictures come to life with a post-it-note and old crayons. For others, a sonata is at their fingertips when they reach for a musical

instrument. Some create new worlds with words, plant seeds to fashion majestic gardens. Some can fashion a feast from the humblest ingredients, and some inspire with their voices. Some use their minds to solve the most complex of problems, or ingenuity to create a welcoming space. Creativity goes beyond the arts, but it is something we all need. It is an essential part of our being.

Proverbs 18:16 declares, "A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great." When we connect with our God-given creativity, and uses it to honor God, He uses those gifts to usher others into His presence.

Friends, let us not forget how our unique expressions of creativity can bless others as they seek to find meaning in this messy world. Take a chance, connect with your creativity, connect with God through it, and see how mightily He will use you for the building of His Kingdom here on earth.



Fellowship Programs

July 2023 - Here's the Scoop

July 1, 2023 By Major Cherilee Ramsey



Scripture: John 14:27, Psalm 34:8, John 3:16-17.

Refreshments

Set up a buffet table to make ice cream sundaes. Provide 2 or 3 flavors of ice cream, chocolate and caramel syrup, some sprinkles, whipped cream, cherries, fresh cut bananas, or

strawberries. Or purchase a variety of ice cream flavors and have the women sample them. Ask them to guess the names of the various varieties. Ben and Jerry make a wide selection with unusual names.

Program Activities

Word Search

Go to http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/ to make your own word search. You can Google "ice cream flavors" to find words to add to your word search.

Ice Cream Cone Craft

Check YouTube or Pinterest for directions on how to make origami and other ice cream cones. Tie the cones together to make a garland to hang in the room, or glue a magnet on the back to stick on the refrigerator.

The History of Ice Cream

It is said that the origin of ice cream goes back to the second century B.C. Alexander the Great ate snow and ice with honey and nectar. King Solomon enjoyed iced drinks during the time of harvest. Marco Polo brought a recipe similar to sherbet back from the Far East to Italy. Historians estimate that ice cream came to England and France during the 17th century but was only available to royalty. The first ice cream in the United States was recorded in 1777 by a confectioner who catered to President George Washington. During World War II, the various branches of the military served ice cream to troops, and when the war ended America celebrated with ice cream. The ice cream shops and fountains of the 1950's have given way to more prepackaged ice cream in various sizes and many flavors.

Ice Cream

Do you remember the familiar jingle of the ice cream truck rolling down the street? My young children would plead for some change and race down the sidewalk to purchase their treats. Perhaps it was a rocket popsicle, or an orange popsicle, or a cartoon character with bubble gum eyes. Whatever they chose, for those few moments as we sat on the porch enjoying our ice cream, we could talk about all the things that were happening that day. Ice cream should be one of the seven food groups. No matter the flavor or the topping, it always tastes good.

Are you or do you know an emotional eater? Ice Cream is a sweet treat often used as a comfort food. When you watch TV you will see the love–scorned woman holding her pint of ice cream. I love a bowl of ice cream in the evening after a particularly long or stressful day. Somehow, retreating to the freezer when my four children are in bed just hits the spot and helps me put the day in perspective. My Dad used to take my siblings and me to a local ice cream stand. We ordered our favorite, the "PBP," creamy vanilla, full of peanuts and hot fudge. We were absolutely delighted when Dad treated us.

The Bible also brings us comfort. When we have had a difficult day, or a hard time facing a situation, His Word brings us peace and answers. John 14:27 NIV says, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." When times are tough, and we do not see the way, Jesus is our shelter, our hope and our strength.

God desires to give us good things to enjoy in this life. He has provided us with sweet treats and yummy food. There is even a scripture verse that says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him" (Ps. 34:8 NIV). God has given us senses, two of which are taste and sight. Can't you practically taste that delicious ice cream sundae on the commercial? Jesus desires our company so much that I am sure that He would love sitting on the porch with us, enjoying an ice cream cone together.

When we find a new flavor of ice cream, we can't wait to share it with a friend. John 3:16-17 NIV says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." How our God loves us. He couldn't wait to share His greatest gift with us; He gave His Son to save us. He wants a relationship with us. God desires that when we find something that we love we share it with Him. Take the time to spend with God today and every day. Thank Him for His provisions and His care for you.

And "Here's the Scoop:" It is your responsibility to share your love of Jesus with others around you. God's love abounds in your life. His promises are true. His blessings are countless. There is an old saying that says, "You may be the only Jesus people see." So, bring an ice cream to your friend's house, sit on the porch and talk about Jesus.



Fellowship Programs

August 2023 - Connecting the Dots

August 1, 2023 By Major Toni Halstad



Scripture: John 15:5

Introduction

This year's theme is "Making Connections." This can be hard, especially for those of us who are shy. It may even be hard to make and keep a connection with God, especially as a new

Christian. Today we will learn how to "connect the dots" to stay connected to God and to others.

Decorations

Cover your tables with white or light purple cloths. For centerpieces use either purple and green grapes and vines, with purple and green polka dot balloons. Put a placemat at each spot with Dots and Boxes game or dot to dot pictures for the women to complete. Hang "dots" from the ceiling or attach purple and green paper dots to the walls.

Favors

Put a box of DOTS® candies at each place setting.

Program Ideas

Fun and Fellowship Together

Icebreaker –Using the placemats, play the Dots and Boxes game. This is where players take turns trying to connect the dots without leaving an opportunity for the other player to complete the box. When a box is completed, the one who finished it puts their initial in the box. For a free printable go to: http://thepuzzleden.blogspot.com/p/dots-and-boxes.html

Dots and Dashes Pencil Game - WMResources August2023 Fellowship

Morse code was a form of communication before computers and emails. Create a sheet with a message on it that the women have to figure out by deciphering the dot and dash patterns. The Morse alphabet is available on the Internet.

String Art Craft

String Art can be complicated or fairly easy depending on the time and skill of the women. There are tutorials on the Internet that also provide a template for the desired design. A heart pattern is fairly easy. If time is an issue, you may want to have the nails placed and the women will simply wind the string around the nails "connecting the dots."

Refreshments

Serve Dipping Dots, which can be found in some grocery stores. If you can't find them, serve grapes, melon balls or any colorful fruit that would resemble "dots"

Getting and Staying Connected to God

"I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. For apart from Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Have you thought about how much we rely on modern technology? We have cell phones, iPads, computers, smart TVs, and Alexa. These items are designed to make our lives easier and more convenient. That is, when they work properly. But in order for this to happen they need to be charged or plugged into a power source. Anyone who has had their phone die on them in the middle of an important conversation knows how frustrating that can be. We need to make sure that like our devices we rely on are regularly connected to a power source.

Have you thought about how much we rely on God as our source of power? What if we stayed plugged in and connected to our Creator with as much enthusiasm as we give our electronic devices? What if we were to give God the same dedication, power and trust that we give to our cell phones? How much better our lives would be if we started each day charged up in the Lord and completely connected to Him as our source of power? Unlike our cell phones and computers, this power source can never be hacked, breeched or compromised. It will never break down or become obsolete. It is completely reliable and can never fail.

John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. For apart from Me, you can do nothing." In this passage, we are reminded that God is our power source. He is the vine we are the branches. When we stay connected to the vine, we are fully functional as well. We, as children of God, require the recharging that we get from being connected to our Creator in the same way that we must plug in a lamp for it to give off light. Without its power source, what good is a lamp? It would be just a useless piece of metal, glass and wire incapable of giving off light. Likewise, what good are we? What purpose are we serving if we aren't plugged into our power source every day. We need to be connected to the Lord to work properly for Him.

So how do we stay connected to our power source? First, we start our day by being filled with the Word of God, seeking Him and His direction. Next, we need to stay fully connected to His love and wisdom by fully trusting in Him. By praying, reading His Word, and following His divine purpose for our lives, we will stay rooted in Him. Worship and surrender keep us connected as well.

We need to stay connected to our power source in order to fulfill the purpose He has for us. Without Him, we can do nothing; we are nothing. Stay connected to God and watch His power at work in you.



Fellowship Programs

September 2023 – What's Brewing With You?

August 1, 2023 By Captain Stephanie Dennis



Scripture: Hebrews 10:24-25, Colossians 4:6.

Refreshments

Coffee, tea and coffee cake.

Favor

Purchase inexpensive mugs (99 cent Store) and fill them with single serve coffee packets, creamer, sugar and a wooden stirrer stick. Wrap the mug in cellophane and tie with a bow.

Ice Breaker: What's Brewing With You Conversation Starters

As the women enjoy their coffee or tea and coffee cake, have the them discuss the following questions.

- 1 Do you drink coffee? How many cups do you drink per day?
- **2** When do you drink coffee? Is it the same time every day?
- 3 How do you feel if you want a cup but can't have one?
- 4 How do you like your coffee (black/creamer/sugar)?
- 5 Do you like plain or flavored coffee?
- **6** What food goes well with coffee?
- 7 Do you have a favorite coffee mug? Describe it.
- 8 Where do you like to drink your coffee?
- 9 Do you have a favorite brand of coffee (Folgers/Green Mountain/Dunkin Donut/Starbucks)?
- 10 Where is the nearest place to get a cup of coffee? How is the coffee there?

Craft

Make coffee filter angels, coasters or mug warmers. Check Pinterest for patterns.

Word Search

Using the website below print the word search, which uses words associated with coffee. https://puzzlestoplay.com/coffee-shop-word-search-puzzle/

Trivia

Do You Know Coffee?

What percentage of the population drink espresso, cappuccino, latte or iced/cold coffees?

- **25%**
- 75%

64%

The global coffee industry is worth how much?

- Over \$50 million
- Over \$100 million
- Over \$100 billion

How many cups of coffee are consumed daily all over the globe?

- Over 1 million
- Under 1 million
- Over 2.25 billion

How many coffee shops are there in the United States?

- Fewer than 24,000
- More than 24,000
- More than 50,000

How many cups of coffee does the average American drink every day?

- 1
- **3**
- 5

How does coffee rate globally as a traded commodity?

- First
- Second
- Third

How much does an average cup of coffee weigh?

- 6 oz.
- 8 oz.

9 oz.

True or False?

True – 400 million cups of coffee are consumed daily in the US.

True or False?

• **True** – 52% of avid coffee drinkers would pick it over a shower.

True or False?

• **True** – 1% of coffee drinkers in the US order their coffee through a mobile app.

Coffee History

Legend has it that <u>coffee</u> was discovered in the Ethiopian highlands by Kaldi the goat herder. It is said that he discovered it when he noticed that after eating berries from a certain tree, his goats became so energetic that they didn't sleep at night.

Kaldi told the abbot of the local monastery what he was noticing, and the abbot then made a drink with the berries and realized it also kept him alert during his lengthy evening prayers. The abbot shared this news with the other monks at the monastery, and from there the word about the energizing effects of the berries began to spread.

As word spread east and reached the Arabian Peninsula, the Arabic people began to cultivate and trade coffee. They also began the tradition of public coffee consumption at "coffee houses" in cities across the Near East. The popularity of the coffee houses boomed, and people began to frequent them for all kinds of social activities from engaging in conversations to listening to music, watching performances and keeping current on the day's news. The coffee houses became such an important meeting place that they were often referred to as "Schools of the Wise."

From there, coffee spread across Europe and then to the United States, becoming the wildly popular drink that it is today.

Marking the long and unique history of the drink is National Coffee Day on September 29. The day was first celebrated in Japan in 1983 and is now celebrated globally as a way to promote fair trade coffee and raise awareness for the plight of the coffee farmers. In celebration of the day, here are some of our favorite fun facts about the most popular drink in the world:

 A French doctor in the 1600's prescribed café au lait to his patients, inspiring people to add milk to coffee.

- Coffee beans are actually the pit of a berry, making them a fruit seed.
- The first webcam was introduced at the University of Cambridge to let students and staff know when the coffee pot was full.
- The coffee houses in England were referred to as "penny universities" because for the price of a penny someone could purchase a cup of coffee and engage in informative conversation.

So, you see, coffee is more than just a beverage. It is a conduit to conversation—staying connected.

Coffee and Conversation

I love coffee and I could drink it and talk about it all day. Did you know there is a book in the Bible that could indicate that God is a coffee drinker? "He-Brews." But seriously, I would like to focus on the other part of this theme—conversation. Something else I like to do is to talk to people.

Coffee shops across the Nation, even the world, are known for more than just their product. They have become a place of community where people gather for many different reasons. Students come to use the internet, completing assignments and doing research. Businessmen and women hold meetings there. Moms meet to "get away" from the everyday routine and spend some time in fellowship with others. It is a place of conversation, to ask and answer the question, "What's brewing with you?" These conversations might vary according to the purpose of the visit, but they all create moments in which we can connect one with another. They are important to our state of mind and our innate need for social interaction.

During the pandemic, we saw a drastic change in our world. Socialization was not encouraged, and isolation was the rule. Tables and chairs were removed from the inside of the coffee shops and social gatherings were not permitted. Conversations were few and far between and people felt disconnected and alone.

God created us to be social, to live in community. Hebrews 10:24, 25 reads, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

As we meet, we are to encourage one another. Colossians 4:6 reads, "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Do you know someone in your sphere of influence who is experiencing loneliness or isolation? Give them a call, invite them for a cup of coffee or tea and some encouraging conversation. And "Let your conversation be always full of grace" and "seasoned with salt."

Author's Note: Websites on coffee:

- https://www.ncausa.org/about-coffee/history-of-coffee
- https://www.communitycoffee.com/blog/detail/National-Coffee-Day#:~:text=Marking%20the%20long%20and%20unique,plight%20of%20the%20coffee%20

About author



Captain Stephanie Dennis
USA Western Territory

Service Programs



Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11





Service Programs

October 2022 – International Day of the Girl

October 1, 2022 By Major Janelle Gonzalez



Introduction

On December 19, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls around the world face. This day focuses attention on the need to address the challenges adolescent girls face and to promote girls' empowerment and the

fulfillment of their human rights. They have the right to a safe environment, education, and healthy life, not only during these critical formative years, but also as they mature into womanhood. If effectively supported during the adolescent years, girls have the potential to change the world—both as the empowered girls of today and as tomorrow's workers, mothers, entrepreneurs, mentors, household heads and political leaders.

For more information on this observance, please visit: https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/girl-child

What Can We Do?

Although this resolution was declared in the year 2011, life for many girls around the world is less than ideal. They have to face stereotypes, exclusion, marginalization and injustice on a daily basis. Even in the United States there are girls who deal with these struggles. They need nurturing and encouragement as girls so that they will become strong, capable, intelligent women. Our responsibility is to do everything within our power for the girls in our corps and community to enable them to have a bright future.

Program Ideas

- Share the information above regarding the International Day of the Girl.
- What were your favorite games as a girl?
- Did you have an adult who was a mentor or great influence on you?
- What characteristics made her an inspiration to you?
- Discuss the service projects and how the women could be involved.
- Mentor long term
- Mentor day of the event
- Refreshments
- Goody bags
- Following the event send notes of encouragement

Service Projects

While the International Day of the Girl is celebrated in October, the Service Project could be scheduled for a later date. Remember, it can take time to plan and prepare for a successful event.

Girls Event at Corps

Idea #1. An introductory day event leading to a longer commitment by pairing the girls with a mentor.

- Pick a date and time to host the event, keeping in mind school schedules. An evening or Saturday may be best.
- Decide how many girls the group is able to host. The girls could be those already
 attending corps programs or children of social service clients. The number could be based
 in part on the adult mentors willing to be a part of this project.
- Contact potential mentors explaining what will be involved and securing their commitment to the project.
- Mail fun invitations to the girls outlining briefly what is planned for this special day.
- Decide what type of goody bag might be given to the girls. Ask the women's ministries group to provide the various items.
- Two weeks prior to the event, decide what snacks to serve and who will provide/coordinate them.
- Contact influential women in the community like the city mayor, elected leaders, school principals, business owners, fire chiefs, police commanders, women CEOs. Ask them to share their empowering life stories.

Idea #2

This will need almost the same planning as idea #1. However, this is a one-day event, and the girls will not be linked up with mentors who have committed to on-going involvement in the girls' lives.

- Decide what group of girls you will invite and what the focus of the day.
- Decide what type of event you will hold: spa day, tea party, PJ party. Check Pinterest for ideas.
- During the event, pair the girls up with women for discussion and prayer. Some conversation ideas are:
- 1 Basic personal information: ages, birthdays, family, siblings.
- 2 What do you do for fun?
- **3** What do you want to do when you grow up?
- 4 What would you like for us to pray together about?

Words Have So Much Power

"She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue" (Prov. 31:26). "Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, that it may give grace to the listeners" (Eph. 4:29).

I still remember people who were kind to me as a child. I also remember clearly those who were not so kind. I recall words that were so hurtful. I am aware as an adult that hurting people often hurt others. However, as Christians we are told to "let no unwholesome word proceed out of our mouth" but rather we are to encourage each other. It is particularly difficult to hear an adult say mean things to a child. Statements like: "You're no good, you're lazy... fat... an idiot... a failure."

In the movie "The Help," the mother of a toddler doesn't seem capable of saying anything encouraging to her daughter. She seems able only to yell and punish her. The housemaid, Aibileen, played by Viola Davis, comforts the toddler with these words: "You is smart, you is kind, you is important." Aibileen was hurt and mistreated as a child, not for just being a girl, but also because of her race. Despite her painful experience, she is able to bring encouragement to this young child.

There are many girls who long to hear kind words, especially when Satan and a mean world abuses them. We have all seen instances when girls and women were made to believe that they had little value because of their gender, physical appearance, or financial status. Girls experience many difficult situations in our country and throughout the world. Anything that we as women can do to encourage and uplift them is crucial and important for their formation and growth.

The saying, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," is patently false. We all know that words do hurt. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them" (Eph. 4:29 NLT).

My challenge for you today is:

- Reflect on the words that you use daily. Do they build others up?
- What changes do you need to make in the way you talk?
- As you connect with others this month, find something wholesome to say to help build them up.

Proverbs 31 reminds us that a woman who honors God "speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue." Let's make this our goal always.

Resources

https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/IDG2021



Photo courtesy of SAWSO – Kenya

About author



Major Janelle Gonzalez
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

November 2022 - Wonder and Warmth

November 1, 2022 By Major Nancy Mead



"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord" (Ps. 137:3).

Introduction

November is a month when the winter weather brings out our desire for cozy things: a warm cup of tea, toasty slippers or a soft, cozy blanket. Blankets do more than bring warmth. They

can be a source of security and familiarity, especially to children.

Program Idea

This program gives the opportunity to partner with agencies or community groups like hospitals or shelters to bring warmth to children. It involves making blankets for kids who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need. Often sewing groups are looking for an outlet for their finished craft projects. They could participate with your women's ministries to provide blankets. It would also be a source to recruit new women into your group.

One national non–profit organization leading the way in providing children with blankets is "Project Linus." You can contact your local representative by going to their website: https://www.projectlinus.org/. Invite their representative to speak to the group about starting a project. This could be a one-time event or an ongoing project of your women's ministries outreach.

Service Project—Blankets for Children

Participation

The women may choose to knit, crochet, quilt, or tie blankets to contribute to this project. Those who do not make blankets may support in other ways during the year such as helping to collect the materials or by making a donation.

Project Manager

Assign a project manager to coordinate and keep the blankets until they are shared with the group and presented to the designated recipients. Or the blankets could be kept in the corps social service office and handed out as needed.

Tie Blankets

An alternate idea is to make "no sew fleece blankets." You will find many tutorials on Pinterest, or YouTube.

Refreshments

A fun refreshment could be pigs in a blanket—a hot dog or sausage wrapped in a crescent roll. Recipes are on the Internet.

Wonder and Warmth

Did you or one of your children have a security blanket? Why do children choose a security blanket? We swaddled newborn babies in a blanket for warmth and to imitate the feeling of security of being in their mothers' womb. As they grow into toddlers, they still find security in

a blanket that belongs only to them. Its brings warmth and comfort as they face each day. It brings comfort when a parent or caregiver can't be with them, a constant "companion" that makes a child feel safe. As we mature we don't carry a blanket around, but we still search for purpose and security in our lives. A new kind of security blanket.

We read in Psalm 127:3, "Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from Him." The wonder of that scripture is amazing to me. Children are a gift from God. He gifted us to our parents. But even more amazing is that we are God's children. "See how very much our Father loves us, for He calls us His children, and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1). Also, Romans 8:16-17: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co–heirs with Christ." We can find security in knowing once we accept Jesus into our hearts we are His child. He is our blanket of security. We never have to worry.

It's freeing and powerful when we feel alone and the world treats us coldly, that God's warmth and wonder and hope remains with us.

About author



Major Nancy Mead
Central Territory



Service Programs

December 2022 - Red Kettle Day

December 1, 2022 By Major Dawn Russell



"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it" (Prov. 3:27 NRSV)

Introduction

All across the world where there is a Salvation Army installation, we will be hearing the sound of the bell at participating shops and stores. The Salvation Army relies heavily on the kettle collections to provide operating funds for several direct service programs. Women's Ministries can take part in helping to raise funds for your area's specific program needs. For many corps and other Salvation Army facilities, ringing the bell and the financial donations that are collected provide necessary funding for the many people who are in need.

Service Project Ideas

World Hunger Day at the Kettle

In several corps appointments, the women's ministry groups have manned a kettle site for the day on World Hunger Day and raised funds for World Services. This was usually the Friday after Thanksgiving. Everything collected at that kettle on that day went toward the corps world service goal.

Sponsor a Kettle

Some of the women may be unable to ring bells but they may know others who could ring for short periods of time. Challenge the women to sponsor a kettle site and gather their friends and family members to man a site for the whole season or for a day. Give them a template to have their family and friends fill in times when they are able to ring, which can be transferred to the local Salvation Army facility for kettle coordination. Attached is a sample template.

If you use registertoring.com, you can have your group or individuals set up their times utilizing that site. Make this fun by turning it into a contest with prizes. For example, the woman who brings in the most volunteer bell ringing hours will get their fee to the next women's camp paid. This could become a yearly event.

Service of Prayer

Prayer is vital to what we do this Christmas season. We must start it out in the right way by first seeking God's direction. In the Sunday meetings and in the women's ministries meeting pray for the corps kettle locations, the workers, drivers, coordinators, volunteers, employees and officers. Pray for them by name. The following is a list of specific scriptures that can be implemented:

- Pray for the area of service where kettles will be placed using Jeremiah 29:7
- Pray for God's planning using Jeremiah 29:11, 12
- Pray for God's direction using Jeremiah 42:3
- Pray for protection using Psalm 140:1, 2
- Pray against temptation using Luke 22:40

Pray with thanksgiving for God's faithfulness using Psalm 100

Prepare Bell Ringer Care Kits

Some of our bell ringers come with barely a coat to wear. These kits can be changed to fit your bell ringers needs.

- Warm Coat
- Tissues
- Gloves, scarf and hat
- Handwarmers (if needed)
- Hand sanitizer
- Cough drops
- Individual snacks
- Insulated coffee cup
- Bottled water

Wash and Paint Kettle Stands

If you have a men's ministry group, enlist their help to get the kettles shiny and clean for the season. Sometimes this will involve applying a new coat of paint.

Surrender

William Booth said, "The greatness of the man's power is the measure of his surrender." Each of us has power within us to do good in some way or another. But we do not always surrender to do great things for others, or we do only the minimal when we can do so much more. We tend to want power to benefit ourselves.

God's word in Proverbs 3:27 says, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it." We can learn from the principles that we find in both the book of Proverbs and in the wisdom of William Booth's words. Chapter 3 of Proverbs urges us to honor God, find wisdom and do good to our neighbors. What better time of the year to do good than at this season of helping others.

Not everyone can stand outside for hours at a time and ring a bell, but all people can do something to do good and help a neighbor. You need to find out what it is you can do and then do it to the best of your ability for someone in need. Just surrender to it and do it. God's

word says not to "withhold good." If we withhold something that is in our power to give, then we are not the people God needs us to be.

My mother used to tell me that our words can be beautiful and pleasing to someone's ears, but it is in our very actions that our true selves are revealed. She was a very wise woman. Surrendering ourselves is what God needs from us so that in turn we can do good to others.

This season, will you do your very best to help someone? If you can ring the bell at a kettle site, will you? If you can give some money and put it in the kettle, will you? If you can give some groceries to someone or bring food for the corps food pantry, will you? If it is in your power to do good, then please surrender yourself and just do it.

Let us pray:

Father God, we praise You for Your goodness. We praise You for showing us how immeasurable is Your love and goodness to us every day. Help us, Lord, to follow in Your ways and do good to those who need it the most. Help us to surrender our power to be used for Your glory. We ask for You, Holy Spirit, to be with The Salvation Army around the world at this time and to help them raise the funds they need in order to do good with what You have given them. We praise You and honor You in all we do. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

About author



Major Dawn Russell
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

January 2023 – Human Trafficking Awareness Prayer Walk

January 1, 2023 By Captain Dana Cook



A prayer walk is a great way to raise awareness, educate and create opportunities to serve victims of Human Trafficking. While Human Trafficking is largely a hidden problem, it is happening in your town, county, state and nation. Action starts with awareness.

Often our women's groups feel that they do not have the capability to make a difference when it comes to the monumental problem of human trafficking/modern day slavery. This is

untrue. By educating our women, we could be saving someone's life. The women can pray, make cards of encouragement, give toiletries or personal care items, and offer life skills coaching. When we serve others with a generous heart, God will take that offering, multiply it and use it in ways we may never know. Matthew 25:40 reminds us, "...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me."

Preparation:

Set up five stations/tables. Add scarves/runners, crosses, candles or prayer signs to each table to emphasize the purpose. Print the action signs and the scriptures for each station. Print various images that support anti-human trafficking. Refer to the resources attached to find some images. Ask the women to bring personal hygiene/toiletry products to donate to a shelter, pantry or a group helping human trafficking victims. Set a goal to raise a certain number of items in the month of January. Take pictures and post your progress on Facebook. Encourage everyone to get involved.

Station 1: Pray for the magnitude of the issue.

Set up: Add a container filled with rice to the table. The rice in the container represents 40.3 million people caught in modern day slavery. It would take approximately 5,757 pounds of rice to have enough to represent every person enslaved today. Take one grain of rice and hold it in your hand. Imagine that each grain of rice is a person with a name, a family and a story.

- Think about a man who is forced to work in a restaurant paying off an impossible debt.
- Think about two sisters trying to get to another country to make a better life, however their "helpers" have more malicious intents.
- Think about children (7-15 years old) who are taken from their homes and forced to be soldiers for drug lords.
- Scripture: "Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless. Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, "He won't call me to account"? But You, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; You consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to You; You are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked man; call the evildoer to account for his wickedness that would not otherwise be found out. The Lord is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror." Psalm 10:12-18

Station 2: Pray for victims across the globe.

Set up: Place pads of post–it notes and pens on the table.

Add Actions and Scripture Signs to the table.

Hang up a large world map near the table. World maps showing prevalence of modern slavery can be found at https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/highlights/.

Slavery happens in every country on the globe. Pick a country on the world map. Write a prayer on a post-it note for those who are impacted by Human Trafficking. Take some time in prayer for them and place the prayer on the map.

Scripture: "I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. I will shepherd the flock with justice" (Eze. 34:16).

Station 3: Freedom Chain

Set Up: Make a red paper chain to drape across the table. Add the station action and the scripture to the overall set up of the station.

Pray for those who work with survivors and those seeking freedom from slavery. Break a link of the chain. This breaking is a symbolic gesture, claiming freedom for another person.

Scripture: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" (Isa. 58:6)

Station 4: Walk a mile in their shoes.

Set up: Print off a couple sets of hands and feet. Put the hands on the wall and the feet on the floor. Add Actions and Scripture Signs to the table.

Many of us can only begin to imagine what victims must endure every day just to survive. We see a little in the movies or read about it in the newspaper, but that is a just a glimpse.

Place your hands and feet in the prints in front of you. Imagine you are the person entrapped in slavery. Close your eyes and use your senses. What do you feel? What do you see? What do you smell? Are your hands and feet tied together? Are you alone in a dark room? What do you have with you?

Pray for those held captive in this dark world. Pray God's protection to surround them. Pray that the lost would be found.

Scripture: "Rescue the weak and the needy; Deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Ps. 82:4). "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them" (Heb. 13:3).

***If you have experienced something in the past that prevents you from wanting to participate or brings up trauma, we pray for the Lord's continued healing in your life. If you need help, please

seek out your Corps Officer in a confidential setting.

Station 5: What can I do?

Set up: Place several red sharpies at this station.

Add Actions and Scripture Signs to the table.

In advance, ask your women to bring toiletries and personal care items. Often, when people come out of their situation, they have nothing, except what they have on. Have the women place the personal care items at this station while they pray for the people who will be using them.

Everyone can do something to help END IT! Yes, you too!

You can: take awareness classes; teach children about modern slavery; learn to identify victims and how to report suspicious actions; participate in a 5 K walk to fight against human trafficking; create a contact for the National Human Trafficking Hotline in your cell phone contacts: 888-373-7888; donate toiletries and personal items to homeless shelters and to groups helping survivors get back on their feet. If you have professional skills, find a group to volunteer with and offer those skills. Donate!

William Booth said in his last public address, "While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight, I'll fight to the very end!"

Today, you can continue to pray for the Lord's leading. Before you leave this place, draw a red X on the back of your hand to show your support in the fight against Human Trafficking.

Scripture:

"Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed." (Ps. 82:3). "The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me"" (Matt. 25:40).

The United Nations defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, or coercion) for an improper purpose including forced labor or sexual exploitation. Human smuggling, a related but different crime, generally involves the consent of the person(s) being smuggled. These people often pay large sums of money to be smuggled across international borders. Once in the country of their final destination, they are generally left to their own devices. Smuggling becomes trafficking when the element of force or coercion is introduced.

The Salvation Army is deeply committed to fighting modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern slavery is an umbrella term including human trafficking for sex, labor or organs, exploitative labor practices, child labor and early and forced marriage. It involves not just individuals but also social and economic systems. The Salvation Army believes in the biblical principles of the inherent and equal value of all persons and the duty to care for one's neighbor. The exploitation of human beings commodifies and dehumanizes the individuals who are trafficked, rewards the inhumanity of the traffickers, and weakens the moral, social and economic fabric of society. The Salvation Army is opposed to the abuse of power against other human beings that is inherent in modern slavery and human trafficking. (The Salvation Army International Positional Statement, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, 2020).

RESOURCES:

- Human Trafficking | The Salvation Army
- https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/fight-human-trafficking
- https://salvationarmysouth.org/ways-we-help/combating-human-trafficking
- https://www.salvationarmy.org.za/human-trafficking-2
- www.sajustice.us
- a21.org
- enditmovement.com
- www.endslaverynow.org
- United Nations definition of Human Trafficking: https://nij.ojp.gov

Written by Captain Dana Cook & Major Stephanie Sawka

About author



Captain Dana Cook

USA Central Territory



Service Programs

February 2023 - Be the Change—Go and Do Something!

February 1, 2023 By Major Charlotte Hall



Scripture: Isa. 1:17 NIV

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

What is Social Justice?

A quick Google search will result in multiple definitions, which vary depending upon the philosophy and mission of the website linked to the search result.

In the United States the word "social" might bring up feelings of unease or, depending upon your personal views, even distaste. The word social, in this program, is not meant to reference a political ideology or leaning. The word social, as defined by the dictionary, means: "relating to society or the organization of society." So, simply stated, social means our practices and interactions with one another as humans.

As Salvationists, "We Believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice." Because of this belief, we must extend the definition of the word social to include our *imago Dei* (image of God): A theological term, applied uniquely to humans, which denotes the symbolical relation between God and humanity. Because God created us in His image our practices and interactions with one another as humans (social) must be expanded to include God's original intent for His creation.

This brings us to the definition of the word justice. From the Biblical perspective justice is defined as "to make right." Justice is a relational term—it is people living in right relationship with God and with one another. Social Justice, from a Christian standpoint of faith and practice, is our desire and attempts to help others by meeting their basic human needs, offering opportunities for others to flourish in community with one another, and working to restore and maintain peace in our world.

The Who and Why of Social Justice:

Upon returning to London after a campaign in the south of England, General William Booth, had a fitful night of sleep. It would seem that for the first time he noticed that there were men sleeping on the bridges at night. The next day he spoke with his son, Chief of the Staff Bramwell Booth, to emphasize that regardless of the other good things that the Army was already doing he wanted Bramwell to DO SOMETHING about the men sleeping under the bridges. He noticed a need that was going unmet and he recognized that it was his duty as a follower of Christ to do something about it!

William Booth fully understood Jesus' words from Matthew 22:36-40: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

General Booth saw people sleeping under bridges at night, recognized them as his neighbors, and then made sure that something was done to improve their human condition. He recognized that social justice is a mandate not a suggestion.

How Can We Participate:

In Isaiah 1:17 we read about how God wants us, His *imago Dei*, to interact with one another. We are told to first learn to do right. Our motivation must be right—we must first be in right relationship with God before we begin "to make right" the world around us. After we are in right relationship with God, we seek to impact our communities by learning to do right, seeking justice, defending the oppressed, taking up the cause of the fatherless, and pleading the case of the widow.

- Think about the community you live in. Do some brainstorming with the women by asking:
- Are there people in our community who go unnoticed?
- Who are the underserved people?
- Where do they live?
- What systems are in place that need to be changed?
- How can our women's group work together to enact social justice?

Make a list of projects which could be undertaken by the women's ministry and do something to make a difference in the lives of others. Following are a few suggestions to get you started:

Homeless Kits: collect personal care items (toothbrush/paste, soap, trial size shampoo, deodorant), socks, mini-bottled water, snack items, \$5 fast food gift cards. Place items in a baggie or other useful container and give them to people in need. Make sure you include a list of community services like shelters, feeding sites, clothing distribution, and other needed services. The short–term and immediate response of a homeless kit is helpful, however, does nothing to help change their homelessness. What are the other factors involved with homelessness? How could your women's group become advocates to change those factors?

Peaceful Protest: As a women's group, gather to stand with those who are disenfranchised and feel voiceless. March with those who are hurting and have little power to change their situation in life. Being an ally or advocate through peaceful protest helps to boost awareness of injustice within our communities. It helps to amplify the voices of people who hold little power to change systems or cultures—in Isaiah's day, the fatherless and widow's.

Hydration and First Aid Stations: perhaps peaceful protests and marches are outside of your comfort zone. Instead of marching, set up a hydration station—pass out water, offer shade, give out sun screen, face masks and other needed items. Offer "free-prayer" stations for those who need emotional and spiritual care. Be present in the moment without being part of the protest—a ministry of presence speaks loudly and breaks down barriers which might otherwise perpetuate injustice.

Thank You Letters: Write thank you letters/cards to partner agencies in your community who serve alongside The Salvation Army to enact social justice change. Are there

groups/organizations that stand out? Many of those involved with social justice get weary along the way. A thank you and acknowledgment of their hard work and dedication will go a long way and may just be the boost needed to continue fighting.

Clean Water Projects: 1.8 billion people world-wide are forced to use a source of drinking water that is contaminated. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of the global population. According to the United Nations, "Each day, nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation related diarrheal diseases." As a women's ministry collect monetary donations to be given to your territorial SAWA for use in clean water projects.

Food Sustainability Projects: Approximately 23.5 million people in the United States of America live in food deserts. Nearly half are also low–income and 2.3 million of those in poverty live in rural areas that are more than 10 miles from a supermarket. As a women's group you can help people who suffer from food insecurity by volunteering at a food pantry, organizing a food drive, or delivering meals to shut–ins.

Human Trafficking Awareness: Host an awareness–raising event to watch and discuss films about human trafficking. Learn how modern slavery exists today; watch investigative documentaries about sex–trafficking, or discover how forced labor can affect global food supply chains. Host an event for hotel employees to teach them how to recognize and report suspected human trafficking.

A United Prayer

Leader: Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

Response: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Leader: A seeker prayed for those who were down trodden, beaten, battered and weary. Seeing the great need around her she prayed, "Oh, great God, how is it that a loving creator can see such things and yet do nothing about them?" God answered, "I did do something, I made you." (Sufi Parable)

Response: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Lord, this world is hurting, and it is with our hands that You want to bring comfort. This world is wounded, and it is with our hands that You want to bring healing. This world is divided, and it is with our hands that You want to bring reconciliation.

Response: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Hear our prayers, O Lord. Answer us by drawing close to us and by showering us with Your love for others. Thank You for Your presence at this gathering. May we go forth better

people; richer in wisdom, friendship, and understanding. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

(Adapted from Catholic Prayers for Healthcare Workers)

Additional Resources:

- https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc
- https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips
- https://issuu.com/isjc/docs/2011_jesus_and_justice_english

About author



Major Charlotte Hall
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

March 2023 - Women Making History Today

March 1, 2023 By Major Tammy Whitney



Decorations

Create a gallery of women who are making history from the last 15 years. Print their photos and create a gallery introducing the women and what their impact on history has been.

https://www.womenshistory.org/women-making-history-award-recipients

Icebreaker: Who are some women, not pictured here, that you think are making history today?

Activity: As a group look through the Chronicles of American Women. If this is a virtual group share the link for participants to browse through. If you are meeting in person print these tributes and lay them out on the tables. https://www.womenshistory.org/womens-history/chronicles-american-women

Discussion Questions:

- What are some things you notice about these tributes?
- Are all of these women famous?
- Is there anyone you know that should be on this list?
- Write a tribute and submit it, or send a card to the woman telling how she has impacted your life.

Other Program Ideas:

- Invite one or two women whose work is impacting your community to share their work with the group.
- Explore some of the "Her Story" themes at the Smithsonian's website and watch a few of the videos that are of particular interest to the group.
- Who am I game? Create a list of current famous women. As the women enter the room write the name of a famous woman on a post-it note and put it on their back. They need to ask the other women to give them hints as to who they are.
- Read through some of the women mentioned on this website: https://www.womenshistory.org/womens-history/chronicles-american-women. Discuss some of the stories that caught your attention. What about their story interested you? Is there anyone that you would like to recognize? Write and submit your own tribute.
- Discovering Herstory:

https://womenshistory.si.edu Explore each of the different themes, watch the videos and discuss how these have impacted your lives.

Who Knew?

Read Exodus 1:8–22 from The Message

Imagine that you are one of the midwives serving in Egypt. Your job is to attend to women at their most vulnerable, to help them bring forth new life into the world. You are a caregiver, a

nurturer, a helper. You are able to bear witness to a new baby's first breath and sometimes their last. This work is hard and raw, yet tender and hopeful. This is sacred work.

For Shiphurah and Puah this was their everyday work. They did this work in a culture in which their people were enslaved and oppressed by Pharaoh. So when the Pharaoh called them in for a chat you can be sure it wasn't to congratulate them on their good work. The Pharaoh wanted them to kill all the boy babies. These were women committed to the care of babies and their mothers and they "had respect for God" (vs. 17). They were a force to be reckoned with. They bravely ignored the order of the Pharaoh and let the babies live. When the Pharaoh confronted them they just said, "The Hebrew women aren't like your Egyptian women, they give birth fast! Too fast for us to stop it." Not only did they disobey the Pharaoh's order, they were a little cheeky about it.

Shiphurah's and Puah's courage saved countless baby boys which impacted families for generations. But there was one baby in particular who made the annals of history ... Moses. These women saved the boy chosen to lead their people out of slavery into the promised land. Did they have any idea the impact of their courageous actions? No. They were simply living their lives, doing their work, all with great respect for God.

We all know women who show up every day to their work, to their families, who serve their communities with no fanfare or television cameras. They do the work because it needs to be done. They change the world by their faithful service. Some of you are those women.

Every one of us will leave our mark in history. Will our stories become known far and wide? Who's to say? But how we live our lives will make an impact on those around us and will have ripple effects in the world.

About author



Major Tammy Whitney
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

April 2023 - Connecting With and Appreciating Volunteers

April 1, 2023 By Captain Jeanette Jensen



Appreciation Week

Refreshments

Invite the women to bring their best cookie or snack recipes to be gift bagged and shared with volunteers as an appreciation gift.

Decoration

This event will celebrate the people who help give our ministry physical hands and feet. Make it festive with a decorated archway of balloons and streamers to welcome volunteers to the parking lot.

Drive Through Volunteer Parade

Invite the volunteers to drive through the corps parking lot between certain times so you can cheer them for their working hands that help your community.

Preparation

- Send out invitations to all the volunteers who have helped with everything the corps does to impact the community.
- Decide what type of memento you'd like to give to the volunteers.
- Put together posters and signs that express your gratitude for the hard work of community volunteers who contribute to the corps ministry.
- Consider a backup plan in the case of inclement weather. This can be an indoor event.
 Have volunteers walk down a hall of signs and posters thanking them and leading them to the meeting hall.

Day of The Event

- Mark a path with an arch of balloons, banners, and chairs, so that the volunteers arriving have a clear idea of where to go.
- Play music and hang posters around the parking lot sharing your messages of thanks.
- Establish an outdoor lounge/picnic area for those volunteers who want to park and share in fellowship. Refreshments and gifts could be available in this area.

Let Us Not Grow Weary

As a wife, mother, daughter, promise–keeper, teacher, Salvation Army Officer, my life's motto has often become a weary "it's always something." There is always something vying for my attention, and I often grow weary as I feel that I can never reach the mark set either by myself or someone else. There are times when I feel like the enemy has me backed against a wall of weariness with no escape in sight. It is then that I am reminded of Galatians 6:9 (NIV): "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." God does not just give us a command; He always backs it up with His grace. Paul reminds us that we will reap what we sow. We have to step back and ask ourselves, where is my energy being spent and is it for God's glory?

As women, it is not hard for us to fill a page of things that should get done. However, let us measure these activities against God's standard and make sure that what we are doing is indeed good. Paul told the Philippians, "Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things" (Phil. 4:8).

As the character Willy Wonka would say, "We have to strike that, reverse it!" If we think about our deeds and actions in this light, the irony is that our "joy buckets" will fill and we will not dwell so heavily on our never ending 'to-do' list. It is all about perspective.

What do you choose to focus on? This perspective shift epitomizes what it means to be like Jesus. He never hesitated to stand in the gap and offer His expertise in any and all situations. Even when the religious leaders and government officials pressed in against Him and tried to stop His ministry, Jesus knew the path God had set Him on. Jesus knew the face of weariness, too. But because He did not stay weary in bringing glory to His Father, Jesus now sits at God's right hand as our High Priest offering the key to eternal unity with God.

Volunteer Week is our opportunity, not just as an organization but as Christ-filled people, to take time to celebrate those who step up and help in so many ways. Those who see a gap and choose to stand in it without any real benefit for themselves. Ecclesiastes3:12,13 (NIV) says, "I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God." Doing good should result in edifying those who choose to live that way. In a world quick with condemnation and blame–seeking, we need to be a respite as the body of believers for weary souls to slow down and see how they were Jesus' hands and feet to others. Slow down and take a glimpse of what we have to look forward to in Heaven.

Do not stand for the whispered reminders by the enemy of how short we fall. Remember that God has commissioned us for this path we walk. Do not grow weary. Keep sowing love and goodness and your reward will be eternal.

About author



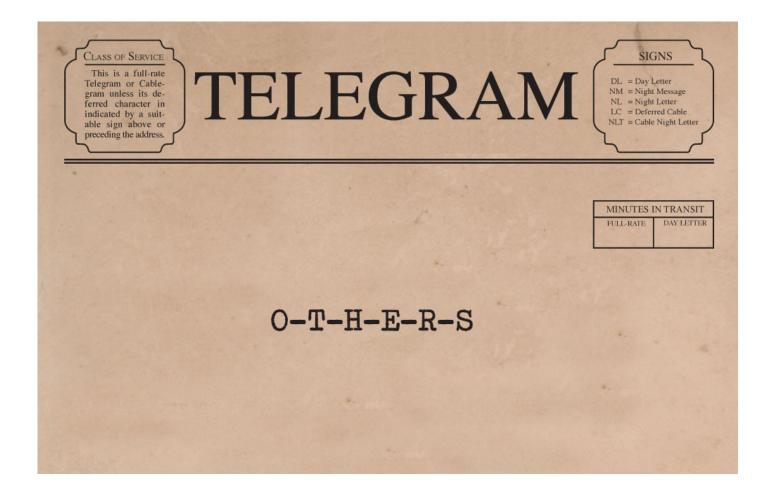
Captain Jeanette Jensen
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

May 2023 - Others

May 1, 2023 By Major Barbara Carroll



Introduction

William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, was preparing to send his annual Christmas message to Salvationists around the world. In those early days, communication was by telegraph, and each word you sent was costly. As money was short, Booth decided to send a one–word telegram. It read simply "OTHERS."

Reaching out to others is still a challenge in our world today. General William Booth challenged his officers with that one word, "OTHERS." Today we have a challenge to continue serving others through The Salvation Army—through our corps and our women's ministries group.

Ask the women to choose one or two areas of service, which they could do in the next two weeks by themselves or teaming up with one or two other women. Ask them to take time to prayerfully prepare for their chosen area of service and then do it! The goal is to serve those outside the corps family who are in need of our care. They might send notes to encourage the recipients using Bible verses, songs or poems.

Program Preparation

- Discuss with the group to predetermine the area of service they would like to cover.
- Decide who will collect the supplies needed to perform the service.
- Assign someone to make contact with potential recipients so that they know you are coming.

Suggested Areas of Service

Traditional Service Areas:

- Community of Care—Christmas and Easter ministry to shut-ins and care facilities with a small gift and a War Cry. Share photos of previous Community of Care distributions with the women.
- Emergency Disaster Services (EDS)—personal hygiene kits, blankets and mosquito spray for the homeless. Invite an EDS staff member to come and share stories of helping during a disaster.
- Food Pantry Collections—non-perishable food and paper products. Invite the social service staff to share how the programs work and how the food pantry serves the community.

Outreach Service Area

- "Welcome to the neighborhood" bags—prepare a gift bag with note cards, small gifts or baked goods to share with new neighbors. Be sure to include information about Sunday services and women's ministries.
- E-learning—this may be a new area of service provided to students who come to the corps building as a place of learning. Provide snacks and volunteer support for the teachers as well as the students by volunteering time. Check with the leader of E-learning to see what supplies are needed.

 Senior Services—reach out to those seniors confined to their homes and facilities by providing a phone call, a handwritten note of encouragement or something homemade.
 Deliver these to each senior you have selected.

Program

Refreshments/Centerpieces

Ask a few women to bring extra cookies, brownies or snacks to share as they prepare for their outreach services. Use colorful table cloths and napkins for decorations. Use items for centerpieces that reflect each area of service.

Work Stations (if assembling)

- Identify and train a few individuals in knowing what each gift box/bag is going to look like and number of assembled items needed for each station.
- Have the items unpackaged and placed in order of assembly so that groups can get right to work.

Inspirational

"And so the rest of you, brothers and sisters, never grow tired of doing good" (2 Thess.3:13).

In the early days of The Salvation Army, open air meetings were often used as a method of spreading the gospel. However, it was discovered that there were some people who were too weak, too ill, or too busy with demands of life to receive God's word in this way. In 1884, Emma Booth (daughter of General William Booth) had a revolutionary idea. Send The Salvation Army officers into the worst parts of London's slums. They could serve the poor by ministering to the sick, caring for the children of working mothers, and providing for the physical and spiritual needs of those neglected communities.

The first officers to be appointed to the ministry in the South of the United States were slum sisters Staff Captain Emma J. Brown and Lieutenant Martha Johnson. They began their service in 1889 living in the midst of the people they served, maximizing their time and capacity to help. They learned to blend in with the working people by wearing no uniforms or Salvation Army identity – just a gingham dress, an apron, shawl and straw hat. After the first year more the 5,500 families were visited; 942 families received clothing; 613 families received food donations and 777 babies were cared for in a Salvation Army nursery. By 1850, social work had absorbed this service with rescue homes for women, day nurseries, children's homes, and summer camps to meet these needs.

Two women reached out in service to the "least of these" and gave them help and hope. Their unwavering courage and devotion reflected their love for God and others. They saw everyone

as a child of God regardless of status, race, or religion. Their position in society did not matter to these women. Their only desire was to share the love of Jesus. It is our mission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human need in His name without discrimination. It is our challenge to bring hope to others and to share the good news in every practical way of service. Is there anyone neglected in your community that you could reach out to in love? Consider living out your faith in this way by being a modern day "slum sister." Adapted from https://youngsalvationist.avcvq5-liquidwebsites.com/our-history/saving-the-slum-sisters/

Follow Up

- Meet up after the distribution for coffee/tea/coke/water and testimonies.
- Begin the meeting with testimonies in which the women share their experience of service.

About author



Major Barbara Carroll
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

June 2023 - Going Green

June 1, 2023 By <u>Lieutenant Carmon Camp</u>



Scripture: Psalms 8

"Lord, Your name is so great and powerful! People everywhere see Your splendor. Your glorious majesty streams from the heavens, filling the earth with the fame of Your name!" (TPT)

Purpose

To participate in service projects that connect us to the community and give us the opportunity to honor God by being caregivers of His creation.

Decorations

Place live wildflowers in vases and use as centerpieces.

Program Ideas

- Visit a nursery and take a tour. Purchase flowers or seeds to create window boxes.
- Invite a speaker to share the benefits of gardening.
- Research and share the benefits of therapeutic horticulture.

Service Project

- Option 1: Look for a community garden and volunteer your time. Commit to working a
 plot for a senior who enjoys gardening but is no longer able to physically do so.
- Option 2: Contact a senior home that will allow the group to bring flower boxes and place them outside the windows of the residents. Set up a schedule for the group to return periodically to care for the boxes replacing flowers as necessary.

Creation Caretakers

Read Psalms 8.

Most of us have had the experience of walking or hiking through the hills, of staring at the vastness of space and being overwhelmed to the point of breathlessness at the resplendent artistry of our Creator. At those moments we often feel closer to God than at other times. Our faith feels endless because more than ever we know that there is a real God. We know that the God we serve is the Master and Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.

Psalms 8 is the perfect praise for God as the Creator. The Passion Translation describes the magnificence of our Lord and the praise and honor we give Him. "Lord, Your name is so great and powerful! People everywhere see Your splendor. Your glorious majesty streams from the heavens, filling the earth with the fame of Your name!" (Ps. 8:1, TPT). Praise tells the world that the powerful name of God is worthy of honor because of all He has done, made and given.

Psalms 8 is not just a recognition of the praise we give to God and the honor that we give to His name, but it is also a directive from God to us. We have been placed and positioned to

protect, nurture and serve His creation. We are creation caretakers. Have we done a good job following His instructions?

Most people acclimate well to fixing the environment and taking ownership of the mess we have collectively made of our planet. It takes a bit more courage and honesty to acknowledge that we have failed in our assignment as caregivers of God's greatest creation—people. That includes you and me and the challenge to put others first.

Just looking at the state of humanity in 2020 might make us shudder with disappointment. We have failed as the light bearers, beacons in the dark and as guiding lights back to God. But we indeed have a second chance to get it right and to do our part. Is it really that hard to start loving all of God's creation? We need to start and pay attention when a person has a need, and help them. What will we do with the second chance?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I am sorry for not always being who You designed me to be. I thank You Lord for every opportunity to shine Your light. It is always my prayer that I have a chance to demonstrate Your love. Enrich me, Oh Lord, with Your power and love. I want to affect Your creation in a way that is positive and cause everything to grow. Help me to be ever mindful of Your greatness and to remember that You made me in Your image. And when the road gets dark, light my path so that I can be a light to others. May God strengthen me so that I will be a proper caregiver of Your creation.

About author



Lt. Carmon Camp

USA Central Territory



Service Programs

July 2023 – Mission Minded—Connecting Outside Our Borders





Scripture: 1 Tim. 6:17-19:

"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Are you looking for a new World Missions fundraiser and find yourself fresh out of ideas? Here is an idea that might work perfectly for your corps. Below is a creative brief for an auction fundraiser that was held at our corps called "Care for Kenya." Check with your division to learn your partners in Missions for World Services and base the title for the program on one of those partner countries.

Pre-Event Details:

- Pick a date for the fundraiser
- Produce a ticket for your event (Canva.com is a great website resource to use for design)
- Secure a cook
- Recruit hosts for each table
- Put together a committee to procure silent and live auction items
- Secure an auctioneer and runners
- Ask someone to be responsible to collect the money
- Put together a set up and tear down crew

How to:

Once hosts are identified, ask them to secure guests to fill their table. Provide each host with 8 to 10 tickets. Ask all of the women to invite their friends and family. When deciding on an amount for the tickets you will want to cover food costs plus an amount for the project.

Day-of Fundraiser Outline:

- Hosts welcome and serve the meal (family style)
- During the meal hold the silent auction
- Show a short video of the receipient of the funds from the day's events
- Have a live auction or a silent auction

Host Instructions:

 Arrive 30 minutes before the event and remain at your table until your guests have arrived.

- Provide a centerpiece and table covering for your table. Something you already own is great.
- Each table will have a sign with your name and table number. Each guest should be given a seat number that will be used for the silent and live auction.
- Once instructed, make your way to the kitchen and pick up the meals. Serve family style at your table.

Silent Auction:

Items can be placed on tables, each with a silent auction sheet and pen. If someone wants to bid they sign their name along with their table number and seat number. The silent auction begins as soon as guests arrive and during the family style meal up until the live auction begins. The silent auction usually contains smaller items, the live auction offering items of greater value. At the conclusion of the silent auction, time runners will identity the winning bids and secure payment for the items.

Meal Suggestions:

Research a typical meal that would be served in your partner in mission country. As much as possible duplicate this meal.

Doing the Most Good

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Evangeline Booth is known for the national brand strategy that The Salvation uses—"Doing the Most Good." One facet of this identifiable message is how it relates to money and our use of it.

In 1 Timothy 6:18 (NLT), Paul encourages the church at Ephesus to "use their money to do good." Ephesus was a wealthy city and the church probably had wealthy members. Paul advised Timothy to deal with any potential problems by teaching that having riches carries great responsibility. Those who have money must be generous, but they must not be arrogant because they have a lot to give. We must be careful not to put our hope in money instead of in the living God. He encouraged those in Ephesus to give generously but not to become arrogant or prideful in doing so.

The problems and difficulties in our world—locally, nationally, and internationally—prompt us today to give generously to those in need. In what ways do we give? Even if we are not financially wealthy, we can be generously creative in sharing what we do have with each other. World Service initiatives like the ones listed here, allow us to become 'rich in good works.'

About author



Jill Johnson

USA Central Territory



Service Programs

August 2023 – ARC Allies

August 1, 2023 By Danielle Moushey



Scripture:Phil. 2: 4

"Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

This is a joint program with the women from the Adult Rehabilitation Centers. Ahead of time inquire if someone in leadership at the ARC would come and speak to the women's ministries group sharing information about the women's program.

What is an ARC?

The Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center ministries in the United States provide an inresidence rehabilitation program with a focus on basic necessities. Each beneficiary (program participant) is provided with a clean and healthy living environment, good food, work therapy, leisure time activities, group and individual counseling, spiritual direction and resources to assist them to develop life skills and a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Anyone is welcome, as long as they are willing to participate in a Christian program of recovery and are willing to work as a way of funding their stay as they undergo treatment. The rehabilitation program generally runs for 6 months. All of the beneficiary's food, shelter and clothing will be provided during this period. The ARC desire is to provide a sober sanctuary for those with nowhere else to go and who want to change their lives for the better.

Learn About Your Local ARC

- 1 Where is the closest ARC?
- 2 Is there a women's program that is part of the ARC?
- 3 Does your city have Thrift Stores that support the ARC?

How Can the WM Group Help?

- Do they need volunteers?
- Do they need financial assistance?
- Is there a special event your group can assist with?
- Would they benefit from baked goods or homemade meals?
- Could you work with the beneficiaries to make cards to send to their loved ones?
- What programs does your corps have that people could join following the completion of the ARC regimen?
- Could you set up prayer partners with interested women in the ARC?
- Is there the possibility of become accountability partners with the women?

The Least of These

As Christians, we can all agree that caring for the poor and marginalized is a central principle of the gospel. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus commands us to care for "the least of these." These words are preceded by a beautiful word picture in which sheep represent those who care for others and goats represent those who do not.

Regardless of a person's status in society Jesus wants us to be compassionate and caring to everyone. This passage, however, focuses primarily on those who are seen as the least in our society. Men and women who have hit rock bottom in their addictions might be seen, as one writer expressed it, as "the least, the last, and the left out ..."

In Latin there is a phrase which might serve to inspire as we focus our hearts and minds on serving others. When we care for others, we experience *coram deo*. This Latin phrase is translated as "in the presence of God." It is the idea that Christians live in the presence, under the authority, and to the honor and glory of God.

It is our responsibility as Christians to care for others by offering life, love, and lasting hope. The beauty of this parable is in Jesus' promise that when we care for others, we are actually caring for Him because we live in *coram deo*.

(End with prayer:)

Heavenly Father,

Help us to live our lives for Your honor and glory. We need always to be mindful that we live in Your presence at all times. Thank you, Lord, because You give to us life, love, and lasting hope through Your Son, Jesus. Help us to be Your hands and feet. Help us to be humble. Grant us the wisdom to ask questions and not to assume that we know what is best. Lord, we thank You for the example Your Son gave to us while He was on this Earth. Help us to be more like Jesus each and every day. We love You. Amen.

About author



Danielle Moushey
USA Central Territory



Service Programs

September 2023 – Farm to Table

September 1, 2023 By Karen Felton



Scripture: Prov. 11:25:

"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."

Aim:

To teach the women how local, seasonal produce can be made into a delicious and nutritious meal. And to remember that all that is harvested comes from God to provide us nourishment. What is grown and harvested is also an illustration of what happens in our own souls when we cultivate the seed of faith and water it with God's word.

Meeting Ideas:

- 1 If you are in an urban/city setting, visit local fruit and vegetable markets and research what the seasonal vegetables and fruits are for your area. If you are in a rural setting find out if there is a local farmers market nearby and what each farm specializes in growing. Explore the possibility of the women picking their own produce.
- **2** Create a list of all local farms, fruit and vegetable stores, and butchers who use local farmers and give these to the women as a resource.
- **3** Have the women help prepare a meal using only local and seasonal ingredients and locally sourced meat. See links below for recipe suggestions.
- 4 Have the women create a beautiful table using rustic decorations, using burlap for runners or placemats. Let them women create centerpieces with mason jars and fall flowers and leaves.
- Have a nutritionist come in and talk about the difference between organic food and "normal" foods. Have them explain the benefits of locally sourced food, and eating what is in season. Go over the recommended daily intake of fruits, vegetables and meats.
- **6** Show a short video on Farm to Table: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1XbEpNZ5yk

Recipe Links:

Main Dishes

- https://dishingupthedirt.com/recipes/zucchini-noodle-spaghetti-farm-stand-tomato-meat-sauce/
- <u>https://dishingupthedirt.com/recipes/hearty-vegetable-ham-stew/</u>
- https://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/pumpkin-turnip-green-lasagna
- https://www.cookingclassy.com/one-pan-autumn-chicken-dinner/
- https://theforkedspoon.com/apple-cinnamon-pork-chops-with-butternut-squash/
- <u>https://wearychef.com/fall-potluck-casserole-with-turkey-and-squash/</u>

Side Dishes:

https://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/root-vegetable-mash

- https://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/fall-salad-beets-apples
- https://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/candied-roasted-squash
- https://familyspice.com/farm-to-table-roasted-baby-carrots-with-thyme/
- https://juliasalbum.com/roasted-brussels-sprouts-cinnamon-butternut-squash-pecansand-cranberries/
- https://skinnyms.com/roasted-apple-cinnamon-sweet-potatoes/

Dessert:

- https://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/apple-pecan-carrot-cake
- https://belleofthekitchen.com/apple-crisp/
- https://laurenslatest.com/pumpkin-pecan-cobbler/

Centerpiece Project Ideas

- https://www.hometalk.com/43749385/fall-mason-jar-centerpiece
- https://www.thefrugalnavywife.com/diy-burlap-autumn-jars/
- https://www.hometalk.com/23394185/diy-sunflower-centerpiece
- https://oldsaltfarm.com/easy-mason-jar-lanterns/

From Seed to Produce

Before the devotion time, pass out small packets of tomato seeds. Have women open them and hold one small seed in their hand.

Look at the seeds in your hand. Imagine that something so small can produce something that will nourish your body. This small seed can produce wonderful tomatoes that can be made into so many other things, like spaghetti sauce, ketchup, pizza sauce, or chopped up for a salad.

However, many things have to happen in order for this tiny seed in your hand to become a full-grown tomato. It has to be placed in soil that is rich. It has to be watered correctly— not too much and not too little. It has to have sunlight and warm temperatures. It needs to be kept free of parasites that might destroy it. You may even need to put a fence around it to make sure rabbits and other wildlife are kept out. It is a delicate process to take this seed and help it to become what it was intended to be. It almost feels like a miracle that something like that could happen at all. Nevertheless, it does! All you have to do is walk through the produce

aisle at any store and you can have your choice of hundreds and hundreds of tomatoes. It is proof that the process does work.

The same is true for that small seed of faith that is planted within us. It too needs to follow a process in order to grow and develop into what God intended. We need to make sure that we water it with the Word of God by spending time reading scripture. We need to let the sunlight of prayer warm the soul and give light for it to grow. We need the warmth of God's love through other people who share our faith. We need to keep it free from the parasites of sin, and put a fence of protection around it to protect it from worldly things like greed and power that would destroy it. If we let this tiny seed of faith within each of us grow, there is much fruit to bear for His kingdom.

Scripture is full of references to this process of growth. Our scripture for today tells us: "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered" (Prov. 11:25). This reminds us that when we bless others, we enrich our own faith, and when we water others, we are watered. Our faith grows in what we do for others.

Tonight as you hold the seed in your hand, I want you to think about that small seed of faith within you. I want you to imagine all the ways God has given you to protect and grow that seed. When I look around this room at all of you, I can see the bounty that God has grown already. I pray that you will continue to nurture that seed within you and watch and wait with expectation for all He will do with the harvest of your faith.

About author



Lt. Karen Felton

USA Central Territory

Worship Programs



Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11





Worship Programs

October 2022 - Di erent Colors—One Beautiful Picture

October 1, 2022 By Lt. Megan Moretz



Introduction

Fall is the time of year when we notice the colors of the leaves turning from green to brilliant reds and yellows. As we celebrate the many majestic colors of this season, let us focus on who God created us to be and how we can celebrate our differences.

Decorations

Decorate the tables in the colors of Fall. Use coordinating tablecloths, paper cups and plates, and centerpieces. Or make each place setting a different color with a neutral tablecloth.

Refreshments

Serve a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, highlighting the various colors of the food we eat. Arrange them by color. Serve fruit muffins or breads. Offer hot and cold drinks.

Meeting Outline

Opening Prayer

Praise and Worship

Suggested Music for Worship:

"10,000 Reasons" by Matt Redman*

"Who You Say I Am" by Hillsong*

Spiritual Gifts Assessment:

Lifeway.com

Umcdiscipleship.org

Brewsterchurch.com

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:38-42

Devotional Thought

Reflection Song

"Take My Life and Let it Be" by Chris Tomlin*

Closing Prayer

*Available on YouTube

Create a Collage

Depending on the age or skill level of your group, choose a craft that involves making a collage or mosaic. For example:

- 1 Cut pictures from old magazines and glue onto poster board, creating one image out of many.
- **2** Collect varied materials (buttons, feathers, paint, paper, etc.) to make a mixed media artwork.
- **3** Use ceramic tiles to make a mosaic.

Different Colors, One Beautiful Picture

One of the first things we teach children how to do is differentiate colors. You might hear a parent or a teacher say to a toddler, "The apple is red," or "The ball is blue," in an effort to teach them what red and blue mean. Knowing how to distinguish one color from another is important in daily life, but equally as important is knowing that all colors play a part in creating a beautiful picture.

When children are a little older, we might show them a rainbow and have them try to name the colors they see. A rainbow captures our attention because it contains many colors. Think about what a rainbow would be like if it were only orange, or only purple, or only green. It wouldn't be a rainbow at all. Just like a rainbow needs all the colors to be what God intended it to be, the kingdom of God needs all of us to work together and be who God created us to be. Each one of us is made in God's image. We might have different features or characteristics, but we are all reflections of the same Creator. That is why the rainbow is such a valuable image for us today. It teaches us that all colors contribute to making the perfect picture.

In the story of Mary and Martha, the women showed us their colors. Although they were sisters, Mary and Martha were individuals who responded to Jesus differently. The gospel of Luke tells us that Martha, not Mary, opened her home to Jesus. As the elder sister, Martha was the matron of the house. She welcomed Jesus and his traveling disciples into her home and so proved herself to be a good hostess. But as soon as she opened her door, Martha became distracted with the amount of work to do. After all, these were hungry and tired men who needed a meal and place to rest. It was Martha who got to work while Mary stopped and listened.

The scripture says that Mary "sat at the Lord's feet," which is where a disciple would sit to learn from the teacher. It was quite a provocative act, since women weren't generally allowed to be students in first century Palestine. Martha would have expected Mary to help with the housework, not to sit down with the men. When her expectations weren't met, this resulted in some frustration. Now we see the differences between the two women clearly. Martha complained that she wasn't getting any help from her sister, but Mary was making clear her intentions to follow Jesus. Martha believed her sister was being lazy, but Mary realized that

what Jesus had to say was important. Martha only thought about what she could offer, but Mary put herself in a position of humility to receive from the Lord. Martha opened her home to Jesus, but Mary opened her whole heart. Both are important, but to paraphrase Jesus, only one is necessary.

Today we celebrate our differences, our strengths, and even our weaknesses. Some of us, like Martha, might have the gift of hospitality. Others might have the gift of teaching, or service, or administration. All of these are important gifts that the church needs, each one like a different color of the rainbow. But it doesn't matter what gifts or abilities we have if we don't give our hearts to Jesus. He is the One who brings us together, with all our differences, to make a beautiful picture. Like a painter uses his paint to create a masterpiece, will you allow God to use your talents and abilities for His glory? If you do, you'll find yourself a part of God's beautiful picture.

Additional Resources

<u>We're Different, We're the Same</u> by Bobbi Jane Kates. Illustrated by Joe Mathieu. 1992. Random House Publishing. Available from Amazon.

Elmo and his Sesame Street friends help teach toddlers and the adults in their lives that everyone is the same on the inside, and it's our differences that make this wonderful world, which is home to us all, an interesting—and special—place. This enduring, colorful, and charmingly illustrated book offers an easy, enjoyable way to learn about differences—and what truly matters.

About author



Lt. Megan Moretz
USA Eastern Territory



Worship Programs

November 2022 - A Grateful Heart Seeks Connection

November 1, 2022 By Major Debra Laro



Scripture: Luke 19:1-9 (NIV)

Decorations

Keep the decorations simple. Use Fall colored tablecloths, colored leaves, signs and artwork about being grateful.

Refreshments

Serve coffee, tea, warm cider, cookies or apple cider donuts.

Craft: Prayer Journals

Keeping a prayer journal helps us to focus on our prayers. The idea for this prayer journal is to cultivate a life of gratitude as we write down and pray for the people and things for which we are grateful. We can add people we have meaningful connections with, thanking God for them through focused prayer.

Items Needed: Small notebooks (one for each person), markers and/or colored pencils, stickers and other decorative items. Printed copy of the free printable pictures from https://brendid.com/start-each-day-with-a-grateful-heart/.

Give each participant a notebook. Ahead of time, have copies of the picture pre-printed and cut so that it fits the cover of the notebook. Have participants glue the picture on their notebooks and personalize their journals using the items provided. Once they have designed their notebooks, allow time for everyone to write something in their journals as a starting point. Guide them to include what makes them grateful. Ask what are they grateful for today in their own lives? What are they grateful for in their corps community? What are they grateful for in the community at large? Have handouts with several scripture verses that they can write on different pages. An example of some verses can be found at https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-community/.

How Connected are You?

True connections take time, commitment and courage. That means making relationships a priority. While social media can make it seem bonding with others is as easy as clicking a "like" button, we are called to go deeper with each other. There are downfalls that come with the easy connections made through social media. Have you ever read something that a friend posted and found yourself in disbelief at what your friend said? There is an issue with reading something that someone shares. We cannot read inflection. We can read it one way, but the writer may have meant something different all together.

Our seasons of life and circumstances will impact our capacity for connection, but we can all pause and ask, "What can I do to truly connect with the people around me?" Even a little bit of time or encouragement can make a big difference.

We live in a fallen world, and we are fallen people. That means that inevitably conflicts will come, personalities will clash and disappointments will happen. When they do, how do you handle it? Do you face it head on? Do you run away or ignore it? Do you complain about it to others? Being intertwined means choosing to stay even when it is hard.

Humans are social beings and we crave connection with others. Sometimes we get so caught up in ourselves to the point that connections with others falter or disappear completely. When we turn to God for help, our hearts are changed and gratefully these connections can be restored. We stop focusing so much on ourselves and we can once again reach out to others. Having these connections, especially with other believers, helps us grow in our relationship with Christ.

Zacchaeus was seeking meaningful connections. Somehow he knew Jesus had the answer, so he overcame challenges (a short man in a crowd) to make eye contact with Jesus. Recognizing the desire of Zacchaeus' heart, Jesus stopped, looked right at him and invited Himself to Zacchaeus' house for a meal. That encounter changed Zacchaeus' heart forever. He not only connected with Jesus, but out of that new relationships changed his priorities in life from money to people, and he started making real connections with his community. Evidence of his transformed heart was his desire to begin building relationships with those in his community, amending the harm done to others.

Zacchaeus was thankful that Jesus did not look past him as others had done. His heart was grateful and that moved him into action. When our hearts become grateful, our entire world changes. Are you connecting with your community?

Prayer Chorus: Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart.

Challenge: Encourage each participant to reflect on how they can make better connections with others in the community and challenge them to do it.

Resources

Creative Ways to Improve Your Prayer Life

HOW TO CREATE A PRAYER JOURNAL

About author



Major Debra Laro

USA Eastern Territory



Worship Programs

December 2022 - Soul Connections

December 1, 2022 By Major Candy Fritsch



Theme

Building each other up.

Scripture Reference and Application

Luke 1:39–56 NIV. Mary and Elizabeth encouraged each other and built each other's faith as they both praised the Savior. We too need those kinds of relationships in our life.

Ugly Christmas Sweaters

Invite the women to come in their ugly Christmas sweaters. Award prizes in numerous categories: ugliest, most original, one with the most lights, funniest, craziest. You can purchase ugly sweater items including award ribbons from www.funexpress.com.

Photo

Take a picture of the entire group that can be printed during the program. If this is difficult, have them printed for distribution the following week. Individual pictures could also be taken.

Craft

Give each of the women a frame to decorate for the group picture. Provide various craft items to use: pens, stickers, jewels, friendship words.

Ice Breakers

Bounce the Ball

The first woman bounces the ball to another woman, and as she does, she answers the question. That woman passes the ball to the next woman and answers the same question. Some suggested questions:

- 1 Something you do not know about me is ...
- 2 My most embarrassing moment was when ...
- **3** If I could be anything or anyone in the world, I would be ...
- 4 I'm afraid of ...
- 5 If I could be granted one wish, it would be ...

Questions to Think About

Am I the kind of friend someone can count on?

Am I trustworthy?

Do I have someone in my life who I connect with? If not, how can I develop this type of friendship?

Is God placing a woman on my heart with whom I can connect?

Soul Connections for Christmas

Read Luke 1:39-56 NIV.

All women need connection. The story is told about a group of village women who met down by the river to wash their clothes. When everyone got a washing machine, there was no longer a need to go to the river, and they stopped meeting together. Suddenly, depression spiked among the villagers. It wasn't about getting their wash done that meant so much to the women, it was about what happened during their time together doing their washing.

We all desire to have one or two women in our lives with whom we can connect. We want someone who accepts us for who we are, wants to be with us, and grows with us. In our Bible passage, Luke talks about that kind of relationship. It is a story of two women who knew each other's struggles, who encouraged each other, prayed for each other and celebrated with one another. We know from scripture that Elizabeth was older, and Mary was only a teenager. We are not told what transpired that nurtured their strong connection, but it is evident from the passage that they loved each other.

In Luke chapter one, we read that the angel Gabriel visited Zechariah and shared with him that God heard his prayers and was about to answer them. It does not say if he was praying for a son since his wife Elizabeth was now very old or for the coming Messiah. What we do know is that God heard his prayer and answered. Like most of us, when it seems impossible, we question and doubt. Because of that doubt, Zechariah was unable to speak until the baby was born. It must have been a shock to Elizabeth when her husband came home mute and tried to explain she would be having a baby. I am sure many times during her marriage, especially the early years, she cried, prayed, and begged God for a son, yet she remained barren. How exciting, scary, and foreign this must have been to her at her age.

Six months later, that same angel appeared to Mary and told her she was going to have a baby who would be the Messiah. Imagine the puzzled look on her face since she was not married and was a virgin. It is evident Mary believed because when she heard Elizabeth was six months pregnant, she went to see her. We are not sure when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she became pregnant. Was it at the instant Gabriel spoke those words? It could have been during her journey to see her cousin. Was it when the baby leaped in Elizabeth's stomach? No one knows, but we know it happened.

What a sight this must have been when Mary entered the room to celebrate an answered prayer. They must have prayed about this together for years, and now the prayer was answered. It was a miracle. I love the fact that somehow Elizabeth knew Mary would have a baby as well, and that he would be a special baby. The scripture does not say that Gabriel appeared to Elizabeth and told her about Mary being pregnant. I imagine that when her baby leaped as he did, it was the Holy Spirit revealing that truth to her. This is a beautiful picture of two women's souls connecting in an intimate moment. Elizabeth probably mentored Mary in

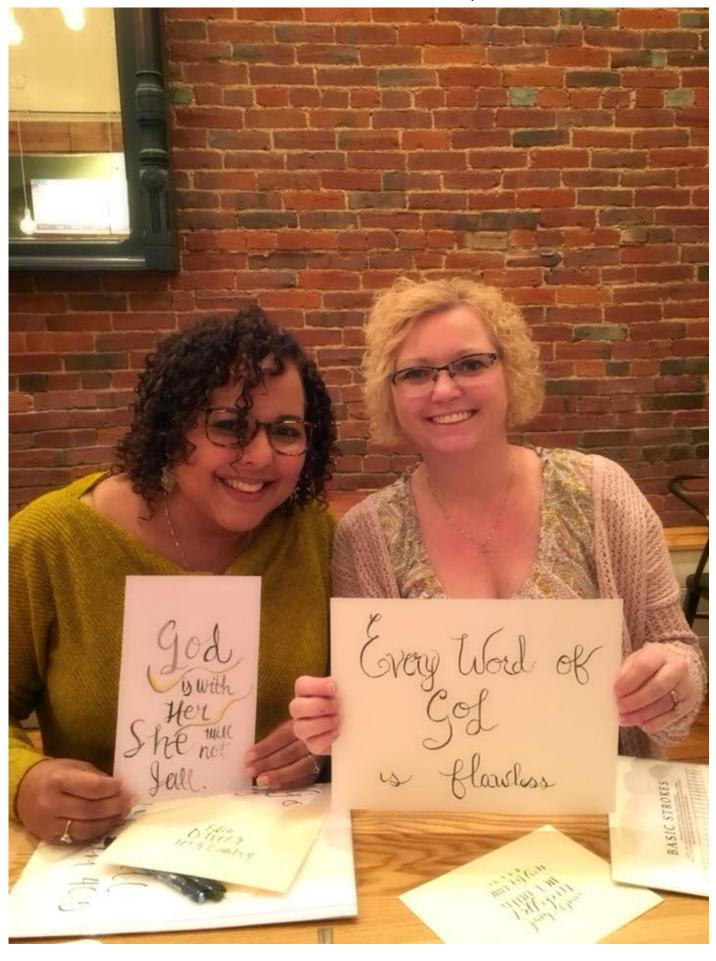
her younger years and a bond developed between them. Their souls connected as they listened to each other, shared in their faith, and prayed together.

Life is hard. We have good times, bad times, ugly moments, beautiful moments, moments of celebration and disappointment. When we are facing these on our own, it can become unbearable, depressing, and lonely. God is always with us, and He walks in life with us, but there is something about a gentle human touch that warms the soul. Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." We need each other. We need that one person to reach out to when we receive good, bad, exciting, or devastating news—someone with whom we can share God's goodness. If you do not have an Elizabeth or Mary in your life, I encourage you to step out in faith and find that person. God will provide her. You need to pray, listen, and respond as the Spirit leads.

Prayer: Lord, we know you are a friend who sticks closer than a brother, and we thank You for being our friend. If we choose to allow them, You have provided people to walk this journey with us. Your Word tells us to love one another and encourage each other. Help us to do better at being that kind of friend.

Thank you for examples of friendship in the scriptures. Help us to love like Johnathan loved David. Help us be a faithful daughter-in-law like Ruth was to Naomi. Help us to support our friends in their moments of weakness as Aaron did for Moses, and to celebrate with each other as Mary did with Elizabeth.

Some are struggling with relationships. Lord, please send someone their way to love and walk with them. Some find trust difficult because of a broken promise or relationship. Father, heal those wounds. Thank you for reminding us how important it is to connect with others through your Word. May it be so for each one of us. Amen.



About author



Major Candy Fritsch
USA Eastern Territory



January 2023 - The New Road Ahead

January 1, 2023 By Captain Allison Bethel



Decorations

Use brightly colored tablecloths. Sprinkle confetti on the tables and use signs indicating "Happy New Year" as centerpieces. Copy the phrases from "Who I Am in Christ" from the following website and post on the wall. https://equippinggodlywomen.com/faith/who-i-am-in-christ/

Reflection Activity 1: My Identity in Christ Mirrors

Print and handout a copy of the statements from the website "Who I Am In Christ." Supply each woman with a small mirror. Instruct them to carefully read through the handout and think about what those phrases mean in their life. Ask them to pick out the words or phrases that they needed to hear. Write those words or phrases on the mirror. Instruct them to take their mirror home and put it in a place where they will see it daily. As they look in the mirror, it will remind them of who they are in Christ.

Reflection Activity 2: My Identity in Christ Scripture Writing Plan

Ahead of time, print and give each woman the "Who I Am In Christ Scripture Writing Plan." It is available at: http://www.swtblessings.com/search?q=Who+I+am+in+Christ. Supply each woman with a journal. This could simply be a notebook from the 99-cent store. On the handout, you will find one scripture passage for each day of the month. Each passage deals with our identity in Christ. Read and write out Day 1 in your journals while together. For the rest of the month, read and write out the verses listed each day. Pay attention to who God says you are in His word.

Who God Says I Am

Have you ever tried to move forward while looking backward? Can you imagine trying to drive while focusing solely on the rearview mirror? It wouldn't work. You would end up crashing into something. Yet this is what we often do with our lives. God has forgiven us, cleansed us and made us each into a new creation. He has put us each on a new path and given us a fresh purpose, but when we should be moving forward, often we are stuck in the past.

It doesn't help that we often have people in our lives who bring up the past. They say things like: "Don't trust her. She's an addict." Or, "Watch out for her. She has a bad reputation." Some of us have "friends" who throw our newfound faith in our faces. Their favorite phrase is, "I thought you were a Christian."

I'm sure Mary Magdalene had a lot of such people in her life. We don't know a lot about Mary Magdalene except that Jesus cast seven demons from her (Luke 8:2). I imagine people would walk by her and whisper under their breath, "She's the one who was full of demons." Perhaps mothers would grasp their children's hands a little tighter or tell their daughters, "Don't be like her."

But that is not how God saw Mary Magdalene. When we look through the pages of the Gospels, we see that God had other plans and purposes for Mary. After her encounter with Jesus, she was a changed woman. Here is what we learn about Mary Magdalene from Scripture:

1 She was one of the women who travelled around Galilee with Jesus supporting His ministry financially (Luke 8:2-3).

- 2 She was one of the women at Jesus' crucifixion who came to take care of His needs (Matt. 27:55-56).
- 3 She was at the tomb looking on when Jesus was buried (Matt. 27:61).
- 4 She was one of the women who went to the tomb early on the first day of the week to anoint Jesus' body with spices (Mark 16:1).
- **5** We also learn from Mark 16:9 that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first after His resurrection, and she was given the task of telling the disciples that Jesus was alive.

Think about that: Mary Magdalene went from being demon possessed to being divinely purposed. If you are a follower of Jesus, that is your story too. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (NLV). The next time someone tries to drag you down and remind you of who you used to be, or the next time you find yourself stuck staring in the rearview mirror of life, remind yourself who God says you are right now.

About author



Captain Allison Bethel
USA Eastern Territory



February 2023 - Love Beyond Gender

February 1, 2023 By Major Janet Gonzalez



Introduction

Priscilla and Aquila are among the special couples we read about in the Bible. They shared their love for each other and for God by being equally involved in ministry. Their faith in Jesus and passion for souls allowed them to work together, not only making tents but also breaking barriers of gender and culture for the expansion of God's kingdom as they traveled with Paul

to Ephesus. We can take courage from their example so that we too overcome our personal barriers to love all fully as they did in Jesus' name.

Decoration

Set up a tent as a focal point for this program. Use the inside as a meeting place with lights and cushions for participants to engage in the group activity.

Tent Love Letters

Letters have become a lost art. Emails, texts, Facetime and Zoom have become our methods of communication, affecting the way we connect with others and share thoughts, feelings and matters of the heart. Personal letters can be meaningful as we intentionally share with the recipient. Following Paul, Priscilla and Aquila's example of love, encourage participants to write two personal tent love letters. They can enter the tent set up for this program to write their love correspondence there or enter the tent later to spend some time of reflection and rededication to loving God and loving others wholeheartedly.

Supplies needed include stationery and envelopes, colored pens, Bibles and stickers. The two suggested love letters are:

- 1 Loving correspondence to someone they haven't seen in a long time, whether a friend or a relative. In the letter they should acknowledge memories shared with the recipient highlighting past fellowship together and confessing anything that may have contributed to their distancing. They should also thank them for who they are and what they mean to the participant.
- 2 A love letter to Jesus remembering God's mercies and acknowledging the times when God has shown His faithfulness. They should thank Him for what those memories mean and how they have helped them grow in faith. They can rededicate their love relationship with Jesus, confessing any barrier that needs to be overcome and respond to God's invitation to love beyond their comfort zones.

God's Love

Today's society is fragmented into many racial, ethnic and political clusters. But God's love transcends all barriers. Once we know God's love, we need to share it with everyone. Priscilla and Aquila were a missionary married couple who used their love for each other and for God. They used their talents and resources to help reach the world for Christ. They were a dynamic duo actively involved in ministry together breaking geographical borders and gender roles.

As a woman in the first century, Priscilla was influential in the early church because of her courage and determination. The fact her name appears first when referring to the couple means she had a leading role. The use of her nickname "Prisca" (diminutive for Priscilla) when

referring to her suggests she had a friendly and approachable personality. She went beyond her gender to become a messenger of the good news.

In today's scripture, Paul addresses both Priscilla and Aquila as his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus." Paul took the time to write a note of gratitude to them for all they had done to help him and many others, often risking their own lives. When the couple originally met Paul in Corinth (Acts 18), they had already left their home in Italy after the Emperor Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Rather than being protective of what they had in a foreign land, Priscilla and Aquila showed hospitality to Paul. They welcomed him into their home and business of tent making. The three of them became close friends as they shared the same trade, travels, adversities and joys in their common passion of sharing the gospel of Christ wherever they went and with those they encountered. Evidence of this was the couple's willingness to remain in Ephesus to tutor Apollos who later continued the work initiated by Paul in Corinth.

The ministry of Priscilla and Aquila was fruitful because of their selfless approach for the good of the kingdom. Their commitment was rooted in their deep love for Christ. That same commitment is expected of us today. Are we selflessly living for God and loving all in His name?

Love is a decision. Think of those from backgrounds different than yours whether they live nearby or are part of the LGBTQ community. Are you reaching out to them? Examine the transparency of your love for God in relation to others in society. Are there any barriers in your heart to love all peoples? Are there any stereotypes or prejudices you need to overcome in order to love fully as a witness for Christ? Do you care for all individuals and ethnicities around you? Do you invest time and resources in missionary work? Is God calling you to "leave your home" for the good of the kingdom as Priscilla and Aquila did? Now more than ever, we believers are to make a difference in this fragmented society, loving beyond the borders of our genders and cultures to reach the world for Christ before His return.

Closing Prayer

After the group activity, encourage participants to mail their first letter and to keep their letter to Jesus in a place where they can revisit it often to assess their diligence in the commitments made. Then gather in a circle and lead this closing prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for your unfailing love for each and all of us. Help us to keep You at the center of our lives, our marriages, our decisions and priorities so that our shared faith in You becomes the driving force in all we do. Make us more like Christ using all we are and have for Your glory. Stir our hearts with Your love to reach out to those who don't know Your love, as Priscilla and Aquila did in the early church. Equip us to move beyond the borders of our gender and culture to attract everyone and anyone we encounter to You Lord with strings of Your holy love. Amen.



March 2023 - Don't Give Up

March 1, 2023 By Major Holly Daniels



Prayer Stations

Set up each station using separate tables. Cover tables with cloths. Place framed printout of the prayer theme, scripture and instructions on each table. You may need to use more than one frame per table. You can purchase inexpensive frames from the Dollar Tree.

Station One: Pray for Victims of Injustice

"And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you; He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7, 8 NIV)

Materials Needed:

Justice scale (can be purchased inexpensively from Amazon), large rocks and permanent markers. Ahead of time, separate large rocks into two groups. Write on one set of rocks various forms of injustice. Keep the other set of rocks plain, as they will be written on by the women. Place the injustice rocks on one side of the scale (yes, the scale will tip.) Place the plain rocks on the table.

Instructions:

The rocks on the scale represent various forms of injustice in our world today. Injustice is anything that strips God's beloved creation of dignity, respectability and hope. It is the denial of basic human rights and needs. Notice how these injustice rocks tip the scale. Injustice is a heavy burden that tips the scale of humanity causing an imbalance of power.

Write a keyword as you pray for victims and survivors of injustice on one of the blank rocks. Place your rock on the opposite side of the scale and realize that our prayers make a difference in the lives of those who have been oppressed. Be assured that as God hears our prayers, He begins to tip the scale of justice and brings favor to those whom He loves. Some examples of keywords: Victims, Survivors, Healing, Justice, Salvation, Families, Youth, Resources, Protection, Deliverance, Freedom.

Station Two: Pray for Violators of Justice

"Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Prov. 14:31 NIV).

Materials Needed:

Newspapers or Internet article printouts pertaining to issues of injustice. Have markers, highlighters, bowl with individual packages of Sour Patch Kids candy.

Instructions:

Choose an article that reports on any injustice. If the article makes mention of a specific person or system that has caused some form of injustice, pray for them. As you eat the Sour Patch Kids candy, consider that our initial reaction to injustice and its accomplices is one of shock and sadness. It simply leaves a sour taste in our mouths. As the initial shock wears off, ask God to help you pray for those who knowingly or unknowingly caused injustice to those around them. This is probably the hardest part of seeking justice ... praying for our enemies.

Consider that the candies represent those who violate justice. Pray for their conviction of sin, interceding for them as people whom God loves. Jesus tells us to pray for those who persecute you/others (Matthew 5:44b). Write out a brief prayer for the "violator of injustice" on or next to the article. What to pray for: conviction of heart, broken family, salvation, justice, repentance.

Station Three: Pray for Victory over Injustice.

"Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17).

Materials Needed:

Pre–addressed note cards to various local organizations, community leaders and law enforcement, pens.

Instructions:

Pray for those who are doing the work of social justice. It requires the commitment of many who would stand firmly in the gap for victims of injustice. Your community is made up of many organizations and government branches that work towards bringing hope to victims and survivors. It is important that we seek the power of God on their behalf for wisdom, provision and the prevailing of justice. Just as Jesus intercedes for us to the Father, we too are called upon to intercede for those who will do justice's bidding. Take time to write out a prayer to local organizations in your community. Your Corps Officer will mail them. What to pray for: Community Organizations, Law Enforcement, Local Political Leader, World Leaders, Community Leaders, Volunteers, Law makers/laws and policies, Justice.

Station Four: Pray for a Voice Against Injustice. What Can I Do?

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV).

Materials Needed:

The "I'll Fight" video from https://youtu.be/FYjjXw03X50 (by The Salvation Army Australia), basket with LED tea lights, markers, various pictures of injustice as mentioned in "I'll Fight." If unable to play video, have a framed copy of "I'll Fight" on the table.

2nd optional video: "I'll Fight" by Jennifer Hudson from the motion picture "RBG" https://youtu.be/ho0aVZHQnNM

Instructions:

Watch the video (or read the words) "I'll Fight." Fighting the war on injustice has been the hallmark and rallying cry of The Salvation Army since the beginning. If there has ever been a

time when we need the light of God taken into the darkness, it's now. On the table there are LED tea lights. Being a voice that stands against injustice means that you are willing to go into the darkness with the liberating light of God and His truth.

Prayerfully ask God to grant you courage to speak up and to take action when you witness injustice. Choose a tea light, write your name on it, and turn it on as a symbol of your commitment to stand against the darkness of injustice. Leave your light on the table to be joined with others making the same commitment. After the program, take the light with you as a reminder. What to pray for: Courage, Discernment, Opportunities, Wisdom, Humility, one another, resources, God's leading, and to trust in God with endurance and persistence.

Praying with Persistence in Pursuing Justice

Several years ago, the word PUSH became a well-known acronym to encourage believers to "Pray Until Something Happens." While the acronym is new, the sentiment behind it is not. I imagine that if Jesus was telling the disciples the parable of the persistent widow today, He could have given each of them one a fabric PUSH bracelet. (These are available at some Bible bookstores.) But instead of using a fancy acronym, He simply summed up the truth behind it through this story.

Read Luke 18:1-8.

It's important to note that Jesus was inclined to share parables of people whose lives appeared to have every odd stacked against them. We know enough about this woman to know that life did not deal her the best hand. She faced several challenges: she was a woman, a widow, and financially destitute. Her adversaries were probably her creditors coming after her to collect on a debt. If she had sons, they would be taken from her in order to become slaves as payment of her debt. This would only add to her suffering because they would not be able to work to support her financially. To make matters worse, the key to her freedom was in the hands of a corrupt judge who had no fear of God or care for man.

Though things were bleak in this widow's life, there appeared to remain a glimmer of hope that woke her up every morning and set her on the path of seeking justice. The Bible tells us that for some time the widow's requests were denied. But even in her fragile and powerless state she was an example of strong persistent faith. Instead of losing hope or becoming faint of heart with each rejection, she managed to persist in her request. It was her faith that would not allow her to give up. It was her faith that caused her to believe that the judge's "no" that day could very well be a "yes" the next day. Perhaps the faith that was stirred up in her caused her to see justice coming up over the horizon. And as they say: "persistence pays off." The corrupt judge soon grew tired of the widow's persistence to the point that it wore down his resistance. Did you catch that? Her persistence wore down his resistance! And he finally granted her justice. If she didn't "PUSH" perhaps she may have never known the experience of justice.

Jesus points out to the disciples that if the corrupt judge could grant justice, wouldn't God who isn't corrupt bring about justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night? Even Paul describes God as a loving Father who lovingly gives good gifts to those who ask Him (Matt. 7:11).

God desires that we always seek Him especially in times of great need. Perhaps you feel that the odds are stacked against you or even that justice is out of reach. Maybe like the persistent widow, you have experienced a delay in your desire for justice. But as we are reminded to not give up. Galatians 6:9 says we are not to grow weary in well doing (seeking justice, answers to prayer), for in His time we will receive the blessings God has for us, if "we faint not." So, PUSH, sisters! Don't give up!

About author



Major Holly Daniels
USA Eastern Territory



April 2023 – Mercy Beyond Borders

April 1, 2023 By Lt. Michelle Drigo



Introduction

God provides for us in ways that go beyond our expectations. When we put Him first, we realize that no matter what situations we face, we will never lack the necessities in life, for God knows just what we need. He is faithful and will provide. If we remain obedient like Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, God will reveal His power and providence in our lives. His mercy

goes beyond the borders we create and shows Himself the Mighty One who never runs out of resources to meet our needs.

Refreshments

Prior to the meeting, set up a table on the side with simply decorated mason jars filled with water and have some warm sliced bread displayed on a serving tray. If possible, make some homemade bread (see recipe links included).

Virtual Meeting Set Up

If you are conducting a virtual meeting, be sure to let participants know before the meeting what ingredients they will need for the recipe (don't share what you will be making even though some may already figure it out on their own).

Homemade bread recipes:

- https://www.thespruceeats.com/super-easy-bread-for-beginners-428108
- https://lilluna.com/basic-homemade-bread-recipe/
- Or use any other recipes that you are familiar with or would like to share.

After the introduction and prayer, share the directions for the recipe while completing each step together as a group. Once finished preparing, place the dough into the oven to bake. While it is baking, continue the program with the discussion and devotional section.

In-Person Meeting Set Up

For an in-person meeting, set up a circle of tables with chairs and a center table. On the center table, include the items below.

- a Bible (opened to the scripture passage)
- a white cloth
- a few sticks
- a small loaf of bread
- a mason jar ¾ filled with flour
- another jar/jug ¼ filled with olive oil.

Opening Song

"Count Your Blessings:" The Salvation Army Song Book #909

Opening Prayer: (say the first half of the Lord's prayer and insert the poem below that ties into devotional):

11

Our Father who art in Heaven,

Hallowed be thy name,

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,

On Earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

(Insert)

Thank you, Lord, for your grace and mercy. Thank you, Lord for your love.

Thank you, Lord, for going before us and watching us from above.

Help us to be obedient to your Word and to allow You to be our guide

For you know just what we need, and you never fail to provide.

Discussion

- 1 What motivates you to give to others?
- **2** When have you found yourself reluctant to give because you were afraid you wouldn't have enough? Explain.
- **3** If you've ever given selflessly in times of uncertainty, how has God revealed Himself to you in those situations?
- 4 How can you bless others through your obedience to God?
- 5 Share a moment when God has provided for you beyond your expectations.

Obedience

Read 1 Kings 17:7–16.

At the beginning of 1 Kings, we see how God spoke to Elijah and how in obedience to His word, Elijah did exactly as God instructed. We see that God showed His everlasting faithfulness in providing for Elijah.

After the brook dried up, it would have been easy for Elijah to question, "What now Lord?" God had provided for him just as He said He would, but the supply had seemingly run out. Well, that's just when God shows up. He already had a plan in place and prepared the way for Elijah. "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food" (v. 9). Once again, God spoke to Elijah. He told him exactly where to go and told him whom he would meet. In obedience, Elijah did just as God commanded.

When the widow met Elijah, she was gathering a few sticks to prepare the very last meal for her and her son. Elijah told her to make a small loaf of bread for him first with the little that she had and then make something for herself and her son. Would she do what Elijah asked? With barely anything to eat and drink, it must have been a difficult decision for the widow to make.

At first she hesitated because she only had enough food for herself and her son, but she acted in faith and was obedient. She set aside her personal desires and put God first by obeying His Word spoken to her through Elijah. Through her act of faith, God showed His faithfulness and provided. "There was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry" (vs. 15-16). Through Elijah's act of faith, God showed His faithfulness and provided for Him as well. All through the drought, Elijah lacked nothing. He had all he needed (read vs. 5-6).

There will be times in life when our faith will be tested. In fear we may be hesitant to act out in faith, but God's promises are true. If He leads us to it, He will see us through it. We just need to be obedient to His Word and walk in faith knowing that He has already gone before us and has put everything in place for us.

God used ravens (unclean birds) and a widow (a poor Gentile woman from a foreign land) to supply Elijah with food. There is no limit as to whom or what God will use to carry out His purposes. God's mercies reach all cultures and His mercy goes beyond borders. When we put Him first, He reveals Himself in ways that go beyond what we could ever imagine. He surpasses our expectations through miracles both big and small. Like the widow and Elijah, may we also step out in faith, and through obedience, experience God's power, His love, His grace and His mercy.

When those moments of fear or doubt arise, may we remember that God will provide. May our eyes be opened to see that His promises are true and that He has a plan for you and me.

Closing

For in-person gatherings, take this time to share the warm bread and water. While feasting on this light snack, use the time to go around the circle and share moments when God provided your necessities (your "daily bread").

For virtual meetings, after the discussion and devotional, have the women check on their bread. It should be finished or almost finished. Once their homemade bread is finished, they can enjoy it and share how God has provided for their necessities, their "daily bread." If the bread isn't finished yet, you can continue with this moment of sharing and then enjoy your bread after everyone has shared.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help us to be women of faith despite the challenges we face. Help us to be obedient to your Word and sensitive to Your voice. Give us the strength and assurance to step out in faith knowing that You will provide our every need. When situations cause us to doubt, may Your faithfulness remind us that You already have everything planned out. May we be reminded that You are not a God of limitations but that Your mercy is limitless and goes beyond what we could ever expect or imagine.

In closing, invite the women to recite the poem:

11

Thank You, Lord for Your grace and mercy. Thank You, Lord for Your love.

Thank you, Lord for going before us and watching us from above.

Help us to be obedient to Your Word and may You always be our guide.

For You know just what we need, and You never fail to provide.

In Jesus' name. Amen.



May 2023 – Moms are Gifted Leaders

May 1, 2023 By Major Sherry Pelletier



Opening Prayer

Ice Breaker Activity: Two Truths and a Lie

This ice breaker helps the group to open up in conversation and get to know each other better. Each woman takes a turn to tell two facts about herself and one lie. This could be

where she is gifted or the most adventurous thing she has done. The group tries to guess which is fact and which is the lie. This game builds great conversation and reveals facts about one another that are often unknown to the group. This is good for a multigenerational group in particular, and participation does not depend on mobility.

Let's Share Our Gifts with Others

Show a video clip of one of the projects highlighting women working together for hope in their community. Share how "Others" is enabling women to help their communities. Purchase a small gift from the Others catalog as a token of appreciation for each woman. These can be found at www.tradeforhope.com.

Your group could also share their gifts with your community. Invite each woman to bring a personal care item, or baked good to give to those coming for assistance at the corps. Or they can be given out at the food pantry, shelter, if your corps has this ministry, or the ARC in your area. Another suggestion is to connect with a ministry supporting women in your community, like a women's shelter, homeless support services, domestic violence shelter, or young mother's program.

I Am Woman

Read Judges 4:4-10.

In this passage we see that Deborah is one of the first women, if not the first woman to be in political leadership over the nation of Israel. Deborah was a judge, presiding over the matters of Israel and was also a prophetess.

In order for Deborah to function as judge and prophetess she had to have been given wisdom from the Holy Spirit and was divinely anointed by God. She must have been supremely gifted and applied herself to the study of God's word and prayer and thus was empowered to speak on God's behalf. Her credibility suggests that she was also a woman of influence at home to those close to her heart.

As a prophetess Deborah ranks on the same level as any of the Old Testament prophets. We can infer from the text she was called by God, but we can also see that she was aware that she faced a different litmus test as woman. She was full of faith and was an encourager. She summoned Barak and commanded him to take ten thousand men, trusting God would enable him to defeat Sisera and his army.

Barak wanted the prophetess to go with him. Deborah encouraged him by assuring she would go. But here is the problem. Deborah answers Barak: "Certainly I will go with you, but because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." Here we see that Deborah, speaking prophetically, both predicts what is going to happen at the end of the story where Jael, the wife of Heber, kills Sisera and addresses the sociological stigma for Barak that a woman will get the glory.

Perhaps this predictable caution or lack of faith on Barak's part is lamentable for him, but the consequence to a modern reader is indicative of gender values. This makes Deborah all the more heroic, not just as a divinely anointed leader but as the first woman leader of the Israelite nation.

We in The Salvation Army, also have a rich heritage of women leaders anointed by God with deep faith and conviction, with brilliant minds leading in challenging times, beginning with the co–founder of The Salvation Army, Catherine Booth. This story of Deborah reminds us of the inclusion of women in the work of the Lord. It encourages us to stay close to the Lord by studying scripture, caring for those around us, speaking truth in a way of justice, and doing what is right.

You may think your life is marked by nothing extraordinary, that your accomplishments pale compared to Deborah's. Often, the reality of our leadership and character takes place in the context of our daily lives as we live out our relationships and responsibilities. As moms, we are in a position of influence to so many around us from our children and spouses to our extended families, communities and workplaces. Each of us has been gifted in some way. Use your gifts for God's glory to influence those around you positively, especially in their relationship with God. Your best gift to the world is your witness of His love and faithfulness and your commitment to what is right. As it was true for Deborah, so it is for you.



June 2023 – Justice Ambassadors

June 1, 2023 By Major Susan Wood Wood



Scripture: Zechariah 7:8-10

Set Up Worship Centers

These can be set up in four different rooms or adapted into one space with four tables for the activities. Place a white tablecloth over each table with the items specified for each activity.

Play music of your choice as women go from one table to the other.

Table 1: Care for the Poor

Place an empty basket on the table. Ahead of time, ask the women to bring canned goods to be placed in the basket. These items will be added to the food pantry. Access Pinterest for ideas for prayers for the poor and place these on the table in addition to the basket.

Table 2: Care for the Homeless

Lay out supplies for making blessing bags for the homeless. As women are packing these, ask them to pray for the homeless in your community. Here's a link with ideas:

https://www.neathousesweethome.com/a-blessing-bag-for-the-homeless/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=social-pug

Table 3: Care for the Refugees

On the table place snacks representative of countries where there is a large refugee population. This could be your refreshment table for the program. Have the women taste the snacks and pray for those countries/refugees. Place a prayer card with information regarding the countries of the refugees.

Table 4: Care for those Trafficked

Have supplies for making bags with personal care products for those being trafficked. Place focused prayer cards for victims of human trafficking and programs assisting them, including resources available and sites where women can donate to assist The Salvation Army programs ministering to this population. Below is the website for The Salvation Army International Social Justice Commission that has many other ideas of how we can become Justice Ambassadors.

https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/think

Be An Ambassador

An ambassador is an authorized representative or messenger. If we are followers of Christ, we are called to be ambassadors for Him. We are Christ's representatives to the world. Zechariah 7:8–10 speaks of what we are to do to be ambassadors for justice: "And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

As Justice Ambassadors, we are to administer true justice. Sometimes the word "justice" gets confusing. Justice isn't about legalism. It's about doing what it right, not in our eyes, but in the eyes of the Lord. Justice is relational. Justice isn't so much about rules and regulations, and it's

not about getting even with someone for something done to us. Justice is about a person or people's dignity, how they flourish in this world, and about the sacredness of life in all aspects of living.

The justice spoken in this scripture isn't about what happens in a courtroom, but what is in our hearts. The source of this justice is God's perfect righteousness, perfect justice, and His radical love. This is how we are called to live our lives. Zechariah also echoes the words of Malachi 6: 8. "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

As Justice Ambassadors, we are called to action. We are, as the words in Zechariah says, to show mercy, not just to speak of mercy. Sometimes showing mercy is not an easy thing to do. And the only way that we can do this is through the words from Malachi 6:8: "To walk humbly with your God." When we walk "humbly with our God," it becomes about the other person, not about our own desires and thoughts. You may ask, how do we do this? It's about showing compassion. Song #626 in *The Salvation Army Song Book* speaks of the how to accomplish this. It tells us that we must be moved with compassion. As you read these words, present your heart before the Lord to help you grow in showing mercy and compassion. That's a good beginning for our journeys as Ambassadors of His justice.

11

The Savior of men came to seek and to save

The souls who were lost to the good;

His Spirit was moved

For the world which He loved

With the boundless compassion of God.

And still there are fields where the laborers are few.

And still there are souls without bread,

And still eyes that weep where the darkness is deep,

And still straying sheep to be led.

O is not the Christ 'midst the crowd of today

Whose questioning cries do not seek?

And will He not show

To the hearts that would know

The things that belong to their peace?

But how shall they hear if the preacher forbear

Or lack in compassionate zeal?

Or how shall hearts move

With the Master's own love,

Without His anointing and seal.

•

It is not with might to establish the right,

Nor yet with the wise to give rest;

The mind cannot show

What the heart longs to know

Nor comfort a people distressed.

O Savior of men, touch my spirit again,

And grant that Thy servant may be.

Intense every day, as I labor and pray,

Both instant and constant for Thee.

•

Except I am moved with compassion,

How dwelleth Thy Spirit in me?

In word and in deed

Burning love is my need;

I know I can find this in Thee.

The Salvation Army Song Book



July 2023 – A Lifetime in the Making

July 1, 2023 By Major Misook Kim



Scripture: Esther 2:1-18

Introduction

Esther's story is about God's providence and how His ways and timing accomplish His perfect will in our lives. Through Esther's story, we will learn that she was prepared throughout her

life for God's purposes.

Suggested Meeting Outline

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Praise and Worship "Through It All" by Hillsong, "I'm Trading My Sorrows" by Darrell Evans,*
- Song #492 "God will Make a Way"**
- Activity Lifetime in the Making Scrapbook
- Scripture Reading Esther 2:1–18
- Devotional: "A Lifetime in the Making"
- Closing Prayer

*YouTube

**The Salvation Army Song Book

Lifetime in the Making Scrapbook

Before starting the scrapbooking activity, share the following questions so that the women can reflect on how God has been at work in their lives to fulfill His purpose. Encourage them to share with those around the table. There can be soft music in the background to make this an intimate moment of sharing

- What specific event shaped your life and why?
- Who are some people that spoke wisdom to your life?
- What was the one milestone you always looked forward to reaching when you were younger?

Preparation

Ask the women ahead of time to bring pictures of their family members and special occasions in their life that they feel have shaped them into who they are today. These can be milestones or pictures of places they visited or where they lived. Make sure they know these pictures will be used for a scrapbook page.

Supplies

Set up each table with scrapbook paper in various colors and patterns, scissors, glue sticks, fun stickers, stamps, color markers, pens, rulers, binder, whole punch, and washi tape

(available from Amazon).

Scrapbook Page

Invite the women to select the picture that represents one event in their lives and glue it to the scrapbook paper as a starting point. They can decorate the page as they wish with the materials provided. They can add names, scripture verses, and feelings evoked by the pictures. Once done, punch holes in the sheets and encourage them to further develop their personal "lifetime in the making" binders. More scrapbook ideas can be obtained from the following sites:

- https://rootandbranchpaper.com/blog-home/tips-on-how-to-scrapbook-like-a-pro
- http://www.kathyburrows.com/2019/02/so-much-happy-scrapbooking-layouts.html
- https://www.pinterest.com/pin/281543716458631/
- https://www.pinterest.com/pin/436004807680116750/
- https://jillibeansoup.typepad.com/my_weblog/2019/07/how-to-use-washi-tape-on-a-layout.html

God's Purpose

Are our lives a series of coincidences? Or is every detail in it planned and carried out by God? As believers, there are no accidents or coincidences. We do not know what God is planning for us. But what is clear is that God has a special purpose and plan for each one of us. With that in mind, He begins to prepare us. He begins to arrange our life circumstances and moves behind the scenes to get us to where we ought to be. When the appropriate time comes, we will be ready to be used by God. That is what happened to Esther.

Esther is one of the great heroines in the Bible. She lost both her parents at an early age. As an orphan, she was raised by her Uncle Mordecai whom God used to shape Esther's life and to help her face challenges with faith and courage. Although she grew up in a foreign land without her parents, her faith remained unchanged. Although she grew up in a poor environment, she did not give in to the environment. Mordecai wisely advised Esther, and she ended up in palace as the queen who saved her people.

Scripture tells us that Esther was chosen to marry King Xerxes and become his queen. The king sent out officers to find women candidates to replace Queen Vashti who had incensed the king. Esther was among the women selected to undergo a rigorous preparation. After 12 months she was finally given an audience with the king.

Scripture tells us that the King loved Esther more than all the other women. This was no coincidence: Esther becoming queen was part of God's plan to save His people in a time of crisis. Esther was a young, beautiful Jewish woman who worshipped the God of Israel.

Although King Xerxes did not know about her Jewish heritage, he chose her out of the many other beautiful women presented to him. Again, this was not a coincidence but the providence of God at work, something we cannot always fully understand. We can only trust that He has control over all circumstances in our lives and that He positions us for His purpose. Though some of those circumstances may appear unfair at times, His purpose will always result in a blessing.

Charles Swindoll states, "Esther is a story of triumph that grew out of tragedy, ecstasy out of agony, celebration out of devastation. Through Esther's story, we can see a dramatic reversal in the face of despair and the rise and fall of a nation. God had a plan for saving the nation through her life. God has been preparing her. God had work for her to do."

Esther was placed in a royal position to assist in the delivery of God's divine plan for His people. As a godly young lady, Esther allowed God to use her and work through her life to bring great deliverance to the people of Israel. God does not impose His plan on us, but we always benefit in the long run when we say yes to Him.

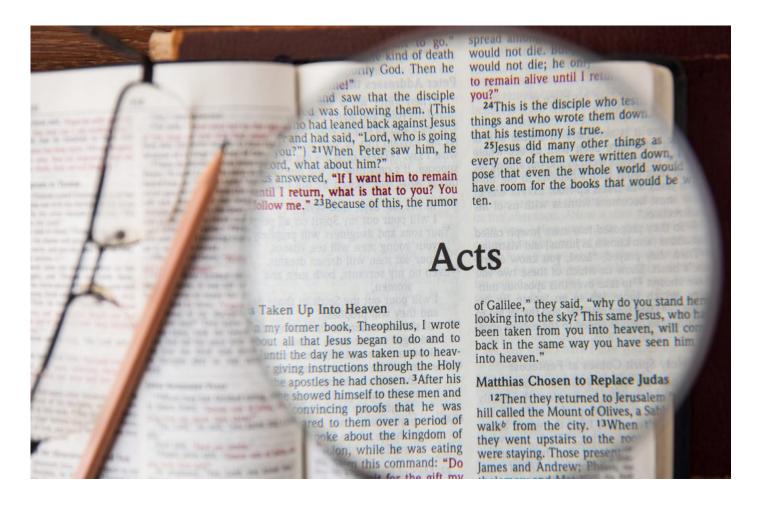
Sometimes God places us in a particular position or a certain place for a specific reason. God uses everything and everybody for His divine purpose. You never know what God is doing in your life. I will assure you that wherever you are and whatever the circumstances of your life, God is getting you ready for something He wants to do in your heart and life. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (NIV).

God can use anyone who is willing to be used for His glory. He is ultimately in control of all things in our lives. May God bless and strengthen and use you for His glory.



August 2023 - One Heart, Many Connections

August 1, 2023 By Captain Koorelyn Rivera



Scripture: Acts 16:6-15, 40

Ice Breaker

Can you name someone who has been a blessing to you or greatly influenced your life? Share the circumstances of your interaction with this person.

Lydia

This program is set up as a dialogue between the leader and the women. If you have a large group, divide the women into smaller groups with leaders in each to promote interaction. Today we are going to look at one woman of influence in the Bible. Her name is Lydia, and her story is found in Acts 16:6-15, 40. Let's read it together.

What do you learn about Lydia from these verses in Acts?

- 1 Where does Lydia live?
 - She lived in Philippi, a Roman colony and a leading city of Macedonia.
- 2 How does Paul and his companions happen to be in that city? Paul had a vision of a man begging him to come to help them.
- **3 Once there, where would Paul have normally gone on the Sabbath?**To the synagogue. Since he didn't, it would seem that there was not a requisite quorum of ten reliable males to form a synagogue.
- 4 Where do we first meet Lydia?
 - Outside the city gate by a river.
- **5** What was she doing there?
 - Meeting with the other women who were praying.
- 6 It is generally understood that she was a Gentile adherent of Judaism. What statement leads us to this conclusion?
 - It states that she was a worshiper of God.
- 7 What else do we know about Lydia?
 - She was a dealer in purple cloth. This infers that she was a successful businesswoman. We read further that she owned a house and had servants.
- 8 She listened to Paul's message. How did she respond?
 She opened her heart, and she and her whole household were baptized.
- 9 What did she persuade Paul to do?
 - To come and stay at her house.
- 10 When Paul was arrested, did this change Lydia's reaction to him?
 - No, she once again invited Paul and his companions to her house.

What Do You Think?

1 Paul, Timothy, and Silas started out on their second missionary journey. After they decided on the route, what happened?

The Spirit of Jesus stopped them (Verse 7). Have you made plans that seemed to be good, but they were stopped? How did you respond or feel?

2 What happened next?

Paul had a vision of man from Macedonia begging him to come and help them.

3 What was Paul's reaction?

He listened and concluded that God had called them to preach the gospel in that area.

4 How do you think Paul felt when they got there only to discover that there weren't enough men to have a quorum for a synagogue? What would you have done? Would you have concluded you were mistaken and left? Did Paul question God? Considering the place of women in those days, how do you think Paul felt when he found no men, only a group of women by the river praying?

5 What does this teach us?

That to God gender is not important. Lydia was seeking and God opened her heart to the message about the Savior.

6 Whose lives were changed because Paul listened to God and made this trip to Macedonia?

Lydia and her household all became believers and were baptized. Paul commanded the spirit to come out of the slave girl, changing her life. The jailer and his entire household became believers.

What Lessons Can We Learn from Lydia's Life? (Acts 16:11–13)

1 If you could no longer gather to worship in a physical building, where would you meet?

Park, virtually online or in someone's home.

2 Read Acts 16:14. What does this verse tell us about Lydia? What do you think are the most important characteristics?

Construct a sentence about yourself similar to this one about Lydia. Which of these things you list about yourself do you consider your most important characteristics?

3 Acts 16:14. What do you think is meant by the words, "The Lord opened her heart to respond?"

Lydia responds to the gospel message with two actions. What are they?

4 She and her whole household are baptized, and she opens her home to Paul and his companions.

When Paul and Silas got out of prison, they immediately went to Lydia's home. Do you think this posed a danger for Lydia?

5 What did Paul and Silas do at Lydia's house following their time in prisons.

They encouraged the believers but didn't complain that they had been unjustly imprisoned.

From this portion of scripture, I think we can conclude that God's plans are often not our plans. His plans are better than ours and we need to follow His leading. It was during this visit that the church was established in Philippi, possibly with Lydia's home as the headquarters. Paul later wrote a letter to the church there that is recorded in the book of Philippians. In this letter he expressed his great love for the believers there.

The Lydia Project

Choose a family who has come to the corps for social service and invite the women to prepare a special gift basket for them. Include in the basket information about women's ministry and invite them to attend the meetings.



September 2023 – Diligent Fingers

September 1, 2023 By <u>Lieutenant Megan Ashcraft</u>



Set Up and Description

This is a prayer walk with five stations. It can be held inside the corps building or outdoors. Depending on the size of your group you may want to break the participants into smaller groups. The stations can be set up using tables or benches or choosing rooms for each

station. For example: In the Others Station, place maps of different countries around the room or on the table. Place framed instructions at each prayer station.

- Station One: Healing Have available large bandages, band-aids or ace wraps. With sharpie markers invite the women to write on the bandages the names of sick people in the community, corps, or people they know. Spend time in intercessory prayer for their healing.
- **Station Two: Others-** Place fabric/scraps from craft stores on the table. Invite the women to take a piece of fabric and to intercede in prayer for the artisans and women in 3rd world countries whose livelihood depends on the items that they make with their hands. Visit the website https://www.tradeforhope.com for further information about The Salvation Army's participation in these types of programs. Focus on the safety and health for women in those countries.
- **Station Three: First Responders** Place badges of firefighters, police, and medics on the table. Invite the participants to pray specifically for these first responders who are in a dangerous line of work. Pray for their safety and for their families.
- Station Four: Anti-Human Trafficking Put chains of various sizes and lengths on the table. Ask the woman to hold a chain and pray not only for the victims of human trafficking but also for those involved in trafficking individuals.
- **Station Five: I'm In** Invite the women to pray specifically for God to show them how He wants to use them as a group in your community. Provide specific information of how the group could be involved. This might be through Community Care, purchasing items from Trade for Hope, or securing additional information on how to be involved from the Anti-Trafficking Department at THQ.

Refreshments

Serve finger sandwich or hand-shaped sugar cookies in honor of Diligent Fingers. Accompany with drinks of your choice.

We Are Chosen, Just like Dorcas

In Acts 9:36–42, we read about Dorcas, a kind woman who gave back to her community. She made clothes and provided food for those in need. Her story begins when she is growing ill and died. But then a miracle happened when Peter prayed for her. When he told her to get up, she did! This was a great a miracle, and while we should not lose sight of that, let's consider the miracle as a legacy.

Dorcas gave back to the Lord by giving back to her community. In Matthew we are reminded of this principle: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not

look after me.'" They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' (Matt. 25:40-45).

It is our job as believers and followers of Christ to give back to Him by serving others. In Matthew spoke the words of Matthew 25:40-45 to His disciples, His followers, before going to the cross. He explained to them how they could be His hands and feet by serving all types of people, not only physically, but with spiritual truth as well.

We, Christ's followers, are called to do the same thing. We are called to be His hands and feet. He has chosen us to be in this specific community for His purpose, with this group for His glory. He has given us tools and talents to make Him known to those in our community. We need to ask God how we, like Dorcas, can be of service. We can't just sit here in this group doing nothing when there is a hurting world around us that needs Christ.

In one of our prayer stations, we were asked to pray for the Lord's specific leading on our group's impact within this community—how He will use us to be His hands and feet. Dorcas took it upon herself to do just that. She used her service to give back to the Lord.

Take this time to think about your community. You have already interceded on behalf of so many around you. Now is the time for you to ask God how He wants to use you, His daughter, His follower, to reach the broken ones in our sphere of influence.