

WORDS OF COMFORT AND HOPE

A CCM Volunteer's Guide to Sharing Scripture and Prayer

Purpose of This Guide

To equip Community Care Ministries (CCM) visitation volunteers with tools to share scripture and prayer in a way that is thoughtful, caring, inclusive, and reflective of The Salvation Army's Christ-centered mission. This includes not only those receiving care, but also their caregivers, who often need encouragement, reassurance, and support.

Best Practices for Sharing Scripture and Prayer

Listen first:

- Begin each visit by listening.
- What the person shares can help guide which Scripture to read or whether prayer is appropriate.
- Build trust and allow spiritual conversations to emerge naturally.

Seek permission:

- Always ask gently: "Would you like me to read a short verse of Scripture?" or "May I say a prayer with you today?"
- Respect their response, whether they say yes or no.

Be present, not preachy:

- Focus on being a caring presence rather than delivering a sermon.
- Your ministry is to offer hope and encouragement, not to correct or instruct.

Choose Scripture with care:

- Select passages that bring comfort, strength, peace and hope.
- Avoid passages that could be misunderstood or sound judgmental when heard out of context.

Use clear, accessible language:

- Use translations like the *New International Version (NIV)*, *Good News Translation (GNT)*, or *New Living Translation (NLT)*.
- Bring a small Bible or Scripture resource you are comfortable using.



Keep prayers short and heartfelt:

- A sincere, simple prayer is often more meaningful than a long, formal one.
- Pray in everyday language and incorporate the person's needs when appropriate.

Be inclusive and trauma-informed:

- Being trauma-informed means approaching every person with sensitivity, recognizing that past trauma may affect how they respond to care. Volunteers should prioritize safety, respect boundaries, avoid making assumptions about a person's experiences and offer support without pressure. In every visit, the focus is on providing a calm, trustworthy presence, allowing the individual to guide the depth and direction of conversation.
- Respect all individuals, regardless of their faith background.
- Spiritual care is offered as a gift, never something to be forced.

What to Avoid During Visits

No promises:

Avoid making promises (e.g., "God will heal you soon"). Instead, offer words of comfort, presence, and hope.

No advice-giving:

Avoid giving medical or personal advice. Volunteers are not acting in a professional health or counseling role.

Non-judgmental language:

Avoid language that suggests illness, suffering or hardship is due to a lack of faith.

Keep it brief:

Avoid overly long prayers or Scripture readings that may be tiring or difficult to follow.

No debates:

Avoid entering theological debates. Visits are intended to offer encouragement, not correction or argument.

Respect boundaries:

Avoid forcing religious conversations. Always honour the individual's comfort level and spiritual boundaries.

Sample Scripture Selections

Comfort in times of illness or suffering:

Psalms 23:1-4: "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures ... Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."



- **Reflection:** Remind the person that God walks beside them through every dark and difficult moment, offering peace and protection.

Isaiah 41:10: “Do not fear, for I am with you ... I will strengthen you and help you.”

- **Reflection:** God’s promise is not just for the healthy or strong—he is with us in weakness and fear, too.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4: “The God of all comfort ... comforts us in all our troubles.”

- **Reflection:** God understands our pain and offers real comfort through his presence.
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Peace and reassurance:

John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

- **Reflection:** Jesus offers a peace that is deeper than our circumstances.

Philippians 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything ... the peace of God ... will guard your hearts.”

- **Reflection:** When we bring our worries to God, he brings calm to our souls.

Psalms 46:1-2: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

- **Reflection:** God is not far away—he is our immediate refuge and strength.
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Hope and encouragement:

Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.”

- **Reflection:** Even in hardship, God can fill us with a deep and lasting hope.

Jeremiah 29:11: “ ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord ... ‘plans to give you hope and a future.’ ”

- **Reflection:** God's plans for us include a future filled with purpose and hope.

Lamentations 3:22-23: “Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed ... his compassions never fail.”

- **Reflection:** Every new day is proof of God’s faithful love.
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Loneliness and God’s presence:

Deuteronomy 31:6: “He will never leave you nor forsake you.”



- **Reflection:** Even when others are gone, God remains.

Psalm 139:7-10: “Where can I go from your Spirit? ... even there your hand will guide me.”

- **Reflection:** There is no place so far or dark where God cannot reach us.

Matthew 28:20: “ ... surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- **Reflection:** Jesus promises to be with us every step of the way.
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Gospel stories of compassion and healing:

Luke 10:25–37: The Good Samaritan

- **Theme:** Kindness and compassion reflect the heart of God. Share this story when someone needs to feel seen and valued.

Mark 5:25–34: The Woman Who Touched Jesus’ Cloak

- **Theme:** Jesus responds to faith, no matter how small. A reminder that God hears and heals.

Luke 24:13–35: The Road to Emmaus

- **Theme:** Jesus walks beside us, even when we do not recognize him. A story of hope and rediscovery.

John 11:1–44: The Raising of Lazarus

- **Theme:** Jesus shares in our sorrow and brings new life. A powerful story for those grieving or discouraged.
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Sample Prayers to Use or Adapt

Prayer is a vital way to express care, comfort and shared faith. The following sample prayers can be offered as they are or adapted to suit each visit.

Prayer for comfort:

"Loving God, thank you for your presence. Bring comfort and peace today. May your love surround us. Amen."

Prayer for strength:

"Lord, give strength for today. Help [Name] feel your closeness. May they know they are not alone. Amen."



Prayer of gratitude:

"Thank you, God, for this visit. Thank you for [Name] and their life. Bless them with your peace. Amen."

Prayer for healing:

"Gracious God, we pray for your healing hand to be upon [Name]. Bring relief, renewal and restoration. Help them feel your peace and power today. Amen."

Prayer in times of grief:

"God of all comfort, we lift up [Name] in their sadness. Be near to them in their mourning. Remind them that your love never fails and that you are close to the brokenhearted. Amen."

Prayer for hope:

"Lord, even when life feels uncertain, we trust in your promises. Fill [Name] with hope and remind them that your love endures forever. Amen."

Prayer of blessing:

"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you and give you peace, both now and always. Amen."

Guidance for Praying Aloud

- Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Keep eye contact if appropriate or gently hold their hand if welcomed.
 - Use the person's name in the prayer, when possible, to make it personal.
 - Close with a soft and reassuring tone, e.g., "Amen" or "God bless you."
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Prayers and Encouragement for Caregivers

Caregivers are often under emotional, physical and spiritual strain. Offering a few moments of compassion, recognition and encouragement can make a significant impact.

Prayer for the caregiver's strength:

"Lord, thank you for [Name] and their faithful care. Strengthen them in body and spirit. Remind them that they are not alone and that their care is seen and valued. Amen."

Prayer for rest and renewal:

"God of peace, grant [Name] rest in the middle of their responsibilities. Help them to find moments of stillness and to know that your grace sustains them. Amen."

Prayer for wisdom and patience:

“Loving God, give [Name] wisdom in difficult moments and patience when days are long. Fill them with compassion and joy in the care they offer. Amen.”

Encouraging Scripture for Caregivers

Galatians 6:9: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”

- **Reflection:** God sees your faithful care, even when no one else does.

Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

- **Reflection:** Caregivers are invited to find their rest and strength in Christ.

Isaiah 40:29-31: “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak ... those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

- **Reflection:** God offers renewing strength for those who pour themselves out in love.

When to Refer to Professional or Pastoral Support

During a visit, if you encounter any of the following situations, take the following actions:

Immediate actions while in a facility:

- If the visit is taking place in a professional facility (hospital, care home, shelter, hospice, etc.), immediately report the concern to on-site professional care staff or the facility’s chaplain.
- If the concern involves suspected mistreatment or unsafe practices by facility staff, report the concern directly to the facility supervisor or administrator (not to the staff member involved).

Also report internally to your Salvation Army leadership:

- Inform your CCM co-ordinator and corps officer as soon as possible after the visit.
- Document basic facts (date, time, nature of concern) without making judgments or accusations.

Situations requiring referral include:

- Expressions of deep emotional distress, despair, or suicidal ideation.
- Observations of abuse, neglect, unsafe living conditions or mistreatment.
- Requests for sacraments (e.g., communion, baptism).
- Requests for ongoing pastoral care, spiritual counsel or anointing.
- Complex theological or spiritual struggles beyond the volunteer’s role or training.



How to Refer a Concern

If a concern arises during a visit, follow these steps to ensure the individual receives appropriate support:

1. Acknowledge the person's need:

- Kindly and calmly acknowledge what has been shared: “That sounds very important and I want to make sure you’re supported.”
 - Offer reassurance without making promises or trying to solve the situation yourself.
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2. Respond based on where you are:

- If you are visiting in a professional facility (such as a hospital, care home, shelter or hospice):
 - Immediately inform appropriate facility staff (such as a nurse, social worker, supervisor or chaplain) about the concern.
 - If the concern involves facility staff behavior (e.g., mistreatment, neglect), report the issue directly to a supervisor or administrator—not to the staff member involved.
 - Inform your CCM co-ordinator and corps officer as soon as possible after the visit.
 - Share the basic facts: what you observed, what was shared and who you notified at the facility (if applicable).
 - Avoid offering personal opinions or interpretations; simply report observations clearly and factually.
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Important Reminders

- **You are not alone.** Your role is to offer compassionate presence, not to carry the whole burden or solve every problem.
- **Timely reporting ensures care.** By passing concerns on to corps leadership and professional care teams, you help ensure that individuals receive the right support safely and appropriately.
- **Confidentiality matters.** Share concerns only with appropriate leaders—not with other volunteers or congregants.
- **Trust God's presence.** You are part of a greater ministry of care and compassion; every act of listening, prayer and appropriate referral reflects Christ's love.



Quick Reference: CCM Volunteer Visit Tips

DO:

- Listen actively and compassionately.
- Ask permission before sharing Scripture or prayer.
- Share short, encouraging passages of Scripture.
- Offer brief, heartfelt prayers in everyday language.
- Be attentive to emotional, spiritual and physical needs.
- Refer serious concerns promptly to corps leadership and, if in a facility, to professional care staff or chaplain.
- Respect personal boundaries and diverse faith expressions.

DON'T:

- Make promises about healing, outcomes or timelines.
- Offer medical, therapeutic or personal advice.
- Use judgmental or theological correction.
- Force religious conversations or debates.
- Share overly long or complex readings that may overwhelm or fatigue.

WHEN TO REFER:

- Expressions of emotional distress, despair or **suicidal ideation**.
- Requests for sacraments (e.g., communion, baptism), anointing or formal spiritual counseling.
- Observations of suspected abuse, neglect or unsafe living conditions.
- Complex theological questions beyond your role or training.
- Concerns involving mistreatment or unsafe practices within a professional facility.

In a care facility:

- Inform professional staff or the site chaplain immediately, then notify your CCM co-ordinator and corps officer.

You are a bearer of Christ's presence—listen with compassion, love with humility, act with care and trust God's Spirit to lead.

