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Cedar Springs of Inspiration

A publication dedicated to providing ideas, inspiration and resources to use in ministry.

Major June Newbury
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Canada and Bermuda Territory

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The Salvation Army
Canada and Bermuda 2008

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NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM THE WORLD PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

New Year Message, 2008

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus as we begin another year in His service! We thank Him for daily grace and strength. Some of you are working in difficult places and some have been through sorrow and pain in the past year. The Lord has been with us all, and we give glory to Him for helping us:



*'Through many dangers, toils and snares, we have already come.
'Tis grace has brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us Home.'*

Thank you for your attention to the 'While Women Weep' theme. This has gone around the world and will not be forgotten. The plight of women damaged by sex trade trafficking is close to our hearts and we will go on fighting this global evil. Although we will not have an international theme every year, we have felt led towards a theme for 2008, a theme which will be picked up when we travel, speak and write. The theme, agreed by the World Secretary and the Zonal Secretaries for Women's Ministries, is:

GENERATION NEXT

'One generation commends your works to another' Psalm 145:4

During this past year, we have been consistently led to consider the next generation - how to be godly role-models, teachers and protectors of children and young people. This is being confirmed to us over and over again, not least because God has given us a Women's Ministries Administrative Assistant who has been a children's officer and is qualified to teach 'Safe and Sound' principles concerning children. We also want to place a vision before the next generation of women, that they can rise to the challenge of being young leaders.

Please join us as we explore this theme in the coming year. We step out with faith and joy, thanking God for blessings past, present and future, and asking His help and His presence to be with us in every situation.

God bless you in 2008!

With love in Christ,

Helen Clifton
Commissioner
World President of Women's Ministries

MESSAGE FROM THE TERRITORIAL PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES



My dear Branches of the Vine:

Greetings to you upon the occasion of a Happy New Year – 2008! We celebrate the beginning of glorious opportunities ahead for all of us. It is a joy to share this new edition of Cedar Springs. Our Women's Ministries promotional material for 2008 will concentrate on being connected as Branches to the True Vine, our Lord Jesus Christ, and reaching out for new 'connections' unexpected.

As we utilize every program suggestion, we will grow and be nourished by Him, the True Vine. He reminds us in John 15: 5, 'I am the Vine, you are the Branches'. He who abides in me, and I in Him bears much fruit.' Abiding in Him is the reason we Branches bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. That promise is offered, if we abide.

Secondly, as Branches abiding in the Vine, He offers us this promise in John 15:7, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you". Think of it!

This "One Connection" assures us of success. This tool helps us as we endeavour to make brand new 'Connections' through our ministry to women in the year ahead. We must abide and ask, and then we will bear much fruit.

With these promises, let us win the World for God — one woman at a time. As His Branches:

Abide and Ask!

Bloom and Bear Fruit!

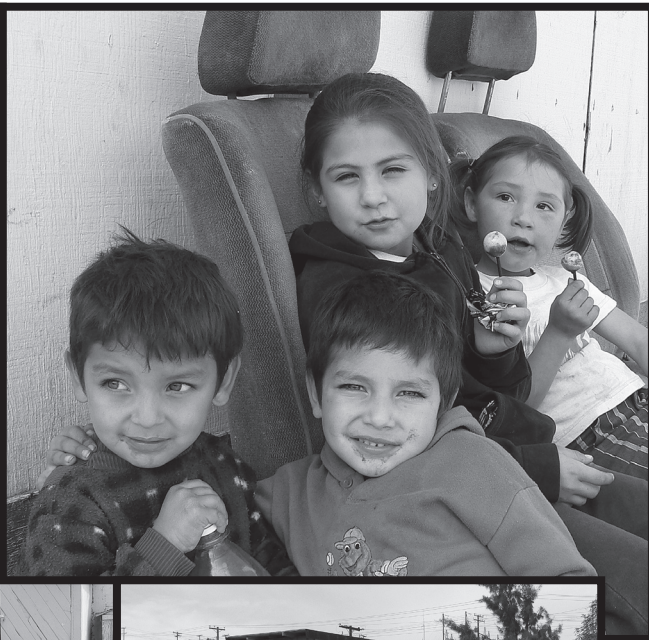
Connect and Stay Connected!

Yours in Christ,

Marilyn D. Francis
Commissioner
Territorial President of Women's Ministries
Canada/Bermuda Territory

Women's Ministries Territorial Project

2008



While to some of us, Mexico is a luxurious, vacation getaway, for many who live there, extreme poverty is an everyday reality. One in five Mexicans can't afford to eat. Men often migrate elsewhere to find work. 95,000 children work the streets. Many live in despair and become addicted to alcohol and drugs, especially in poor, rural areas. These conditions provide a lucrative market for those who take advantage of desperate and vulnerable people by trafficking them.

The Women's Ministries Territorial Project in 2008 will assist Mexico in its efforts to combat Human Trafficking among the most

vulnerable of its population in the Mexico — US border city of Tijuana. Some parents have to work long hours in factories. Children attend school only mornings or afternoons to accommodate the large numbers. This leaves many of them with lots of idle time and often no supervision. The Salvation Army wishes to provide programs and initiatives designed to raise awareness, and educate children and parents. Their aim is to keep children off the streets in a caring, protective environment, providing food, recreation, and assistance with homework, while teaching and demonstrating Christian faith and values.

Child Sponsorship *Help Change A Life*

The world's children need our concern, love, prayers and support. They are innocent victims of war, power struggles, human trafficking, HIV/Aids and aggression. Some are victims of broken homes, and desperately need the security of 'belonging'. For some, the economic situations of the families are extremely poor.

Meet **Jonnalagadda Aruna** from the India Central Territory. She comes under the care of The Salvation Army at the Tissot Sunrise Residential School. She was born on 27 March 1996, and has a younger sister. She comes from a very poor family background. She has only her mother to look after her. Her ambition is to become a Teacher.

The ministry of the Child Sponsorship Program is one of 'bridging the distance' — providing the open door of opportunity for the underprivileged children, who come under the care of The Salvation Army, to have a better quality of life, to have a sense of security, and the chance to achieve their goals.

Through partnering with us in this vital and worthwhile ministry, for \$25.00 a month, we can offer HOPE in a sometimes seemingly hopeless world. The financial assistance ensures that children receive food, clothing, shelter, education and medical needs, as well as being nurtured by loving spiritual care.



Please contact: The Child Sponsorship Office, 2 Overlea Boulevard, Toronto, ON, M4H 1P4

If you require more information on sponsoring a child, or giving support to a Home or Project so that many children may be helped, please call (416) 422 6164.

Or visit our website: [child.sponsorship @can.salvationarmy.org](http://child.sponsorship@can.salvationarmy.org).



GIFTS OF HOPE

SalvationArmy.ca/giftsofhope

GIFTS THAT ARE GUARANTEED TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

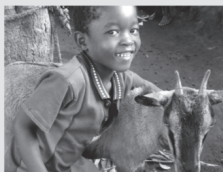
We know you put a lot of thought into the gifts that you give. You want to choose something that's just right for each person on your list. We do too. That's why we think that gifts that keep on giving are the best presents for your friends and family.



WATER - \$30

An overflowing gift. More than 1 billion people do not have access to clean, safe water. In countries like Malawi and Tanzania, just \$30 can provide a family with safe, clean water for life!

GH-0001



TWO GOATS - \$80

Goats provide milk and meat for families. In our goat bank projects a family will be provided with a pair of goats (male and female), with the understanding that when 'kids' arrive these will be given to benefit another family.

GH-0002



KIDS CLUB PACK - \$100

In sub-Saharan Africa there are more than 12 million AIDS orphans. Help equip a kids club for hundreds of orphans and vulnerable children with items such as pens and paper, games and puzzles, skipping ropes and balls.

GH-0003



BUSH AMBULANCE - \$225

In Malawi traveling to a hospital or clinic from a rural village is almost impossible. The Salvation Army has developed its own bush ambulance. Now those unable to walk the long distances can get the care they need.

GH-0004



To order by phone call 1-800-SAL-ARMY

Encouraging Those Who Serve

Wanda Vincent, Grand Falls, Newfoundland

As November 11th is the annual occasion on which we especially remember the debt we owe our military forces, it would be a good month to think of ways to support the Canadian troops serving overseas.

One way could be to write letters to them, and another way to show support could be by sending them a Christmas package. As they serve in difficult, volatile situations, a parcel from someone at home would really boost morale at the holiday season.



To do this, contact should be made with the director of the Military Family Resource Centre at a Canadian Forces Base. The Resource Centre sends Christmas packages to the troops overseas and would welcome any community groups or individuals willing to support this effort.

There may be an option of gathering items and delivering them to the forces base to be included in their parcels, or parcels can be marked with the name of the donating group and have them forwarded overseas for distribution.

The packages are sent for distribution to the Padre and Social Worker at Canadian Forces Bases in Afghanistan or other

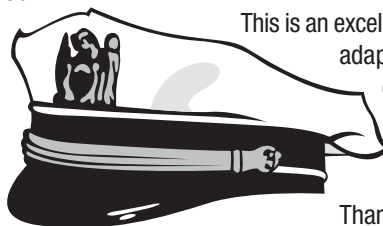
locations where the Canadian troops are involved in peace-keeping or active military situations.

The Padre and Social Worker are best able to identify any troops who are particularly needy — perhaps some who do not receive any support from home or soldiers who are injured or in hospital.

This is an excellent opportunity for us to serve other people from a distance and bring some encouragement to our men and women who are putting themselves at risk on the front lines of a dangerous mission.

List of preferred items for small packages. Samples of:

- Crystal Lite Singles
- Gum, Breath Strips, Halls Cough Drops
- Hard Wrapped Candy
- Peanuts
- Trail Mix
- Any type of Purity product
- Magazines, Cotton Socks
- Hand Sanitizer, Tissues
- Individual packs of hand wipes



This is an excellent program that can also be adapted for a smaller group. Not only remembering our troops around November 11th but at other special times of the year e.g. Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.

Be an Evangelistic Group

Small groups are a great place to find help and encouragement in sharing Christ with nonbelievers. Encourage the ladies to read the book *The Prayer of Jabez* written by Bruce Wilkinson to prepare their hearts for the weeks ahead.

Resources needed: Bibles, lots of prayer, flip chart, markers, enthusiasm, prayer journal.

Spend a few weeks sharing the following tips with your group so that a harvest can be reaped for the Kingdom.

Week One

- Read together Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. Use a flip chart or poster paper to list as many observations as you can from these verses.
- Discuss how you would define your *Jerusalem*. Is it a neighbourhood, work-place, your circle of acquaintances, or something else?
- Brainstorm how your small-group members can reach their Jerusalem's. Write your ideas on a flip chart or poster paper.
- Commit to pray daily for one another to become more evangelistic.
- Ask group members to spend the next week asking the Lord for the names of three people they can reach out to.

Week Two

- Tell each other about the three people you want to share Christ with.



- Divide into prayer partners or small groups, and pray for each other and the people on your outreach lists.
- As a group, brainstorm ways you can reach out in kindness to your three people. Refer to the ideas you came up with last week.
- Look over an assortment of gospel presentations: *The Bridge To Life* (Navigators), *The Four Spiritual Laws* (Campus Crusade for Christ), and so on. Your pastor can help you with ideas.
- Role-play sharing the gospel with each other using these presentations.

Following Weeks

- Continue to divide into groups of two or three and pray for each other.
- Plan an outreach event — a picnic, hike, potluck dinner, etc. Invite the three people on your outreach list, plus others who come to mind.
- Continue role-playing your gospel presentations. Discuss together how to answer difficult questions that arise in your conversations with non Christians.



Adapted from Australia Southern Territory Home League Ideas

Introduction

Plan an evening with your ladies and encourage them to invite a friend. This will be a great opportunity for the ladies to glean a fresh picture of themselves in a relaxed atmosphere. As the women share a picture of themselves they will learn about others and at the same time gain a few spiritual pictures from the Bible.

Resources needed

Bibles, pictures to reflect the International Salvation Army i.e. Territorial Project Poster, Partners in Mission information, Child sponsorship.

Song

Shine Jesus Shine

Picture of You

Ask ladies to think of a word that best describes them. Once they have shared, ask other ladies in the group to affirm them. Carefully choose ladies who are comfortable speaking before a group.



My Favorite Pictures

One picture speaks a thousand words. Ask the ladies to share their favourite picture they have brought with them. What makes the picture special?

The Big Picture

Always more than the obvious. Share with the ladies that the Home League, Ladies Night Out is part of the “Big Picture” of The Salvation Army — or their Church, their Community, their Country, or Internationally.



Game

Pictionary: It's all about getting the picture.

Jigsaw Puzzle: piecing the whole picture together. Create this game using the pieces of the puzzle.

Reading

“Picture of a Son” can be found on the Internet www.google.com — go to search and type in “A wealthy man and his son”

Song

SASB 371/TB 666 *O What a Wonderful Day*

Testimony

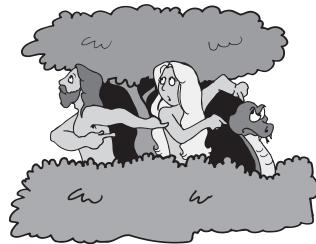
Arrange beforehand for a person to share about their spiritual journey — life before and after knowing God.

Chorus

SASB Chorus 173 *I'm Living My Life For Jesus*

Pictures from Scripture

Genesis 1:1-8. Eve forgot God's big picture and became the centre of the scene. She settled for a whole lot less.
Or Numbers 13. Caleb's vision of God's land.
Develop the story of one of these passages and share with the ladies.



Prayer

Song

SASB 347/TB 834 *This One Thing I Know*

Conclude the evening with refreshments.

Won't you be my neighbour?

Adapted from Today's Christian Woman

Six ideas for getting to know people in your neighbourhood

Sit a spell. Create a spot on your porch where you can sit and share impromptu conversations with neighbours. It could be anything from two rocking chairs to a bale of hay. Be creative!

Keep it clean. While the rest of your house can be chaotic, try to keep your living room tidy. Having a “safe” spot makes it easier to invite neighbours in for a moment when their kids stop by selling candy for school projects, or to return an item they had previously borrowed, or just to have a break from the daily routine of their housekeeping.

Welcome the newbie's. When someone moves onto your street, host a “Welcome to The Neighbourhood Dessert.” Drop invitations in your neighbour's mailboxes, and serve coffee and cookies. This helps break the ice for the newcomers and gives you the chance to chat with neighbours you don't know yet.

Bake and break. When the holidays roll around, host a Christmas cookie exchange. Ask your neighbours to bring two-and-a-half-dozen of their favourite holiday cookies. Everyone trades their two dozen for an amazing variety of others to take home, while everyone snacks on the other half dozen cookies over a cup of coffee or hot chocolate.

Eat and run. Plan a progressive dinner block party. Everyone brings his/her own plate and

silverware, and the participating households host the appetizers, salad, main entrée, or dessert. This divides the work so no one has too much to do, and it's an easy way to make new friends — or feed the old ones!



Trade your “trash”. Organize a Neighbourhood Exchange by asking people on your block to donate clothes, toys, or sports equipment their kids have outgrown. Display these items on tables in your backyard and invite your neighbours to rummage through and find some free, slightly used treasures. This creates a community bond while helping families recycle items that still have some good use in them. Donate the leftovers to a local charity.

Meaningful Memories

Kathie Sharp, Brampton, Ontario



Name of Group	Meaningful Memories
Type of Group	Scrapbooking
Aim(s) of Group	To help people in the grieving process
Target Group	Those who have lost loved ones
Main focus of Group	To create lasting memories for families
Secondary Focus	To be available in our community as a caring church
Duration of Program	3 weeks
Outline of Program	Simple techniques of Scrapbooking, linking community people to our church by building relationships
Cost for Participants	None
Leadership	Local Representative from Funeral Home & Corps Officer/Pastor
Support Personnel	Ladies from your corps or Church
Equipment	Scrapbooking supplies, (cutting system, paper, stickers, etc.)
Resources	Local stores, dollar stores
Possible related activities	Weekly/biweekly scrapbooking group, grief counselling from the Church
Anticipated Results	Being recognized as a church body giving hope

New and Used

Adapted for Cedar Springs

Ideas: New and Used

Reaching out into our communities is a key to extending God's Kingdom, strengthening Christian fellowship, and building new relationships with others. These new and used ideas can be adapted to your local setting and create a relaxed atmosphere for reaching out to non-Church women.



Theme: Fresh Start

This could start with a fashion show by Cotton Ginny Ladies (or choice of a local ladies clothing store) with clothing modelled in regular and plus sizes and a representative from the store as the commentator. A guest speaker and soloist could share the theme of "A fresh start with God". Dessert could be apple crisp with whipped cream. An excellent way to kick off the program year in September.

Possible Scripture to develop this theme: Psalms 40:1-3, or 2 Samuel 22:21 from the Message, "God made my life complete when I placed all the pieces before him. When I cleaned up my act, He gave me a fresh start. Indeed, I've kept alert to God's ways; I haven't taken God for granted. Every day I review the ways he works. I try not to miss a trick. I feel put back together, and I'm watching my step. God rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes."

Theme: Season of Colour (Fall)

This could feature a colour consultant as guest for a personal colour consultation. Getting to know the colours that suit you can be very helpful when coordinating your wardrobe. If a professional is not available maybe some

of your members are gifted in coordinating and choosing the right colours. The television show "What Not to Wear" could provide some useful tips. A Fall Fashion Show would be a great way to end the evening.

Another idea could be "What's new in home decorating". There are many decorating books with simple and easy to use ideas which will assist in developing this program. There are many ways to re-decorate a room with little cost if you have the ideas. Yard sales are a good source for picking up inexpensive household items to complete the effect.

Another focus could be "harvest decorating", giving some new ideas for centrepieces, table favours, colour coordinating of a thanksgiving table or creating a harvest door hanger. Creating an outside display indicating our thankfulness to God for His abundance is attractive, and one way to stimulate a conversation with our neighbour about His goodness.

Conclude with a devotional on Psalms 27:4 "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple". Fall is a beautiful time to reflect on the beauty of our Lord.

Theme: Trade Show

Instead of a traditional sale, try a mini-trade show. Give ladies from craft groups, Christian book companies, Avon, Tupperware, Pampered Chef, etc., the opportunity to show and sell their products. You might even rent tables to participants. Serve lunch for a cost. The funds could be used for Child Sponsorship or Territorial Project. This exposes new people to your church and opens doors to chat about the opportunities The Salvation Army provides for outreach into our world.

Create a display and information centre about The Salvation Army and the opportunities to reach out to a hurting world through Child Sponsorship, Territorial Women's Ministries Project, Partners in Mission and Home Missions.



Consider a devotional, highlighting the fact that everyone can make a contribution towards helping our world to be a better place by helping those in need. Possible Scripture 1 Corinthians 12:1-20.

Theme: Salute to Veterans

Invite Veterans to a meeting, if possible have them led into the room by a piper. Share in reflective moments with *O Canada* and *The Last Post*. Have a time of fun and fellowship enjoying a sing-along (*White Cliffs of Dover*, *Pack Up Your Troubles*, etc). With many troops serving our country, an evening of this type helps focus on the needs of soldiers and their families. Close the evening with a time of silent

prayer for those who have a family member serving in the armed forces. A devotional message could remind those in attendance that even though we enjoy freedom in our country, there are spiritual battles that continue to challenge us. But the battle is the Lord's! Reflect on 2 Chronicles 20:15-17. Serve refreshments.

Theme: Victorian Tea and Sale

Have a Victorian Christmas tea. Decorate with Victorian boxes draped with beads and holly as centre pieces. Using fancy china, serve scones, jam and cream, squares and sandwiches with tea. Display a Christmas tree, set up a children's corner to include a fireplace, rocking chair and nativity scene. The children in attendance would be interested to hear a lady dressed in a Victorian outfit telling the Christmas story.

Theme: Oh Those Feet

Invite a foot care specialist to speak on some of the simple things that can be done to care for our feet. Or have a local shoe store display what is new for the season in footwear. Devotional speaker could speak on the topic "On Walking the Walk". Use 2 John 6 "And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love".

Theme: Cultural Christmas Sampler

Set up the room with lighted candles (unscented) to create a Christmas ambience and serve warm apple cider as the ladies arrive. Invite ladies from other countries that attend the group to dress in costume and bring a sample of their traditional food. Arrange the different foods on decorated tables so ladies can browse, chat and eat. Add a seasonal touch to the evening by playing Christmas music. Display a number of Christmas candles.



Adopt-A-Bed

Reaching out with hope to women in our community is a wonderful way to use our gifts and abilities that God has given to us. While this program has been submitted by a Toronto Ministry unit there are similar programs where you live that can benefit from the support you provide. Seek out the needs of your community and see what God will do in the lives of women.

*Being the
presence of
Christ is
the focus of
our ministry*

compassionate, unconditional support through a holistic approach that encourages each woman to maximize her individual potential in all areas of life; body, mind and soul.

Our Values: The Salvation Army Florence Booth House is committed to the following core values: Teamwork, Advocacy, Client Centered Service, Diversity, Safety and Social justice.

Our Vision: To be an encouraging, safe place that fosters growth and empowerment; where staff and residents inspire and learn from each other experiencing personal growth and healing.

We are here:

- To provide emergency accommodation to meet the temporary needs of women in the community.
- To provide quality nutrition in the provision of every meal so as to enable the average

Our Mission: The Salvation Army Florence Booth House is a shelter offering

person to move towards soundness strength of body.

- To provide clothing and laundry where necessary so that our residents may restore and maintain their dignity and self-respect.



Women praying for women.

***She could be the woman
at the well; the prostitute
that the elders condemned;
your co-worker
or your friend***

afford market rent; a woman who has endured domestic violence; a woman who has fled her country in fear for her life; a woman who is suffering from mental health issues; a woman whose pain is so great that she turns to prostitution, alcohol or drugs to ease her suffering. She could be the woman at the well; the prostitute that the elders condemned; your co-worker or your friend.

- To encourage each woman who enters the house to fulfill and maximize her individual vocational/educational potential.
- To give encouragement and assistance at all times.

Florence Booth House is a 60 bed women's shelter where women come to stay who are experiencing homelessness. The face of

The Adopt-a-Bed program involves women praying for women. The only commitment is to pray daily for the person who stays in one particular bed in the shelter. It is not necessary to know the name or the circumstances of the individual. All that is required is that you consistently pray for whoever stays in the bed each night; offering their circumstances to the Lord in an effort to encourage healing, protection and that they will have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

A Prayer for Florence Booth House

*In the name of God,
Most Gracious, Most Merciful,*

*There is a woman at Florence Booth
House Women's Shelter who needs
your help and divine intervention.*

*Please send to her the best people
to help her make the best informed
decisions for what she needs in her
life as she has come from you, and to you she will return.*

*Please keep her path free of obstacles such as corruption, injustice, addictions,
mental illness, separations from family, financial worries and immigration details.*

Help her to forgive those who caused her injury.

Let her see your love in all that you do, so that her light shines.

May all her days be filled with miracles.

I ask you and thank you for these things, ever expanding and enfolding until all are free.

Amen



Michelle Spring Rachi; Adopt a Bed Women praying for Women. Bed No. 1; Florence Booth House

We believe that Jesus Christ will work miracles in the lives of the women who reside at the shelter through your commitment to Pray.

If you are interested we will provide you with a bed number; send quarterly newsletters to share with you the miracles of how Jesus Christ is transforming lives.

God is working miracles at Florence Booth House and we believe with women praying for women lives will be transformed and women will come to know the divine healing that only Jesus Christ can bring.



History of Our Namesake: Florence Soper-Booth

September 12, 1861 - June 10, 1957

In the early movement of The Salvation Army, members "... began to recognize the complexity of their ministry, and there dawned an awareness ... that it was not enough to preach the Gospel to the poor, but that preaching had to be complemented by taking care of the physical needs of the poor to whom they preached". From that logic, the first rescue home for women opened in Scotland in May of 1883.

***... preaching
had to be
complemented
by taking care
of the physical
needs of the poor
to whom they
preached***



Florence Booth, daughter-in-law of founding member William Booth had begun to advocate for women who were being bought into slavery. Many people, including her husband thought she was exaggerating until in 1885 a girl appeared on the door-step of The Salvation Army Headquarters, telling Bramwell Booth her story of escaping the night before from a prostitution house.

The Salvation Army advocated on behalf of this enslaved population and their powerless families. Soldiers of The Salvation Army collected 393,000 signatures and influenced the British Parliament to change the age of consent to 16, at the time virtually stopping the intercontinental traffic in girls.

Florence Booth has been credited for starting the Army's work in Women's Social Work.

You can help in practical ways by:

- Volunteering
- Making a financial contribution (income tax receipts provided)
- Donate goods such as:
 - Toiletries
 - Socks and underwear
 - Sweaters and jeans
 - Nightgowns
 - Slippers/Flip Flops
 - Housecoats /Winter Coats/Footwear
 - Towels and facecloths
 - Journals
 - Phone cards
 - Reading materials
 - Craft materials
 - Local transportation tickets

For more information please contact:
Brenda Wootten, Director. Tel: 416-603-9800

***Giving Hope Today — Women Praying for Women
Together we can make a difference giving hope today
... one person at a time.***

Florence Booth House, 723 Queen Street West Toronto, ON M6J 1E6. Tel: 416-603-9800

Beauty Within

Mountain View Corps, British Columbia

Chorus

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me;
All His wonderful passion and purity,
O, Thou Spirit Divine,
All my nature refine
'Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*

Season of Prayer

Spend a brief time on each element: sentence prayers of adoration; quiet individual prayers of confession; one voluntary voiced prayer of thanksgiving; naming of items of concern or individuals for the petition element. The corresponding verse of Scripture could be read in between prayer elements.

The ACTS of Prayer

A - Adoration. *Praise the Lord, o my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.* (Psalms 103:1)

C - Confession. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

T - Thanksgiving. *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

S - Supplication. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:6)

Bible study: A Woman of Beauty

Proverbs 31: 10-31 (selected verses)

While some may see in this description of the ideal woman the 'Martha Stewart' of



the Bible, we must look beyond what this woman does and accomplishes, to who she really is. We must see the beauty of her character, her personhood, and discover in her a picture of Christ. She is a woman of 'noble character,' (v10) which we can interpret as a woman of holiness — her beauty ultimately rooted in her relationship with God.

Key verse — 30

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Discuss and compare outward and inner beauty — the physical and the spiritual elements.

Verse of promise — 31

Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

What is the reward? What do 'her works' represent? What role does public praise play? Is it important?

To contemplate: How do I compare to this woman? Does my life reflect the beauty of Jesus, full of the fruit of the Spirit?

Discover the Attribute of Behaviour

Verse	Behaviour	Attribute
12	_____	_____
13	_____	_____
16	_____	_____
17	_____	_____
18	_____	_____
19	_____	_____
20	_____	_____
23	_____	_____
23	_____	_____
25	_____	_____
26	_____	_____
30	_____	_____

For Discussion

Compare her attributes with the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22

Love _____

Joy _____

Peace _____

Patience _____

Kindness _____

Goodness _____

Faithfulness _____

Gentleness _____

Self-control _____

Fresh Ideas!

Adapted from Discipleship Journal

Letting God Speak

In weekly meetings stress the importance of having a daily quiet time.

Develop a form, as a means of helping people do this, which you could use in a group setting. When we all consider a passage of Scripture using this form, invariably God speaks in different ways to group members — according to their particular needs.

God Speaks to You Personally ... Through His Word

Passage: _____ Date: _____

Summarize main thought: _____

How God spoke to me personally: _____

My commitment: _____

Analysis Questions

What is the main idea of the passage? What does it teach me about God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit? Is there a command for me to obey? Is there a sin I should avoid? Is there a promise I can claim? Is there a warning I should heed? (Note: Every question may not apply to a given passage.)

Hot Topics: Want to get your group really fired up? Try the following communication activity:

Choose a controversial topic. Different issues would be appropriate for different groups, but one possibility might be, “God protects Christians.” Have everyone write down a “yes” or “no” answer without discussing it with anyone.

Divide into two groups. Those who answered “yes” go to one side of the room and “no” to the opposite side. Each group spends a few minutes discussing the reason for their answer. Finally, the two groups come together. Each person talks with someone from the opposite side. Usually people are surprised to discover that there are logical reasons to both sides of the question.

Promoting Your Group

Invite friends and co-workers to join a “discovery group.” Your group will want to know upfront exactly what is involved. Start by designing a simple brochure to include basic information (purpose, meeting times, and topics), but also anticipate their questions with a Q & A section:

Who can attend? Anyone from junior high age to retirement.

Will I be expected to attend all the sessions even if I'm not interested in every topic? No, you can come to one or two sessions without being obligated.

I'm busy. Do these sessions require a lot of study? Although some “homework” may be assigned, it will not involve a large time commitment.

It sounds kind of boring to sit around in a church classroom is that all there is to this small group? By no means! Plan other things — social outings, visit museums, pot luck suppers, fellowship sharing together the list is endless!

Going the Distance

Adapted from Discipleship Journal

Small-group leaders often face discouragement when their Bible Study Group runs into difficulties through personality conflicts within the members. Here are some principles that may help go the distance.

Recognize Your Enemy

When members express hostility, defensiveness, or doubt, resist viewing them as 'the enemy.' Our enemy is the devil. Wage war in prayer, and persistently ask for strength. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world" (Ephesians 6:12).

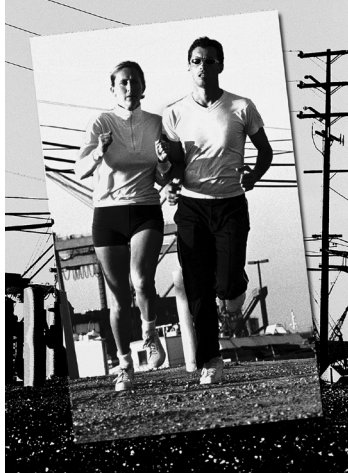
Rally Prayer Support

Ask prayer group leaders in your church to pray against strongholds your members battle with, such as unforgiveness, unbelief, or fear. Offer specific needs and members' names only with their permission.

Rely On God's Word

Consistently point your student to the Bible for answers. God designed it to "correct, rebuke and encourage" (2 Timothy 4:2).

As an example, a leader once said "I had labeled Kathy an impossible case. She felt God demanded too much of her; therefore, she rebelled against reading the Bible. Then, after several months of gently guiding her to the Living Word that is "sharper than any



double-edged sword ... [judging] the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12), I saw her embrace God's love and acceptance. With time and the gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit she freely enjoys reading and studying the Bible.

Resist Force-Feeding

With the desire for spiritual growth in your members' lives, it might be tempting to overfeed them. Scripture will stimulate growth no matter how much or how little is presented. Relax over the amount of spiritual truth they eat. Let the Holy Spirit's leading determine when to address certain doubts and questions and when to set them aside.

Rest In God's Redemptive Plan

Share God's truth then trust Him to enlighten their minds and understanding and lead them to salvation. Jesus states, "No one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him" (John 6:65).

Rejoice and Reap

Giving thanks cultivates inner strength. Rejoice over baby steps of progress:

- someone is reading the Bible for the first time.
- a prayer request is shared.
- a difficult member smiles at you.

God promises that "we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galations 6:9).



God Blesses Broken Things

Margaret Hiscock, Toronto, Ontario

While in Mexico last year, we stopped one afternoon in the beautiful, colonial city of Taxco, famous for its silver. After driving up a narrow winding street, we reached the “city square” consisting of statues, greenery, walkways and benches. From there, more narrow streets fanned out in all directions, with almost every store offering the most beautiful silver objects imaginable. For a change, my two companions and I went into a book store, which also had a number of nativity sets on display. Curious to know how much they cost, I priced several by looking on the bottom of the crèche piece. As I picked one up and turned it over to see the price tag, to my horror the baby Jesus figure was not attached and fell on the hard tiled floor and broke into

three pieces. I was soon the owner of another nativity set and minus twenty US dollars!

I knew instinctively that this incident would carry deeper meaning than a piece of broken ceramic. The body of Jesus was in reality wounded, bruised and broken for us. (Isaiah 53:5) His suffering and death was the cost of our salvation so that our broken relationship with God could be restored.

In thinking of this I was reminded of an article by the late General Albert Orsborn that I had read many years ago entitled “God Blesses Broken Things”.

This is evident in Scripture:

*The body
of Jesus was
... wounded,
bruised
and broken
for us*

Genesis 32: 24–32

Jacob by nature was a deceiver and a schemer. He would go to any lengths to get his own way. But a time came when God confronted him and after wrestling all night to the point of having his hip out of joint so that he was left with a limp, Jacob surrendered. He finally handed over total control of his life to God. It was only after that “breaking”, that God



could bless him. With the blessing Jacob also received a new name, and went on to fulfill God’s plan and purpose in his life and in the nation of Israel. *(This breaking speaks of surrender.)*

Matthew 14:15–21

The gospels record several occasions where Jesus took bread, broke it and then blessed it before giving it to people to eat. Matthew told how Jesus was speaking to great crowds of people who had come to hear Him. When evening came they were hungry and far from their villages, so Jesus instructed His disciples to give them something to eat. All they had available were five loaves and two fish. As inadequate as it seemed, we read that “Taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves.

Then He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.”

No matter how small or insignificant the offering, when it is given to the Master, when it is broken and blessed by Him, there is no end to what can be accomplished. As General Orsborn also wrote, “My life must be Christ’s broken bread ... that other souls refreshed and fed, may share His life through mine.” *(This breaking speaks of service.)*

Mark 14: 3–9

This Scripture describes the occasion when Jesus was in the home of Simon the leper and a woman came in with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. It was customary at that time and in that culture to pour a few drops of perfume on a guest when he arrived at a house, or when he sat down to a meal. But this woman broke the jar and anointed Jesus with the whole contents! Nothing was held back. This costly gesture of total devotion and love pleased Jesus so much He commended her and described what she had done as a “beautiful thing”. *(This breaking speaks of sacrifice)*

Psalms 51:16–17

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” These words of the Psalmist remind us that there is nothing we can do or give to God that would please Him more than a heart that is humble and broken before Him ... broken by surrender to His plan and purpose, broken to serve others and broken to love sacrificially.

Fruit of the Spirit Activity

This idea can be used in building a team spirit with ladies. A small Bible Study group, Book club, Scrapbook group, etc. will benefit from this activity as building strong spiritual relationships also provide encouragement in their journey of faith.

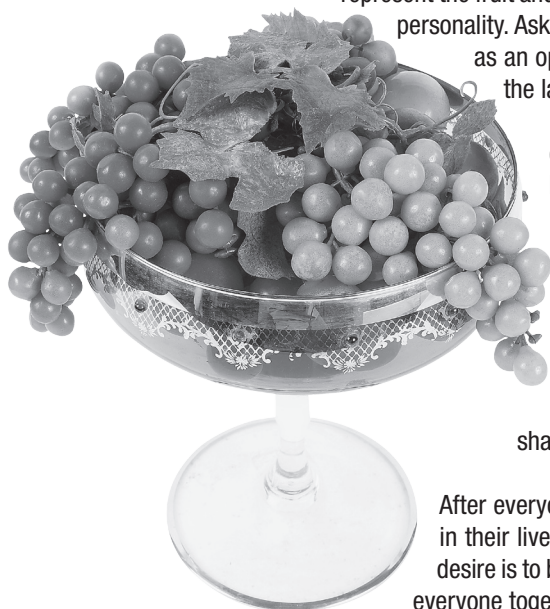
Scripture: Galatians 5: 22 – 23

Goal: To build a strong spiritual team of ladies within your Church.

Materials: Drawing paper
Markers
Coloured paper
Other craft materials optional.



Procedure: Ask each lady to think of a piece of fruit that describes her personality the best. Have each one draw the fruit or create something to represent the fruit and ask them to share how this relates to their personality. Ask them to think carefully about it and use it as an opportunity to share about themselves with the ladies in the group to create a team.



e.g. Grapes best describe me. I love grapes but I can be picked out of the bunch to be alone. I can lead but don't mind being a follower. I love working with people. I sometimes do not take criticism well. I am learning not to wear my feelings on my sleeve.

This is a great opportunity for women to share in a fun and interesting way.

After everyone has shared remind them how the fruit in their lives is powered by the Holy Spirit that God's desire is to build strong spiritual relationships and bring everyone together as one.

Helping A Needy World — Acts 3: 1 -10

Linda Bradbury, Atlanta, USA

Introduction

The book of Acts tells us in simple terms how the Early Church functioned and affected its world. Here is a look at an interesting experience in the life of the young Church.

It will help you to understand what has brought the Church to this point.

The believers had been given a command and two promises.

- The command was to tarry in Jerusalem (v4)
- Promise number one was that they would receive the Holy Spirit. (v5)
- Promise number two was, “This same Jesus ... will come back.” (v11)

While they waited for the Second Coming, they were to live lives full of victory and joy.

To do this they would have to be obedient to God’s guidance. In chapter 2, the believers were obedient and God filled them through His wonderful Spirit.

(The Holy Spirit is not an “it.” The Holy Spirit is “Him” — God’s special way of being with His people.)

Many Christians struggle to be good and are exhausted by their efforts because they have never truly surrendered their will to His way. In too many lives the clay tries to dictate to the Potter what it wants to be.

The Obedient Believers Are Praying

Twice we see the importance of prayer in the Early Church. In chapter 1 they were praying.

In chapter 3, they are on their way to a prayer meeting.

The encounter mentioned in verses 2 and 3 would have been very normal because his encounter with the people of God, the beggar was totally helpless. What happened after that encounter made him a completely different person. In verse 4 Peter and John are not timid survivors. They have absolute confidence according to verse 6.

Peter did not give the man what he requested. He gave him what he needed. We live in a crippled world that needs help. Jesus can and will change the world if we will present Him. It is not silver and gold that the world needs. The world needs Jesus.

The world needs someone to reach out a hand of faith to the people

It took faith to do what they did in verse 7.

When believers reach out in faith, great things happen. (v8)

When believers start living in a way that demonstrates that what they say is true, a struggling world will find the help that is needed. The need today is for Christians to live the Spirit-filled life and reach out to a needy world.

Conclusion

God will do mighty things to change crippled lives in our world when we fully trust Him. The miracles that are recorded in the Book of Acts can be repeated today if we become an obedient people.

A number of years ago, a radio preacher made a comment that struck to the heart. He said, “God has lots of servants, but not many friends.”

Many could relate to that statement because they realize that they are “servants.” Daily they go through the routine of singing, giving thanks, making intercession, and memorizing

Prayer Journaling

Adapted by Cath Ward, Toronto, ON. Resource: Discipleship Journal.

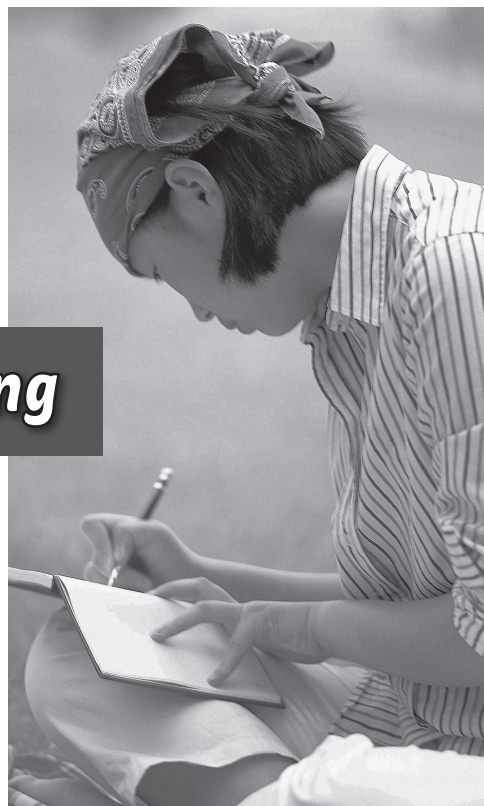
Scripture. Then opening up the Bible to receive daily orders and spending the rest of the day attempting to carry them out.

Certainly God wants and commands us to be servants. But a refreshing and revolutionary day opens when we realize that the greatest commandment, to love the Lord with all your heart; soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) — is not primarily an exhortation to do more for Him, but to grow more intimate with Him.

Scripture says, “The LORD takes delight in His people” (Psalms 149:4). That means He is enamored by us, excited about us, and interested in everything that relates to us. He wants to be woven into the fabric of our daily experiences, and there is nothing trivial about any thought or incident that touches our lives.

To aid in corralling the important matters of the heart, there is a tool that can become a measurable record of our developing intimacy with God.

One of the most effective ways to involve God in



daily life is to keep a journal — a record of your spiritual journey, thoughts and experiences. It will help to find a balance between service for God and friendship with Him.

Here are suggestions that will help you get the most benefit from keeping a spiritual journal.

How to Begin

Write honestly. One of the best definitions of intimate friendship was written by George Eliot: “Friendship is the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words.”

Whenever I’m not feeling “safe” enough with the Lord to be completely honest about my thoughts and feelings, it’s because I have

forgotten that He loves “me”— even the “me” of my innermost being (Psalms 51:6).

To truly experience His unconditional love, we must meet with the Lord in the “dressing room.” This is the backstage area where the dirty, unsightly garments of pride, envy, anger, greed, lust, jealousy, and every other evil thing lie in the dark corners of the heart.

God is not that interested in the stage image we often present to others. He prefers talking to us in the dressing room. We can learn much about Him during these private chats. It may be hard to realize that God not only delights in praise and worship, He welcomes the unvarnished thoughts and emotions. The following journal entry was written by someone about strained work relationships. (All names have been changed.)

people takes too much effort. I'm not willing to give anymore. I know I'm going to Heaven; let them find their own way. It just hurts too bad to try to love them. Am I just supposed to take their snubbing and backbiting?

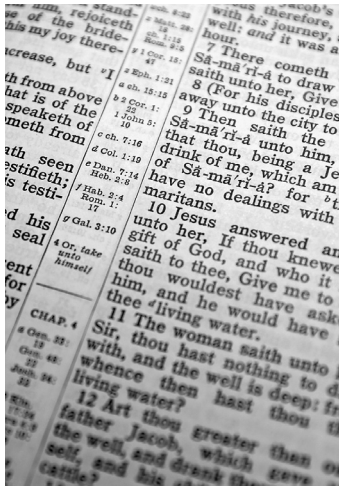
A few days later God's response was recorded: *“Remind the people ... to show true humility toward all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures ... But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy”* (Titus 3:1-5 NIV).

The desperate cry to the Lord transformed the work relationships and over time several people there were led to the Lord. Until we are honest with God about our innermost feelings,

no matter how ugly — there can be no true resolution of our problems. God is not shocked by our honesty; He delights in it.

Integrate Scripture with Your Life

Many secular psychiatrists, psychologists, and “self-help” experts are masters at leading people into the inner self. But they often do not provide guidelines as to what to do with this self-discovery.



**When Scripture
affects us
... it's because
we see how
it addresses
a specific
situation
in our lives**

Lord, I want out! I can't take it anymore. I hate my job. I hate the people at my job, and they clearly hate me. I don't swear. I don't drink. I'm just not like them. Lisa even sabotaged my work. I know she threw away those reports I'd done. It's too much. I don't even want to get out of bed sometimes. Loving unlovable

The Scriptures clearly warn us of the danger of attempting to discover the paths of “truth” and “enlightenment” by our own reasoning: “He who trusts in himself is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26). The solution is not to avoid self-exploration, but to process the discovery through the grid of Scripture and prayer.

When Scripture affects us the most, it's because we see how it addresses a specific situation in our lives. For example, if we are convicted by the exhortation of Philippians 4:6 to "not be anxious about anything," don't merely write down the desired behaviour; describe in detail what you are anxious about. Is it finances? A situation at work? Health? A relationship? Maybe something exciting is happening. Whatever it is, explain the event in detail and describe how the particular Scripture passage relates to the situation.

Here's an example from a journal:

"You make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands" (Psalms 92:4). Edward did it! Yesterday afternoon in the crowded and noisy restaurant on campus he became a Christian. I'm really glad, Lord. And what's more, I learned a lesson about how to use a noisy environment in presenting the gospel. I said to Edward, 'Jesus Christ doesn't seem relevant in this environment, does He? Jesus said that when He returns, people are going to be carrying on with business as usual and then BOOM! He'll be back.' It was perfect for Edward, Lord. Thanks for giving me the idea, and I do "sing for joy at the works of your hands."

"Write to Express, Not to Impress."

That helpful advice comes from Frank Thomas, author of *How to Write the Story of Your Life*. He says that in journal writing you are not writing to impress a future audience but to reveal yourself to the Lord. One of the

refreshing things about keeping a journal is that it encourages total freedom of expression without concern over formal rules of writing. Since our thoughts and emotions are often vague — incomplete and random — writing them down will often be a rather messy endeavour.

You may have to scratch out words, draw arrows, or even contradict yourself. Your words may be misspelled, "mis-grammared" or "mis-syntaxed." But don't worry about how it looks! Have fun and enjoy the Lord. Concentrate on exposing your heart, not on flawless writing.

God understands your thoughts from afar (Psalms 139:2); He knows what you mean even before you try to write it out. The purpose of writing is to help you better understand your thoughts so that you can honestly discuss them with Him.

Although there is no right way to keep a journal, here are two basic methods — description and list-making to get you started.

Two Basic Methods

Description. This method involves writing down episodes from your daily life. They can be any length. If they are written with enough detail and honest emotion these vignettes will provide great satisfaction as you reread them and see answers to prayer and your growing dependence on God.

You may want to record actual portions of conversations with others. Describe how you felt, did it hurt your feelings or anger you? Why? Did you hate to see it end or did it bore

*The purpose
of writing is to
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Keeping a journal can be a unique prayer activity

you to tears? Perhaps you dominated the discussion — again. Remember to be honest with the Lord. You are safe with Him. If you like, you can title these entries to avoid mixing them in with other subjects.

List making. This method can be applied to just about any experience. Lists can be generated from specific passages of the Bible or from your observations of life.

Lists could have titles such as, “The fears I have that God says I shouldn’t.” This list is based on Isaiah 41:10: “Do not fear, for I am with you.” Another one is, “My most building comments of today,” based on Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” A favourite list might be; “Things other people said to me today that really made me feel good.” If prayer time is limited, a list of direct quotations from others allows us to be thankful for the progress God is making in my life and for the impact it is

having on the lives of others.

“Things that matter today” helps focus only on the most important issues to talk about with God.

Lists are also time-savers. A list is a brief account of things that have happened since the last time you wrote in your journal. It captures quickly and concisely the events and emotions experienced during that time.

You Can Do It!

Keeping a journal is not just for those who love to write. Anyone can learn how to do it and enjoy it.

Recently, at a journal seminar, a participant who bordered on script phobia (the fear of writing) described what he had gained from the experience: “I have been better able to express my feelings and enjoy deeper, quality conversations with God. In addition, it has been a springboard to creative ideas and a means of discovering areas in my life that need developing.”

This can be your experience. When you reread your journal, you once again encounter people who have been both curse and a blessing in your life — and you may be moved to pray for them and give thanks. Again you can experience, both happy and sad moments, that will lead you to enlist the help of the Holy Spirit in getting God’s perspective on the matter.

If we let it, keeping a journal can be a unique prayer activity. As we write, we see what is truly in our hearts. If we offer our hearts’ contents to God, He will pour His love and compassion on our frailties and draw us closer to Him.

Influential Characters

Resource: Discipleship Journal

It is suggested that the following could be used as a Bible study for small groups.

Many stories in scripture illustrate the power of influence in action. In each of these Bible studies each character exercises significant influence in someone else's life. Read each story and then consider the questions that follow.

Jethro and Moses, Exodus 18:5-27

- How did Jethro influence Moses?
- How did Jethro's counsel affect the nation of Israel?
- What does Moses' response to Jethro's counsel suggest about Moses' character?

Peter and Paul, Galatians 2:11-16

- Who exercised influence in this story?
- What motivated Peter to submit to the "conservative Jewish clique"?
- How did Peter's actions affect other believers in Antioch?
- How does Paul's influence contrast with Peter's?

Jehoiada, Joash, and Judah, 2 Chronicles 23:1-3,11,16-17; 24:1-2, 17-25

- Who exercised influence in this story?
- How does this story display the strength of Jehoiada's influence in particular?



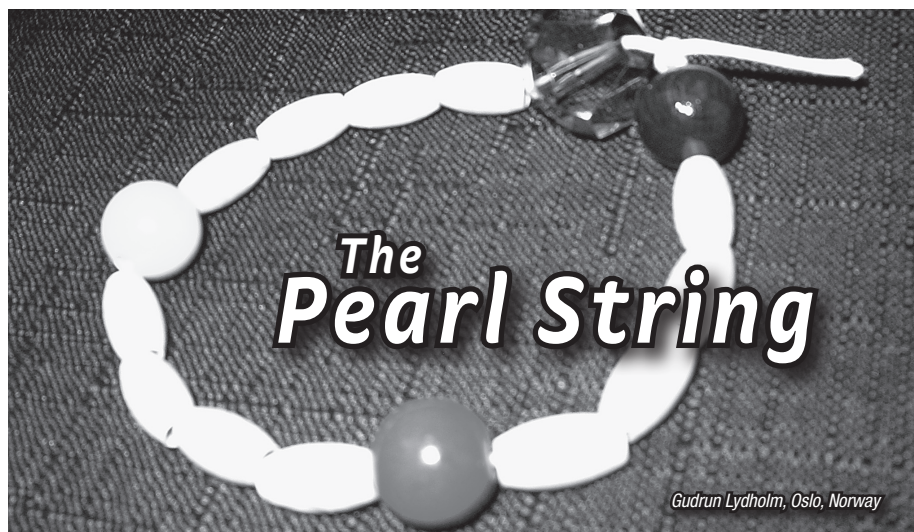
- What were the consequences for Joash and for Judah when Jehoiada's positive influence was no longer present?

Jesus and the Woman at the Well, John 4:3-42

- How did Jesus influence the Samaritan woman?
- How did she influence her fellow townspeople?

Naaman, a Young Girl, and Elisha, 2 Kings 5:1-15

- List each person who affected someone else's decisions.
- What similarities do you see among these influencers?
- How are they different from one another?
- What do these similarities and differences suggest to you about the nature of influence?



This prayer string of pearls is meant to be a tangible support for prayer and meditation, a constant reminder of the basic belief of Christians. As you feel the touch of the pearls you concentrate your prayers around these basics.

The Blue Pearl

The spring of purity and holiness. God our Father. "You are worthy, our Lord and God. To receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Revelation 4:11

"A feeling of awe in the presence of God is common to religious experience. We reach out to that which is different from ourselves, to complete purity and goodness, not simply to greater power. What we are recognising is the holiness of God. Our sense of awe is often accompanied by an awareness of guilt and unworthiness in the presence of divine holiness."

"We are called to reflect the holiness of God. God is holy, awesome in His majesty and in the beauty of His character. He is all that true love could desire. His children are called to a related

holiness, dedicated to the service of the holy God and called to be like Him in character."

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.
Psalms 51: 10-12

The Four Pearls of Meditation and Reflection

Perfect in holiness. Meditate on the words from Revelation 4:8, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Reveal Yourself to me, God, in Your holiness and majesty!

Perfect in wisdom. In silence let the words from Romans 11:33, be rooted in you: "O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

God, let me grow in wisdom that comes from You!

Perfect in power. Meditate on the words from Isaiah 40:25-26, 29. “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? Says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens; who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them, each by name. Because of this great power and mighty strength not one of them is missing . . . He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”

God, be my strength!

Perfect in love. Receive the words from 1 John 4:16 and Romans 5:8. “And so we know and rely on the love of God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in him.” “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Thank You, God, for Your love for me!

Red Pearl

Jesus Christ, God’s eternal Son our Saviour.

Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1:3-4

The loving obedience of Jesus was the means through which God reconciled the world to Himself. We are part of that world. Salvation is to enter by faith into the story of Jesus, so that, associated with and transformed by His death and risen life, we may share the fruits of His self-giving. Because Jesus is our Saviour, the story of Jesus is our salvation story.

May Your grace transform me day by day, that the wonder of salvation may stay fresh and

real for me. May my life reflect Your presence and Your resurrection power.

The Four Pearls of Meditation and Reflection

Repentance. Bring before God all that creates a distance between yourself and Him, bring all that needs to be forgiven. Be still in His presence, just pray: *Our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!*

Grace. Receive and accept the words from 2 Corinthians 12:9 as spoken to you: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”



Faith. While trusting Him, surrender yourself to Him and submit your whole being into His hands — He who was, who is and who is to come. In silence make room for a growing faith in Him. *Christ, come be with me and walk the road of my life ahead of me, next to me, that I in faith can live in Your grace and peace!*

Assurance. Rest in the knowledge that you are precious, loved and accepted.

Yellow Pearl

The Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life.

"To the Christian, the Holy Spirit is both a tender, intimate presence and a mystery beyond full understanding. He brings God near to us and directs our attention to Jesus."

"The Holy Spirit is always contemporary. He is God acting for us today, giving us confidence in



the Christian mission and enabling us to look forward with hope to the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes ... the Holy Spirit, giver of life, guides and vitalizes our mission to live the story, to tell the story and to help others to make it their own.

Send your Holy Spirit over me and fill me with His fire and power. Make my life and service a living and trustworthy testimony to You.

The Four Pearls of Meditation and Reflection

God's gracious provision. "Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, I am sending you" And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:21-22

Holy Spirit, come and rest on me!

The sanctifying Spirit at work. Meditate on the word from Romans 8:26. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

Holy Spirit, come alive in me!

A radical life-change. Meditate what the words from Galatians 5:25 mean for your life: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Holy Spirit, come alive in me!

The Fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23

Holy Spirit, may Your fruits be seen in my life. Lord and giver,

equip me for Your service!

The pearl of intercession. "Others — the World. "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." John 3.16

While interceding for others, those close to you, those you hardly know, those placed on your heart to pray for, keep in mind the love of God to all.

Conclusion

Conclude this time of prayer and reflection by holding the whole string of pearls in your hand as a sign of surrender to God, resting in Him who is, who knows and who has all power. Take all the time you need for this!

Precious Moments of Blessing

Patsy Rowe, Bowmanville, Ontario

Encourage those who have a collection of “Precious Moments” figurines to participate by bringing one or more of their collection to mount a display and/or share a personal memory of a Precious Moment that has happened in their life.

Introduction of Theme

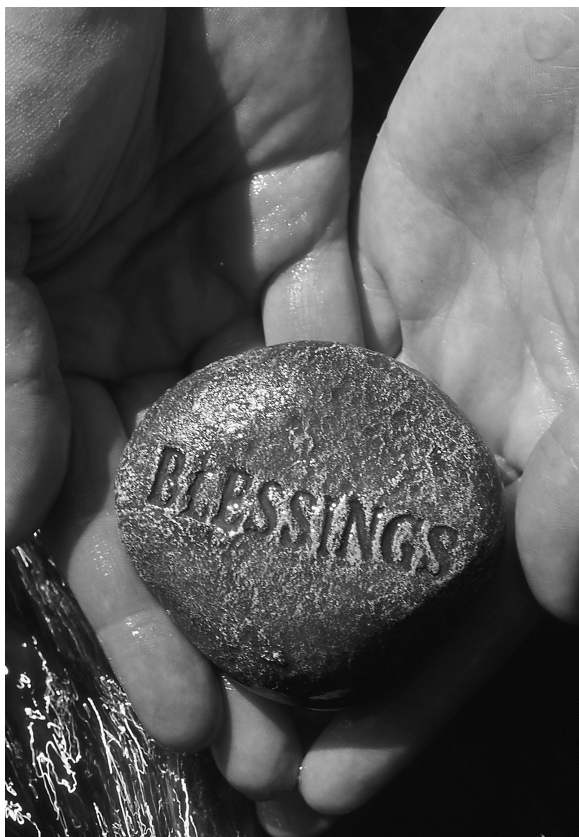
Precious Moments: Some people collect them; others live them and call them ‘blessings’. Precious Moments or Blessings — we are surrounded by them everyday; yet there are times when we fail to recognize them and to respond to them with thanksgiving. Today, let us do just that — recognize our blessings and respond with thanksgiving to God.

We will begin our journey by reading Psalm 139 together.

Devotional

Precious Moments are Blessings from God. After sharing precious moments with each other — one thing is certain, they are blessings from God even if we didn’t recognize them at the time.

The very words ‘precious moments’ make us think of something positive that has happened



to us personally, or to others when we have been present. Such moments are recalled with joy and thanksgiving. To fully appreciate the precious moment, and to bask in its full glory, we must do so with the realization that all blessings in life come from God, to whom we must give thanks.

Today as we take a few minutes to reflect on the goodness of God, and the many blessings we have received, we should resolve to express our thanks by being a blessing to others.

Invite the women to fill in the Count Your Blessings Thanksgiving Survey. Then follow through with personal reflection and response.

Count Your Blessings — Thanksgiving Survey

Fill in the blank beside each letter with something that you consider a blessing of God that begins with that letter.

T _____
H _____
A _____
N _____
K _____
S _____
G _____
I _____
V _____
L _____
N _____
G _____

Personal Reflection and Response

1 Chronicles 16:34 says: “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever”. Name a way that God has been good to you recently.

Name someone that God has placed in your life and is a blessing to you.

Having reflected on how God has blessed you, identify someone — relative, friend, colleague — this week to whom you can find a way of showing practical support.

Here are a few ideas:

- Send someone a card to encourage them.
- Take someone a batch of cookies or freshly baked bread.
- Make dinner and deliver to someone who is alone.
- Offer to take a senior grocery shopping.
- Visit a lonely elderly person.
- Send someone flowers just for the fun of it. The list can be endless!

Scripture: In Psalm 139 – (NIV)

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.



A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Our Father in heaven, we recognize and thank you that you are our Provider. We thank you that, before we were born, you provided those who loved us. We thank you for providing those who taught us to love others as you love us. We thank you for surrounding us with the signs of your love for us — your creation. We thank you for friends, as we laugh and cry together, as we serve each other and as we together serve others. We thank you for helping us to recognize the many blessings we often take for granted. We also thank you that you give us a heart of compassion and love for those who find it difficult to recognize your blessings. Our desire is that you would use us to share your love with others. We are so blessed and we want to be a blessing. We give glory to your name and give thanks in anticipation for the many ways you will use us to create precious moments in the lives of those around us — here in our church, in our workplace, in our homes and the communities where we live.

Conclude With Refreshments

A Celebration of Christmas With Friends

Natalie Peckford, Toronto, ON



Life demands a lot from us and often does not afford many opportunities to get together to just enjoy each other as friends. We all work, have families, etc. — life revolves around the needs of family and the demands of life. As women we are so often in service to others, with few opportunities to be served ourselves. What better time than Christmas to come together and celebrate who we have been created to be — daughters of a loving Heavenly Father, part of the family of God in which each one of us is valued and celebrated for who we are!

Choose a date early in December long before pageants and other Christmas gatherings crowd the calendar. Send invitations to friends for an evening of light refreshment and dessert.

On the evening of the party, the tree is decorated, the table is set in an elegant 'White Christmas' theme, the lights are low, candles are lit, and Christmas music gently ushers everyone into the room. Conversation usually flows easily when women get together, but just in case have something ready to help 'break the ice'. Try opening some Christmas crackers and enjoy the jokes with one another.

A variety of hors d'oeuvres are prepared — both hot and cold, including:

Cheese tray. Include some well-known varieties but introduce something that might be new, accented by fruit, crackers, and nuts.

Assorted crudités and dips/spreads. Be

creative with the assortment of vegetables and the way in which the tray is arranged. Square platters and bowls can bring a contemporary flare to the presentation. Incorporate ethnic flavors in the dips used. Pâté with an assortment of crackers and flatbreads. Try some of the lighter fish varieties — smoked trout is excellent! Fill small wonton cups with your favourite savoury mousse or hot dip — hot artichoke dip is an excellent choice.

Meat and/or fish. Spread herbed cream cheese on slices of ham, roll, then slice into pinwheels. Layered shrimp cocktail dip. Serve bite-size pieces of roasted salmon on baby spinach leaves, topped with red pepper jelly.

Beverages. Offer a variety of drinks — light juices, sodas, or a festive punch.

Dessert. End the evening with coffee, tea, and a decadent dessert — your favourite cheesecake, perhaps?

The important thing with any menu like this is to include a variety of foods that assure everyone will find something they enjoy. Go the extra mile with platter presentation — remember, it is a celebration. You want everyone to feel pampered.

As you make plans for Christmas celebrations this year, why not set aside an evening to celebrate those who have enriched your life through their friendship.



Shop 'til You Drop

Adapted by June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario.

*Resource: "Working with Women",
Elaine Whittaker, Australia Eastern Territory*

Plan an evening of "Christmas Shopping" for the ladies to be held mid-November. They can shop until they drop at a variety of sale booths made available.

Invite ladies to take the responsibility for Christmas decorations and create a craft stall called *'To Die For Craft Boutique'*. Ask the younger women to provide the *'Yummy Sweet Store'*. Design the evening to bring all ladies, members and their friends plus women from nearby churches and communities to share in fellowship together.

Welcome

Have a greeter welcome the ladies with a decorative shopping bag. An individual with sales experience would fit well.

Market Stall Holder

Invite a variety of people from your local community to bring their products either for display and sale.

- Hand-painted jewellery
- Cards
- Home-made Christmas cakes
- Creative Memories, (scrapbooking)
- Silk-painted scarves
- Avon
- Tupperware
- Quilting
- Books

Demonstrations

A professional florist could show easy and quick methods of table arrangements for Christmas.

Have someone demonstrate and give ideas how to wrap or decorate Christmas gifts that are of difficult shapes.

Christmas Music (Have a variety of music choices they could purchase as gifts. Include CD ideas suitable for children, teens and young adults).

Refreshments

Serve tea/coffee and slices of Christmas cake.

Shopping Day!

Plan a day for the purpose of Christmas shopping in November when the ladies can enjoy a full day of shopping without their children. In your preparation ask the ladies to submit the ages and gender of the individuals they have on their Christmas list and create a list of suitable gift ideas to assist with the shopping day. Have a copy of the list printed for each lady, leaving a space where they can place the name of the individual beside the gift idea.

Conclude the day with dinner at a local restaurant, include a time of thanksgiving for the opportunity to enjoy a day together.



JESUS

God's Glory Revealed

Resource: Memories 2005 — USA Resource Manual

Setting the Mood

Set up four stations around the room by hanging a mirror at a height where the women can easily look at their reflection (square mirror tiles work well). Place the following signs by them:

- Who do I look like most in my family? Do I favour my mother or father? What features do I see that are unique to me?
- How has my reflection changed through the years?
- How did I get my name? What does it mean? If I could choose a different name, what would it be?
- What dreams did I have as a child? Have they been accomplished? What things would I still like to do?

As the women arrive, serve them a cool drink. Play traditional Christmas carols to add to the atmosphere. Instruct them to move around the room stopping at each station to ponder the question there.

When they are finished, invite them to share with each other some of their thoughts and reflections.

Centrepieces

Cover the tables with Christmas tablecloths. Place a square mirror, surrounded by evergreen branches in the centre of the table. Wrap two boxes in Christmas paper, putting a baby rattle in one box and gluing a small mirror to the inside bottom of the other, add bows and place on the mirror. These will be used during the devotions.

Stone of Remembrance

Take individual photos of each woman or ask them to supply one for this project. Have the women glue their photos onto a smooth, large rock. Remind them that Jesus is the Rock and that He chooses to dwell in each of them. God's glory revealed in us! Our likeness to Him should be unmistakable.

God's Glory

We often hear or see the phrase "God's glory" in books, songs, magazines and sermons. In Isaiah 6:3 we read that the seraphs called to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is filled with His glory." I Corinthians 10:31 tells us, "whatever

you do, do it all for the glory of God.” But what does that mean? What is God’s glory?

Imagine that the great artist Vincent vanGogh painted a picture of an intimate starry evening with two lovers. He spent day and night perfecting the painting, creating a masterpiece that he calls “Love at Night.” But instead of displaying it for all to see, he wraps the painting in brown paper, labels it and tucks it away in the attic. The painting is still a beautiful masterpiece but no one can see it. Years pass and vanGogh comes across the painting and decides to show it to his colleagues and friends. When he tears away the brown wrapping revealing the splendour behind it, the people are amazed.

In this same way, God’s glory can be compared to God ripping off the brown paper that veiled our eyes, to reveal His glory in the face of Christ. His exact reflection is in this little babe, His Son Jesus, who came to earth, was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Hebrews 1:3 tells us, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.”

There are two beautifully wrapped gifts on the table. When we take the wrapping off the first box, we discover a baby’s rattle. This symbolizes the priceless gift God gave to us in His only Son. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). God became human, a



man, dwelling in flesh and blood. He took off the wrapping so that we could see His glory revealed in Christ.

In the second box we discover a mystery that had been kept for generations, but now God has chosen to make known the glorious riches of this mystery to the saints, to you and me. Remove

the wrapping from this second box and pass the box around. The women will discover the mirror glued to the bottom of the box, which reflects their image. What has He revealed?

Colossians 1:27 tells us, “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

When you arrived today, you were asked to go around the room to the different stations and spend a few moments thinking about your uniqueness as you looked at your reflection in the mirror. As children, we often resemble our parents and reflect the life lessons they have instilled in us.

As children of the Heavenly Father, and the expression of Christ, we should reflect His glory in our faces and by our actions. When we use our abilities to help others, they will see Jesus in us and praise Him for the help they have received. In Matthew 5:16 (KJV) Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Song: SASB 22/TB 576 *To God be the Glory*



A Taste of Christmas

As enjoyed by the ladies of Richmond Hill Community Church, Richmond Hill, ON



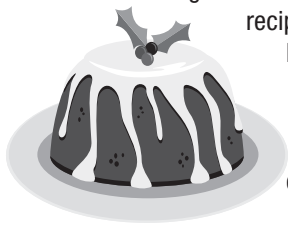
Introduction

Christmas gatherings can be very stressful for families. Plan an evening where ladies can come together to experience a taste of Christmas before having to plan family events. The evening should be relaxed and provide an opportunity to invite friends to join. The following activities will provide some guidance, however you may have other ideas that would work well for your ladies.

Feature Cooking Demonstration

Invite a chef or a few ladies to provide a taste of Christmas from their recipes — creative appetizers, main dish, desserts/sweets, ideas which ladies can serve family and friends during the holidays. Prepare

recipes so that the ladies can see how they are prepared or have them prepared in advance. They will enjoy having a taste.



Favourite Recipes

Invite the ladies to bring their favourite recipe card for the purpose of creating a small booklet

for every lady in attendance. Charge \$5.00 to cover the cost of copying the booklet.

Special Music

Have a guest soloist to add a gentle touch to your devotional time in keeping with the theme of Christmas. If you don't have a soloist have a time of singing with the ladies.

Special Speaker

Enjoy a spiritual taste of Christmas by inviting a guest to share a time of devotional reflection.

Book Table

If there's a Christian bookstore in your community invite them to supply a variety of Christmas gift ideas for purchase, or invite the ladies to bring their used books to sell as a fund raiser for Women's Ministry.

Gift Ideas

Have a display set up of creative gift suggestions for men, women, children and teens. Coming up with new ideas every year for gift giving is one of the common stresses related to Christmas.





Christmas Bon-bons

*Adapted by June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario
Resource: Australia Eastern Territory*

end of the bon-bon. You may use a bit of glue to keep the doily in place. Guests will be delighted to know you took the time to make personal bon-bons. There are all kinds of small items at Christian Book stores that can be used to encourage the spiritual journey of your guest.

It's easy to make your own Christmas Bon-bons (Christmas Crackers) using serviettes, toilet roll cores and paper doilies. First collect 18 toilet rolls centres each of equal size. This will make 6 bon-bons.

Place the paper napkin on the table. Put the 3 separate toilet rolls next to one another at the end of the napkin. Fill the middle roll with small gifts and sweets.

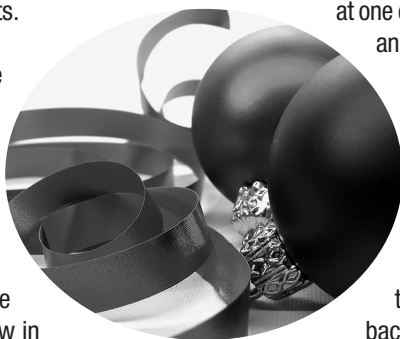
Roll the napkin around the cardboard rolls, and using craft glue, glue along the length of the napkin and seal together.

Using decorator ribbon, wrap it between the middle and end rolls and tie a bow in each. Remove the roll at each end and tighten the bow.

Take the centre of two small sized paper doilies, twist them and tuck them into each

Centrepiece

For the base of the centrepiece use a papier maché box of any size covered with the border cut from a holly-patterned paper tablecloth. First, mix some glue with water (About 3cms of mixture in a jar will be sufficient) then paint the outside of the box. Using a strip of the holly border, align the edge with the box base and glue around the box, overlapping slightly at one corner. Tuck excess paper, if any, down into the box, gluing to secure. Glue a row of gold tinsel around or tie a gold ribbon, around the box.



Fill the box with red, green and gold Christmas balls. Separate the holly trimmed serviettes from the back layer and tuck in among the balls, leaving the points exposed. Continue doing this until the balls and the serviette points are well mixed. Tuck fresh holly springs around the edge of the box, taking the stems down into the box.

Use Your Loaf

*Adapted from Resource Book for
Home Leagues, U.K. Territory*

Preparation:

Research different recipes for bread, the history of bread or flour milling.

Obtain a range of different types of bread for tasting. Sell the loaves of bread used for display and give proceeds to an Overseas Missions Project.

Contact a local bakery and invite someone to come and talk about their work and products.

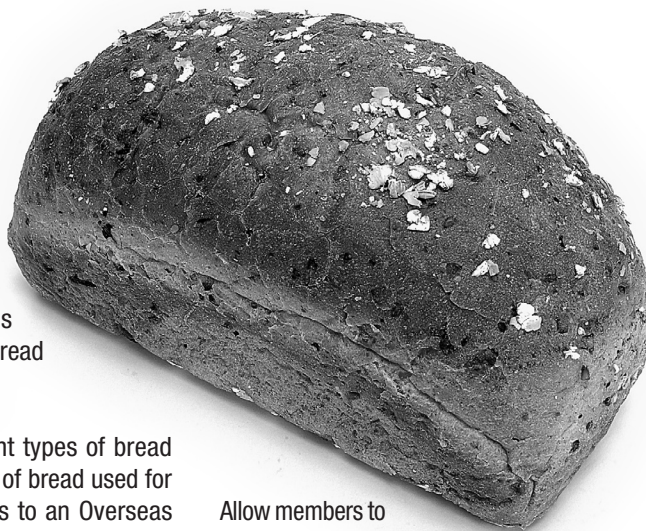
Suggested Songs

SASB 579/TB 592, *He Giveth More Grace*
SASB 930/TB 624, *Sowing In The Morning*



Fellowship

Display a range of different types of bread. Large supermarkets now sell a variety of different breads from different countries. If you have ladies in your fellowship from other countries, ask if they will bake a loaf or bring a recipe of bread that is unique to their country.



Allow members to taste the various kinds of breads — find out what they like best.

Taste Test

Have loaves of bread from a reputable local bakery — some (home) baked from “scratch”; some baked in a bread-maker. Make sure you keep the loaves separate — cut into cubes, set out under three separate headings and see if the ladies can taste the difference! Have a small prize to give to the person who could distinguish which was what!

Recipe Exchange

Prior to meeting ask ladies to bring their favourite bread making recipe, (either home or “machine” made) for a recipe exchange. (Ideas: milk loaf, sesame and herb bread, bran loaf, granary loaf and fruit loaves, these are but a few that can be found when a bread-making machine is purchased.) Type out and add to the exchange any unusual recipes. Encourage members to tell of their bread-making experiences, their successes or failures.

Quiz

What are the main ingredients for bread-making? *Flour, yeast, salt, water and time*

Bread stays fresher in the fridge — true or false? *False, it causes bread to dry up*

How many is a baker's dozen? *13*

What did Moses call the food God provided from Heaven? *Manna*

How many loaves did Jesus originally have to feed the 5,000? *Five*

How many baskets of scraps were left over? *12*

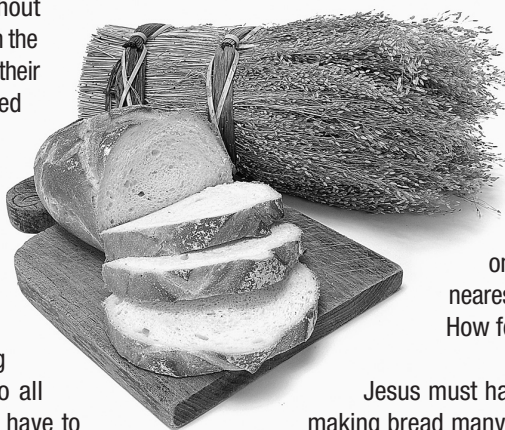
What is Melba toast? *Bread very thinly sliced and toasted*

What are the main ingredients for bread pudding? *Bread, dried fruit, eggs, milk*

Devotional

Scripture Reading: John 6:22-41

How wonderful to smell fresh cooked bread! It whets one's appetite. Bread has always been the main substance in our daily nourishment. Life just would not be the same without bread. Nowadays, even the worst cooks can make their own bread. No one need struggle to knead the dough, then find a warm spot to allow it to rise, and eventually place into tins and bake. It is now possible to buy a bread-making machine that will do all this for you. You only have to measure the ingredients, place in the machine, set the timer and wait for the aroma to fill the room, and — hey presto! — out comes a delicious loaf of bread. To produce bread we need flour, and as we all know flour comes from wheat. To grow



wheat we need the seed, soil and water. How often we have grumbled when it has rained constantly; when we have been unable to dry our washing; when every time we leave the house we have the inconvenience of carrying an umbrella. If we are on holiday, we pray that it will not rain, yet do we realize just how selfish we are? We should be grateful for the food and water God provides for us. We only have to go to the nearest shop for our bread. How fortunate we are!

Jesus must have seen His mother making bread many times — not in the latest appliances available these days, but in a crude oven, although I should imagine it to be far more tasty than today's bread. Even in Jesus' day, bread was the main diet. In John 6:1-15, we see that Jesus realised how important it was to feed those who had come

Homemade Scones (Raisin Biscuits)

Jane Shirran

3 cups of flour	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter (cool)
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar	2 eggs
4 tsp baking powder (slightly heaping)	1 cup milk
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt	1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp nutmeg (grated is the best)	1 cup raisins (optional)
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Shortening (margarine)(cool)	

Mix all dry ingredients together

Add shortening and butter, mix into dry ingredients until crumbly

Add raisins to flour mixture

Pour wet ingredients into dry and mix only until it comes together — do not over mix!

On floured surface lightly knead into a ball and flatten to $\frac{3}{4}$ " — treat the dough kindly!

Cut and place on baking tray

Bake for about 18-22 minutes at 425 degrees fahrenheit

Yields 18-20 Scones using 2" cutter

Wonderful right out of the oven with butter and home made jam!

(Always flaky & light as long as you don't over knead!)



to hear Him preach. He knew how hungry they were. He gave them the bread they needed. No doubt He remembered the times when He was hungry, especially when He had retreated to the wilderness, where the devil had challenged Him to turn some stones into bread. How tempting that must have been!

There are many instances in the Bible when bread was important. Perhaps the most significant was at the Last Supper, when Jesus took some bread, thanked God for it and broke it apart. Giving it to each disciple

He said, 'This is my body given for you. Eat it in remembrance of me.'

It is very rare these days that we give thanks to God for the bread we eat, yet He continues to supply us with all we need. Sometimes, we are so wrapped up in our little world that we become unaware of the needs of others. Let us remember others in our prayers, particularly those who have a far greater need than ours.

Prayer:

Dear Father God, we thank You for opportunity to meet with You today. We thank You for giving us all that we need. Sometimes, when we appear to be dissatisfied, help us to realize how fortunate we are. Be with those who would be content with just a crust of bread. There are times, God, when we have more than enough on our plates. Help us not to be wasteful, but to prepare and use only what we need.

There are many people in need, not only abroad but in our own country too. Open our

eyes to their need, and let us respond with love, compassion and practical help.

Dear Jesus, help us to remember how You sacrificed Your life for us; how You asked us to remember You when You broke the bread at the Last Supper. We give so little in return, yet we have so much. Help us to share what we have, as You share with us.

*We ask that Your love and presence will remain with us now and for evermore.
Amen.*

Refreshments:

Sandwiches on a variety of breads

Fruit Breads

Scones with homemade strawberry jam and cream with, of course, an 'army' cup of tea!

Relax and enjoy!



Social Butterflies

Adapted from "Great Ideas" Australia Southern Territory



Social Butterflies is designed to create an oasis of fellowship, so all arrangements for the activities are kept fairly simple.

The first event could be a Chinese Banquet. Food can be ordered from a local Chinese Restaurant and a lovely ambience be created with soft lighting and decorated tables with candles and butterflies made from tulle material.

Different women attend different events, which means creating groups with broad appeal. Sometimes the event is considered 'cool' enough for younger women to attend.

This group can be flexible as far as meeting

dates so that women are not excluded due to other commitments. Social Butterflies can enable the building of relationships and friendships in a relaxed atmosphere.

Some activities, though not limited to, that could be considered for this group:

- Saturday Bargain Shopping Day
- Organized Garage Sale Hunting
- International Banquet — held in one of the ladies homes
- Saturday Morning Breakfast at a favourite restaurant
- Visit to Local Art Gallery (always include break for coffee!)

Let your imagination run wild!

What Works For Us!

P.U.S.H. - Physical United With Spiritual Health

Hazel Barrett, Mayfield Corps, Southern Territory, Australia

This could be a small group, meeting perhaps twice a month for those interested in improving their physical and spiritual health. The original idea was conceived as a women's ministries new initiative and it was decided to open the group to all members of the church family initially, and later to encourage folks to bring friends and neighbours. An information night was arranged and the proposed program idea was discussed.

The suggested program ran as follows:

- The group meets on Tuesday evening between 7-8pm. The cost is \$2 per night.



- The 2nd Tuesday of the month is known as Week A, held in the church hall.
- The 4th Tuesday of the month is known as Week B. It can be held in a member's home.

Format for Week A

- Optional weigh in at 6:45 p.m.
- Announcement of total group weight loss — excess baggage.
- Special subject and tip of the week. A time of sharing — any support required by any member for the following two weeks.
- Spiritual health — devotions.

Format for Week B

(can be interchangeable depending on the cooking time)

- Optional weigh-in at 6:45 p.m.
- Announcement of total group weight loss — excess baggage.
- Cooking demonstration of a healthy dish and tasting session.
- Spiritual health — devotions.

Tips for Leaders *Handling Stress*

The dictionary defines stress as tension, strain, pressure, anxiety, and frustration. In today's fast-paced world, stress is deadlines, traffic jams, family crises, and trying to do it all. In ministry, its having a talk to prepare for, hosting a shower, attending a funeral, providing special music, counseling a woman in pain, nursing sick kids, and keeping a doctor's appointment ... all in the same week! How do you handle times like these?

Lower Your Expectations

You need to realize that your house can't be in perfect order especially if you've had extra responsibilities at church that particular week. Let someone else in your household prepare dinner, or sandwiches are okay if you have to be out for the evening.

Exercise

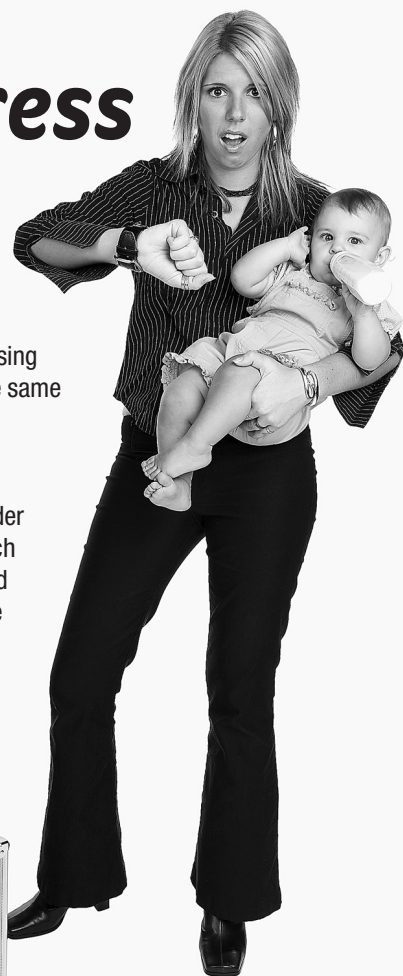
Just leaving the house and walking briskly or going for a run can help to relieve pressure. Being away from all the demands and the phone can be renewing. A brief time exercising can help you pick up the load again.

Read

Take some time off — spend an afternoon at your local library. Browse through the myriad of books — be it novels, cooking, travel, even watch a video. There are some excellent biographies that have been written about godly women, the Internet can help you here. Let your imagination take you on a journey away from the “hum drum” of daily chores — enjoy your time!

Find A Friend Outside The Church

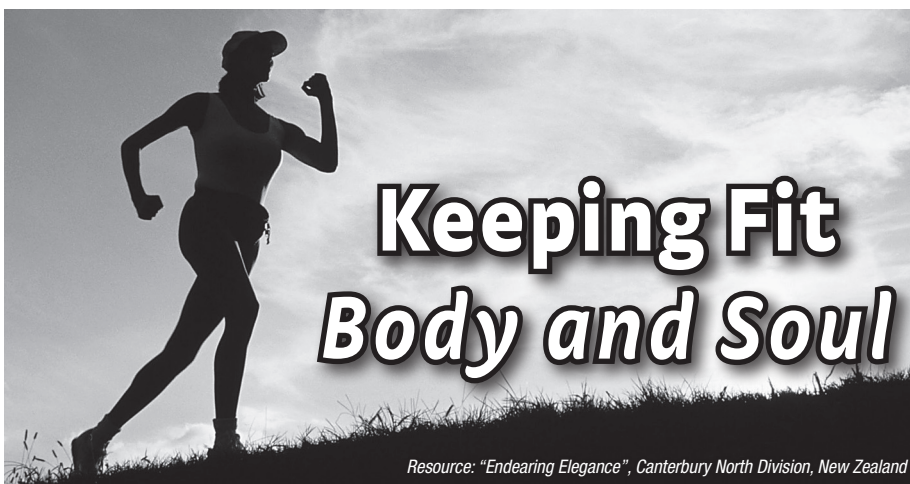
If you don't have one, start by praying for one. This can provide a safe place for you to



share the stresses on your heart. It is especially wonderful to have a friend like this where your identity isn't all about being in ministry.

Learn To Say No

It's so easy to feel obligated to do things just because you're asked, but you cannot do everything. If your calendar is full, find a listening ear, share your concerns with a friend or loved one, they may be able to take some of the pressure from you. This can be God's way of protecting you from overloading your day or week.



We are part of a body-conscious generation. Women who used to make fun of high school gym classes now flock to health clubs and aerobics classes. After exercising we can feel better, gain energy and experience more of a sense of well-being.

Our body and soul goals are appropriate as long as they challenge us and they're attainable and measurable. Physically our goals might be running a marathon, walking a mile, or doing some "armchair aerobics" whatever the goal is, our body needs us to reach for the goal. Spiritually, our goal might be daily prayer, reading Scripture daily, getting through the Bible in a year, or memorizing one verse each week.

Let's look at some nutritional/physical goals and discover that at whatever age we are, attainable goals are worthwhile.

Keeping the blood pumping strongly toward the heart is the key. You don't need to run a marathon to do this. Just squeezing your fist shut and opening it wide again pushes the blood up your arm towards your heart. Flexing and pointing your feet has the same effect. Raising arms up and dropping them down by

your side does the same job and all of these small exercises work muscle groups — that's got to be helpful!

Let's check our spiritual diets and physical diets. We're bombarded with suggestions to limit sugar and fat, increase raw fibre and fresh fruits, and eat organic food. That's exactly how our study of God's Word should be — as direct and fresh as possible! As food moves through the refining processes, some nutrients are lost and the personal meaning of God's Word is sometimes lost as well when it's processed through others.

We Eat Meals Three Times A Day

Are we willing to eat three spiritual meals a day too? Here is a suggested menu:

Breakfast: By using a written prayer, we can praise God for His holiness, faithfulness and love, and bring before Him the particular needs of the day.

Lunch: Reading an article or part of a book or listening to a teaching tape is a great way to enjoy a spiritual lunch.

Dinner: Another time for 'soul food' is mealtime prayer. This is especially a good thing to do when you have family over — praying together before or after the meal.

Late-Night Snack: We'll sleep so much better reading a Psalm or something else encouraging, maybe a love story from the Song of Solomon!



Exploring Scripture

Read III John 2

Taking Action

What are your physical fitness goals?

List three steps you will take to reach your goals.

What are your spiritual fitness goals?

List three steps you will take to reach your goals.

Maybe it seems selfish to waste time on ourselves. Wrong! Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Are we less valuable? The Lord is honoured when we take care of ourselves physically, nutritionally and spiritually.

Prayer

"Lord, my body, mind and spirit belong to You. Help me to care for them all wisely — feeding, exercising and resting them as a precious temple" Amen

Brain Exercise

Brain Exercise – New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory

Here are some simple activities for stimulating the growth of brain cells:

- Think up 25 uses for a toothpick or an elastic band.
- Write a set of instructions for an every day task such as tying shoelaces.
- Use your non-dominate hand to brush your teeth, eat, or apply make-up.
- Try picking up things with your feet.
- Close your eyes and move around your home. Navigate by using other senses.
- Look at photo or painting for a few minutes then turn away and make a list of everything in it.
- Change something in your daily routine — take a new route home or try a new spot.
- Practise using both hands at once by bouncing two balls or stirring two cups of tea. Try throwing two balls of paper at the bin at the same time, one underarm and one over arm.



4 Ways to Cancel Your Pity Party

Resource: Today's Christian Woman

I'm a lousy mother," A woman thought one morning after a heated discussion with her 16 year-old daughter over a certain video's appropriateness. By lunchtime, she had replayed the conflict a dozen times. By mid-afternoon, her pity party was full blown: "My kids deserve better." Nobody loves me. Everybody hates me. I'm gonna run away.

Most of us throw a pity party at least once in our lifetime. Sometimes it begins when a relationship crumbles. Sometimes it starts when we compare our assets, appearance, or abilities to others' and feel inadequate or less fortunate.

Before long, joy dissipates like helium from a balloon, and Bible reading and prayer become a drudgery. Personal relationships suffer. Is this how God wants His daughters to live? Not a chance.

Instead, His plans for us include joy and peace. Not "giddy giggles" when things go well; but genuine joy that bubbles from the soul and crashes pity parties before they get rolling.

The Old Testament contains a story about a man who had every reason to throw a pity party, but he refused to do so. His account proves it's possible to cancel the party before it begins.

The Ultimate Party Pooper

Meet Job, the greatest pity-party pooper of all time. Scripture describes him as blameless



and upright. He feared God, shunned evil, and bore a reputation as the greatest man among all the people of the East (Job 1:1, 3). But one day, circumstances soured — he lost oxen, donkeys, sheep, servants, camels, and worst of all, his ten children.

Job grieved, as would any normal person facing unspeakable loss. But his attitude set him apart. As life caved in, he fell on his face in worship and said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:20, 21). Is that amazing, or what?

Like Job, we can rise above self-pity, no matter what our situation. When we're tempted to throw a pity party, we can use these four points to check our perspective:

Focus On God's Word

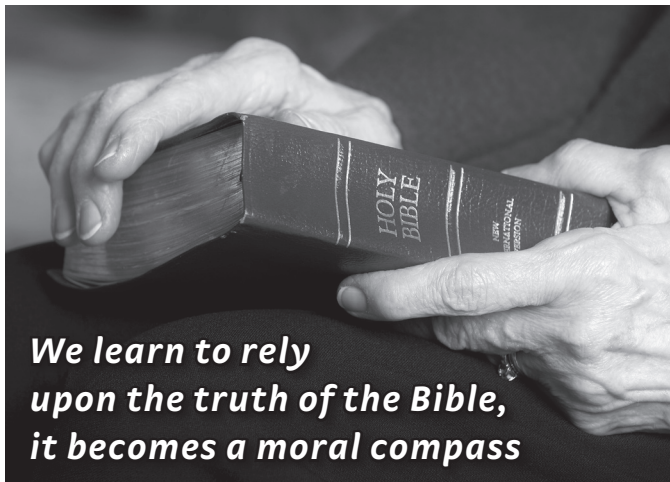
Circumstances change, but God's Word remains

the same. Its truths overcome worry and fear — two culprits responsible for pity parties.

In 1989, 30-year-old Jan Turner was her church's music minister. She also taught music and fifth grade at a Christian school and was a single mom raising two adopted boys, ages four and ten.

Then pneumococcal pneumonia invaded Jan's body. Within hours she slipped into a coma and for two weeks hovered between life and death. Due to lack of circulation, her limbs were amputated. Jan had to learn how to walk, eat, dress, drive, and cook using prosthetics.

Throughout her ordeal, Jan clung to Romans 8:28-39. She reminded herself nothing could separate her from God's love, and in Him, she was more than a conqueror.



We learn to rely upon the truth of the Bible, it becomes a moral compass

Today, Jan, 44, is an ordained minister, part-time radio announcer, and substitute teacher at a local high school. When she shares her testimony, she tells listeners, "Gaze at the promises, glance at the problems. God will always see us through." What an inspiration this can be to all of us!

Focus On God's Character

When Betty moved to another city, she hoped to buy a particular house surrounded by lush greenery, much like her former location. That didn't happen. The house she eventually purchased faced desert-like scenery, and homesickness set in.

Losing sight of God's character, she focused on her circumstances. Life lost its joy. Disappointment overwhelmed her. She expressed her frustration to anyone willing to listen.

Nine months after Betty's move, a forest fire consumed nearly every house in the neighborhood where she'd hoped to buy. Suddenly she realized that a merciful, all-wise God had been working on her behalf all the while.

"I acted like a child stomping my foot and saying, 'I want to live there and I don't want the answer to be no,'" admits Betty in retrospect. "But God graphically showed me how He protected me from my wants."

Betty discovered that focusing on circumstances yields discouragement, anger, and bitterness. But focusing on God's character, even when we don't understand or necessarily like His ways, builds confidence, joy, and

peace. Focus on Him, who can and will as He sees fit, supply all our needs!

Focus On Obedience

In her book 'A Heart Like His', author Rebecca Manley Pippert writes, "As we learn to rely upon the truth of the Bible, it becomes a moral

compass in a confusing, unstable, and often scary world. Scripture not only guides us into orthodoxy (right thinking), but also into ortho-praxis (right living). Our obedience to God's Word will keep us steady in the worst of times."

But sometimes it's easier to throw a pity party than to obey commands in Scripture such as "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Many of us have been there.

After high-school graduation, Stephanie, made plans to attend college nearly 1,000 miles from home. Rather than put her on a plane, her mother chose to drive her to school, hoping to create a lasting mother-daughter memory. She created a memory alright, but not the kind



she had hoped for. The car's transmission blew before they left town! They drove home in a loaner car, sporting a \$3,600 repair bill.

Sleep evaded that mother all night as she stewed over the unwelcome turn of events. "Poor me. Things never work out the way I want. You hung me out to dry this time, God." All the while, a familiar Scripture kept running through her mind: "Give thanks in all circumstances." She tried ignoring it, to no use. Giving thanks was the last thing she felt like doing, but she knew it was right.

When she finally confessed her disobedience and began thanking God for His control over the situation, peace replaced frustration and contentment replaced self-pity. Let Him be our Guide in life's journey!

Ditch Self-Pity

Celebrate life with these activities instead:

- List ten things for which you are thankful
- Take a walk and pray for others along the way
- Serve at a soup kitchen
- Fill your home with upbeat worship music or hymns
- Sip a cup of herbal tea and read a book
- Open the drapes and let the sunshine flood your home
- Watch a funny movie with someone

Focus On Others' Need

"Discouragement tends to stop us from carrying others' burdens", writes author David Jeremiah in 'Slaying the Giants in Your Life'. "It sends us inward, where pity parties are common and perspective is rare. How often I've forgotten my own little worries when I've been busy calling on someone who was sick, or making rounds at the hospital. Going

in, I've told God that I had nothing to give these people; coming out, I've felt abundantly blessed." For years, an elderly woman cared for her grown daughter, who had a crippling disease. Then the woman lost her husband to cancer. On the morning after she had buried her spouse, she looked beyond her needs and phoned an elderly friend to check on her well-being.

We need to look beyond our own problems and bear others' burdens through prayer and practical aid. Does a single mom need a

break? you can baby-sit. Does a less fortunate family need food? You can offer resources. Personal pity parties lose their appeal when you focus on others' needs. Look around you, someone may be needing you!

Pity parties negatively impact our relationship with God, impair our interactions with others, and cause us to become self-absorbed.

Instead of having a pity party a much better way is to spend our time celebrating God's faithfulness, love, and control over our lives.

18 Ways To Lift Your Spirit

Resource: "Endearing Elegance" Canterbury North West Division, New Zealand

Realise we all have such days for whatever reason and it's what we choose to do with them that enables us to mentor others and adds that 'endearing elegance' to our own lives.

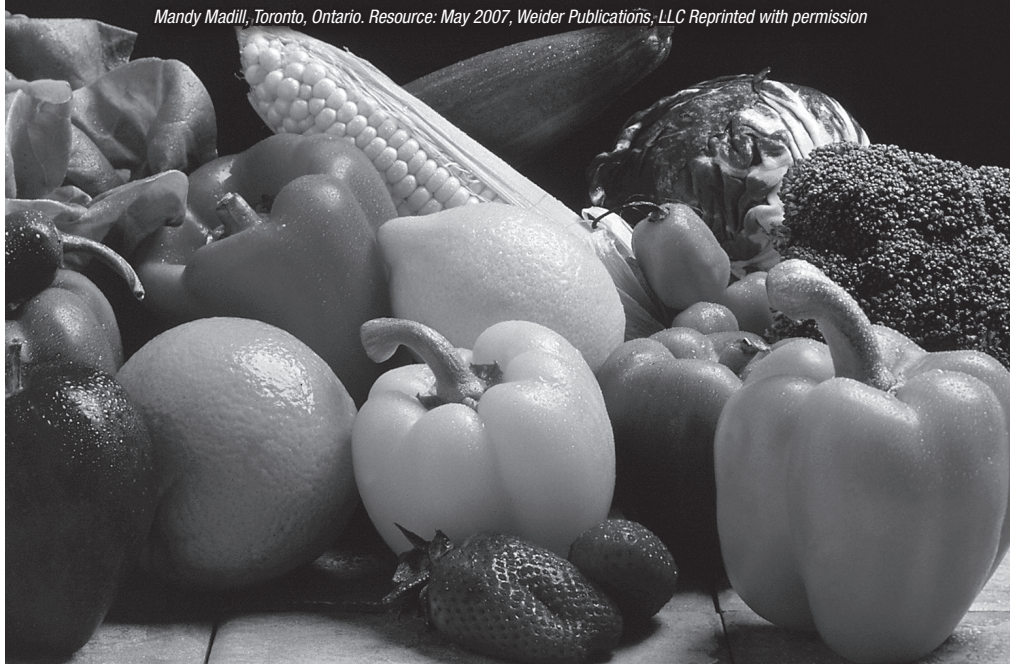
- Call a friend, a shut-in, someone known to you who is unwell.
- Go out to your garden and pick fresh flowers for your home.
- Take fresh flowers from your garden or buy some flowers and take to someone else.
- Be naughty and eat something rich, fattening and delicious.
- Put on your favourite CD and dance and sing to your hearts content.
- Give someone a compliment.
- Make yourself a cup of tea or coffee in your best china.
- Do something that you have been putting off for ages.
- Buy a new plant and add it to your garden.



- Make yourself laugh aloud. Think of something funny to get yourself started.
- Simplify your life and make it less stressful.
- Forgive someone who has hurt you.
- Watch your thoughts, don't entertain negative or ungodly thoughts.
- Be good to yourself today & take care of your body.
- Go somewhere special to you and spend time with God.
- Pray for your friends and family.
- Don't ask God for anything today, thank Him for everything.
- Do something fun with a friend.

Health and Wellness

Mandy Madill, Toronto, Ontario. Resource: May 2007, Weider Publications, LLC Reprinted with permission



Section 1 **Nutrition — A Whole** **New Way to Eat Healthy**

Shape magazine (May 2007, vol. 26 (9), pg. 210)

Prepare Your Vegetables — Partially cook vegetables the day you bring them home from the market.

Make Big Batches of Grains — Separately cook several kinds of whole grains and store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator. At mealtimes, mix together and reheat in the microwave.

Stock Pantry with Protein — Pick up various types of canned beans so you can

add a quick protein and fiber boost to grains, pastas, and soups. Nuts are also high in protein and heart-healthy monosaturated fats.

Section 2 **Health Mission — Get More Sleep**


Shape magazine (March 2007, vol. 26 (7), pg. 100-102)

Keep Off Those Extra Pounds — Tired people eat more. "Sleep deprivation increases hunger by altering levels of leptin and ghrelin, hormones that regulate

appetite." Another theory is that, the more hours you are awake, the more you will eat.

Improving Memory — During sleep is when

*Tired people
eat more*



Sleep helps us keep our reflexes sharp

your mind processes everything that it has learned that day. Sleep helps us keep our reflexes sharp.

Reducing Risk of Diabetes — Too little sleep throws your hormones out of whack. “Stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline — which increase when you’re sleep-deprived — reduce the effectiveness of insulin, the hormone that regulates blood glucose.”

Protect Your Heart — When you do not sleep, your body loses the opportunity to slow itself down. Your heart works harder for a larger portion of the day, which causes blood pressure to increase over time.

Look Younger — As you begin to feel tired, your body prepares itself for rest by lowering blood pressure and pulse rate. This means less blood flows to your skin, which can take a toll on radiance.

Getting Rid of the Sniffles — Lack of sleep makes you more prone to infection. Your body requires sleep to fight off invading germs.

Be a Safer Driver — Being sleepy at the wheel slows your reaction time as much as alcohol does.

Section 3 **Protecting Yourself from the Sun**

Shape magazine c(May 2007, vol. 26 (9), pg 108)

Watch the Clock — UV rays are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. If you are going to be outside during between these times, try and stay in the shade.

Wear a Hat — a wide-brimmed hat will protect your face, ears, neck, and scalp.

Try UPF Clothing — It is treated with a special coating to help absorb both UVA and UVB rays. **TIP** — Hold the fabric near a lamp; the less light that shines through the better.

Sunglasses — Buy a pair of sunglasses that are clearly labeled to block at least 90 percent of UV rays.

Get Moving — Exercise strengthens the immune system and will help your body defend against disease.



Mandy is a member of the Wellness Committee at THQ, Toronto, Ontario. The committee's mission is to enhance the health and well-being of officers and employees at The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters in The Canada and Bermuda Territory through promoting and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

Six Great Ways to Make Your Goals Stick

Adapted from Today's Christian Woman

I will go on a diet.

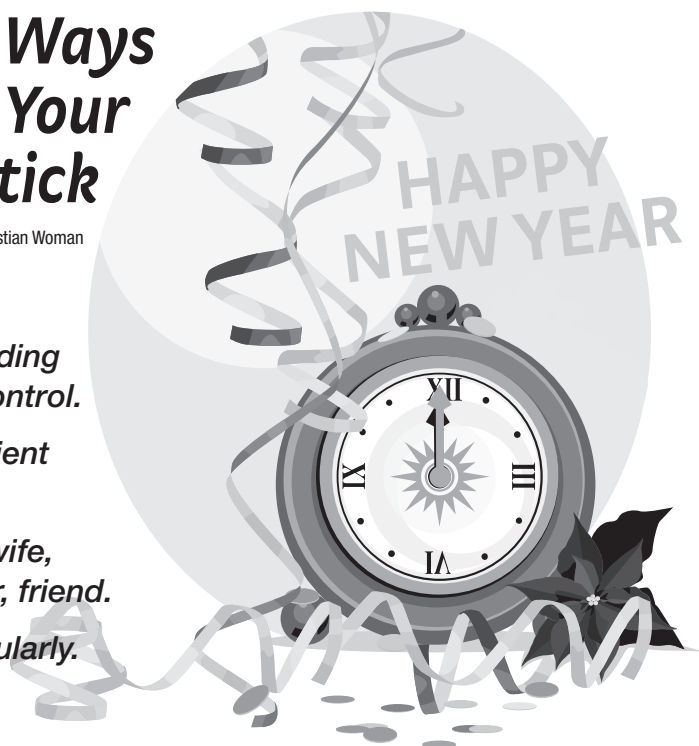
I will get my spending habits under control.

I will be more patient with my kids.

I will be a better wife, daughter, sister, friend.

I will exercise regularly.

I will pray more.



Sound Familiar? If so, you're one among millions who made New Year's resolutions this year, have done and will continue to do so. By about March, if you're like most, you've either given up on your resolutions or you're about ready to quit. How do I know? I've been a New Year's resolution dropout myself.

It certainly wasn't because of a lack of desire; I wanted to change. Motivation wasn't the issue, either; I was highly motivated (at least in January), I couldn't identify the problem until I stumbled upon some old training objectives I'd set 20 years earlier while working in student ministry. I was amazed at how similar my ministry goals were

to New Year's resolutions. As I read through my files, I realized my difficulty in keeping resolutions was less a matter of desire, discipline, or motivation, and more a misunderstanding of how to set goals effectively.



New Year's resolutions are nothing more than goals in disguise. Our problem is we often treat resolutions as desires (I want to get in shape) or promises (I will be a better friend), whereas goals give us a plan.

Try These Six Steps For More Effective Resolutions:

Be Specific

In my work as a teacher-coordinator, I meet

with Bible study teachers to help them set personal and ministry goals. At one such meeting, a teacher mentioned her personal goal for the year was to “grow in Bible knowledge.” While her desire was admirable, I had to ask a number of questions: “How will you know when you’ve grown?” “What does growth in Bible knowledge look like?” “What steps will you take to foster this growth?” Her goal needed to be more specific. As I worked with this teacher, we were able to revise her goal from the vague—“I’ll grow in Bible knowledge”—to the specific—“I’ll spend 30 minutes a day in personal Bible study, 5 days a week.” Her goal now expressed not only her desire, but the means to accomplish it.



Be Realistic

During my college years I wanted to pray more. So I decided to rise every morning at 5 a.m. and pray for an hour before breakfast. But I also worked as the closing cook for Pizza Hut at that time, and rarely made it back to my dorm room before 2 a.m. How long did my prayer endeavor last? About two days. And in those two days I spent more time sleeping than praying.

In a recent interview, I spoke with a Christian counselor who said, “If our goals or resolutions begin to overwhelm us ... perhaps that is a sign ... we are not living within the limits and boundaries ... God has created for us. We are human beings. We all need to eat, sleep, and relax. Yet, at times we push ourselves in [ways] that [ignore] these realities at least temporarily. Then, when we can’t do it anymore ... we give up. Instead, we should reassess our goal. Perhaps it was totally unrealistic.”

My goal of early morning prayer was unrealistic in light of my work schedule, my class schedule, and my need for sleep. When I realized that, I replaced my original goal with a plan more suited to my schedule: I’d pray during my 15-minute breaks between afternoon classes 3 days a week. During my afternoon break I sat on a park bench near my classrooms and prayed. Unlike my first attempt, this “three-afternoons-a-week” prayer endeavor lasted the entire semester. My prayer life grew because my goal was realistic.

Include A Way To Measure Your Success

A good goal will answer the questions of what, how, and when; it’s measurable.

Jean, a working wife and mother, decided to simplify her life by getting rid of the excess clutter she and her family had accumulated over the years. In January, she set the goal to clean out one drawer, cupboard, or closet each week. It was a specific, realistic, measurable goal; at the end of each week either she’d cleaned out something or she hadn’t. She had a means to track her progress.

By April, Jean was still going strong on her “de-cluttering” routine. She explains, “The sense of accomplishment I felt as I measured my weekly progress kept me motivated to start the next week’s clean-up. Today, my

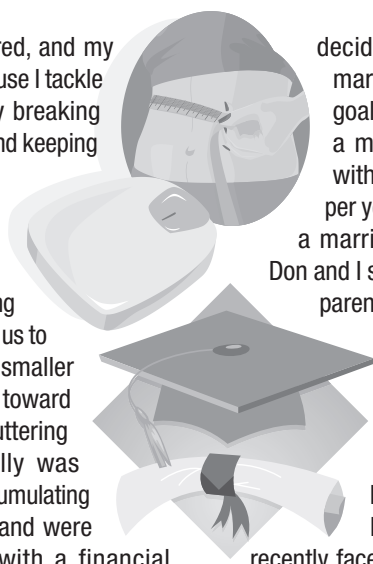
house feels less cluttered, and my life seems simpler because I tackle overwhelming tasks by breaking them into smaller jobs and keeping track of my progress.”

Think Short-Term and Long-Term

Short-term goals (cleaning one closet a week) allow us to experience success at smaller intervals while working toward long-term goals (de-cluttering an entire house). Sally was overwhelmed by the accumulating debt she and her husband were facing, so they met with a financial advisor who counseled them to develop both short-term and long-term financial objectives by using weekly, monthly, and yearly goals. “I never thought I’d like being on a budget,” Sally recalls. “But it was freeing. When I looked at our debt as a whole, it was too big to deal with, but by working on it in smaller bites, it seemed okay.” After three years of sticking to their short and long-term goals, Sally and her husband are now debt free.

Finances and organizing things aren’t the only areas in which to set short and long-term goals. You can use them in virtually any area of life: education, child-rearing, family life, athletics, community service, church service, personal and spiritual growth, marriage.

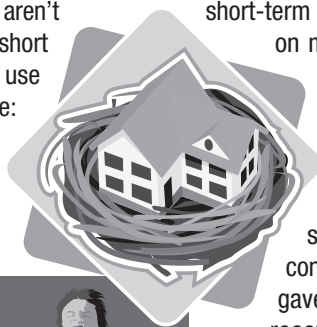
When our three children were small, my husband, Don, and I discovered how easily parenting could cause us to grow apart. We



decided to guard the health of our marriage by setting the following goals: We’ll go out on a date once a month; we’ll go away together without the kids for one overnight per year; every five years we’ll attend a marriage seminar. Over the years, Don and I stuck to our goals, and today, as parents of three teens, we’re still best friends. The short-term and long-term worked together to build and maintain a healthy marriage.

Be Flexible

Linda, who’s self-employed, recently faced this challenge: “I’m trying to expand my home business, so I set some fairly aggressive goals. Little did I know my family would become victims of the flu. Now, healthy once again, I’m struggling to make up for lost time. I hope to get back on track, but I never considered that life might get in the way.” Life can, indeed, get in the way. Two years ago, I planned to jog 500 miles over the course of a year. That worked out to be 2 miles a day, 5 days per week, and 50 weeks out of the year. It was a specific, realistic, measurable, short-term and long-term goal. I was well on my way to achieving that goal when I hurt my knee. Did I quit? No. I wanted to stay in shape, so I learned to be content walking. I had to become flexible, which allowed me to stay on course, and ultimately contributed to my healing; walking gave my injured knee a chance to recover. After my knee healed, I started running again.



Review Periodically

Regular review allows us to stay on course, track our progress, and adjust course as

necessary. Each year I record my goals in my date-book/planner so they're accessible wherever I go. In a section marked "goals," I list specific objectives by category: personal/spiritual; marriage/family; professional; ministry; house/projects.

Then I set aside one Sunday every three months for reviewing my goals. On those "review dates," I check off the items I've accomplished. (What satisfaction!) Next, I look at what remains, and prayerfully ask the following questions:

- How am I doing? Am I still on course?
- Which goals am I encouraged about?
- Which are frustrating me? Can I be more flexible?
- Have circumstances changed since I set this goal?
- Is my goal realistic? Specific? Measurable?
- If not, what could I change to make it more so?
- Is this the right season of life to work on this?
- Have I prayed about this goal?

Based on my answers, I make any necessary changes, sometimes crossing off objectives that are too ambitious or impossible to fulfill because of changing circumstances. I finish my review time by prayerfully committing my remaining goals to God. Regular review helps me not only to stay on track, but to guard against over-commitment and burnout.

I find it helpful to review my goals not only on my own, but also with someone else. Often, another set of eyes can catch what I fail to see. Earlier this year, I set several work goals, and then sat down to review them with a co-worker who quickly noted they seemed a bit

ambitious. I'd stated I'd take each teacher out to lunch once this semester when, in fact, I meant to say I'd take each one out this academic year. My co-worker's review helped catch my error. I'm thankful I didn't commit to 16 teacher lunches in 14 weeks!

If you're a resolution dropout like me, take heart! Goal setting's a liberating alternative. It helps you realize objectives are simply tools, not promises or laws, and tools are something we can implement anytime. Take these words



of advice "Don't let falling off track keep you from your goals. Dust yourself off and get right back on track." Leave yesterday's failures behind, and treat today as a brand new beginning. You'll be glad you did.

Need Some Goal Setting Help? (Here are 10 easy tips)

- Write down your goals.
- Then cut them in half.
- Tell someone your goal.
- Keep track of your progress.
- Reward yourself with each success.
- Be optimistic.
- Be prepared for difficulty and failure.
- Adjust course as needed.
- Measure growth by months and years not days.
- Treat each day as a brand new beginning.



Cabin Fever Busters

Carolyn Simpson, Georgetown, Ontario

Type of Group	Moms & tots, but includes grandparents & caregivers
Frequency & Duration	Weekly for 2 hours. The winter season or throughout the year
Group Objectives	To provide a safe, healthy environment for children to play and parent/caregiver to meet others and build relationships.
Important Considerations	In order for relationships to be built, leaders must show consistent concern and real interest. Absentees should be followed up and opportunities to show concern and care and appropriate support should be given, ie: a new baby or death in the family. Contact throughout the year should be made by using email and sending out invitations to worship and other church events.
Program Outline	Free play for the children in a large open space while parents socialize and enjoy refreshments.
You Will Need	Snack – Network with a local shop for this if you can Floor Mats Multiple age level appropriate toys, exersaucers & bouncy chairs Tables for adults to sit at, arrange so they can see their children playing Videos, DVDs, & Books 1 or 2 leaders with preschool age children (this is essential)
Cost	Free, with a donation jar in the snack area
Tips	Label toy bins with both words and pictures and cover the labels with packing tape. Children will be able to see what goes in each bin and help with clean up

Decorating A Home Without Creating Debt

Sandra Walker-Mastin, Reprinted with permission from MOMSense Magazine – Sept/Oct 2007

Re-purposing things you already have can look great and save you a bundle.

Take a look at things you have in your home. Whether you have furniture, glass, textiles or doors, re-purposing them for another use breathes fresh life into your home. Here are some of the reinventions in my home.

Remember those crystals bowls you received for wedding gifts? Plant flowers in them. Put potpourri in them. Put your fruit in them on your counter. Use them in the bathroom to hold soaps. Roll up nice towels in them and set the bowl on the back of the toilet.

Do you have some outdated throw cushions? Check the local dollar store and pick up some pretty cloth napkins. Sew two together to form a pillow cover. Often the cloth napkin is the perfect size. I've also used cloth placemats.

Do you have ugly coloured candlesticks you can't part with because Aunt Martha gave them to you? Acrylic paint does wonders.

Panel curtains make a great tablecloth.

Look for 60" wide fabric found in fabric store clearance bin and make a throw for a sofa. If you can't sew, fabric glue works great.

Take an old denim or patterned shirt that has shrunk and use the fabric to make cushion covers. Denim looks great in a child's room.



Use a tablecloth to swag across the top of a window for a swag curtain.

Recycle old frames for your child's artwork.

Heavy round candles make great bookends.

An old lamp is revised with a new shade and spray paint.

Display a favourite quilt on a wall to add texture and warmth to a room.

Successful decorating without breaking the bank will give you a great feeling. There's satisfaction in having a story to tell when someone compliments you on your gorgeous newly covered throw cushions.

Seek and You Will Find

Always shop with a list of items you'd like for your home. A bargain may show up were you least expect it. Check out the following:

- Your garage or crawl space.
- Newspaper classifieds.
- Yard sales.
- "As is" and "clearance sections".
- Secondhand thrift shops.
- Fabric stores (Look for rolls of clearance fabric, be patient, the fabric you saw full price may end up there.)

Read and Play Café

Kelly Rideout, New-Wes –Valley Corps, Newfoundland



Type of Group	Parents & Tots.
Aim(s) of Group	Holistic development of young children. To offer an opportunity for a safe and positive environment for social development at no cost to the family.
Target Group	Children, newborn to six years of age and their mothers.
Main focus of Group	To develop a holistic approach in healthy living for families.
Secondary Focus	Provide education in the areas of physical fitness, nutrition, social development, spirituality, provide a lending library to encourage reading skills.
Duration of Program	Weekly 9:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Outline of Program	Full group interaction, individual classes for children and moms, singing, devotions, lending library, work on reading skills for children and parents, health issues.
Cost for Participants	None (Funding obtained through government).
Leadership	Qualified leader or Corps Officer.
Support Personnel	Caregivers and volunteers.
Equipment	Children's toys, books, CD player, children's music.
Resources	Children's books, toys, music, snacks, public health information.
Possible related Activities	Family activities during Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Anticipated Results

To produce children who are well rounded citizens. Building the confidence of mom's through parenting assistance and lighten the feeling of isolation, building helpful relationships with other moms. Community partnerships. Continued involvement of qualified community volunteers.

Sample meeting outline 9:45 a.m.— Registration & Lending book exchange — Opportunity to browse the book table and choose books to read.

10:00 a.m. — Full group Interaction. This gives time to check in with the children and parents to get started for the day. Children enjoy interacting with each other. A time of singing introduces the theme.

10:20 a.m. — Divide into appropriate groups. Share coffee/tea and snack (All snacks provided by parents and caregivers on a volunteer rotation basis) Devotional time is shared with adults. If a public nurse is present a presentation is given.

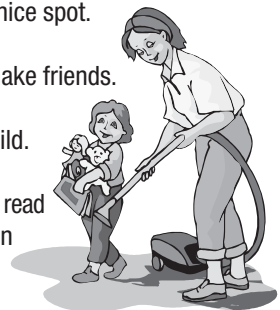
11:00 a.m. — Reuniting of children and parents for preparation to go home.

For more information regarding this program contact Women's Ministries Dept at THQ.

Building Your Child's Self Esteem

The Salvation Army Southern Africa Territory Resource Magazine for Women

- Compliment your child; e.g. good job, I'm proud of you, etc.
- Don't allow your child to be self-critical. A child may criticize his own actions, this is acceptable. Criticism of 'self' is not.
- Practice courtesy with your child, both to and from him/her.
- Let your child help make the decisions.
- Make your child the guest of honour.
- Ask for your child's opinion. 'What do you think?' 'What's your idea?'
- Show the value of the work they do by displaying it in a nice spot.
- Help your child make friends.
- Pray with your child.
- Teach your child to read and follow written instructions.
- Set rules that children are required to follow. Parents have the responsibility to make rules that will benefit the child.
- Listen to what your child has to say.



Mean Moms

Resource: Program Helps, Singapore/Malaysia/Myanmar Territory

Some day when my children are old enough to understand the logic that motivates a parent, I will tell them, as my 'Mean Mom' told me:

- I loved you enough to ask where you were going, with whom, and what time you would be home.
- I loved you enough to be silent and let you discover that your new best friend was not good for you.
- I loved you enough to stand over you for two hours while you cleaned your room, a job that should have taken 15 minutes.
- I loved you enough to let you see anger, disappointment, and tears in my eyes.
- Children must learn that their parents aren't perfect.
- I loved you enough to let you assume the responsibility for your actions even when the penalties were so harsh they almost broke my heart.
- But most of all, I loved you enough to say NO when I knew you would hate me for it. Those were the most difficult battles of all. I'm glad I won them, because in the end you won, too.
- And someday when your children are



old enough to understand the logic that motivates parents, you will tell them.

Was Your Mom Mean? I know mine was. We had the meanest mother in the whole world!

- While other kids ate candy or junk food for breakfast, we had to have cereal, eggs, and toast.
- When others had Pepsi and a sweet treat for lunch, we had to eat sandwiches. And you can guess our mother fixed us a dinner that was different from what other kids had, too.

Super Mom

*Mom, you're a wonderful mother,
So gentle, yet so strong.
The many ways you show you care
Always make me feel I belong.
You're patient when I'm foolish;
You give guidance when I ask;
It seems you can do most anything;
You're the master of every task.*

*You're a dependable source of comfort;
You're my cushion when I fall,
You help in times of trouble;
You support me whenever I call.
I love you more than I can express;
You have my total respect.
If I had my choice of mothers,
You'd be the one I'd select!*

By Joanna Fuchs

- Mother insisted on knowing where we were at all times. You'd think we were convicts in a prison. She had to know who our friends were, and what we were doing with them.
- She insisted that if we said we would be gone for an hour, we would be gone for an hour or less.
- We were ashamed to admit it, but she had the nerve to break the Child Labour Laws by making us work. We had to wash the dishes, make the beds, learn to cook, vacuum the floor, do laundry, empty the trash and all sorts of cruel jobs. I think she would lie awake at night thinking of more things for us to do.
- She always insisted on us telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
- By the time we were teenagers, she could

read our minds and had eyes in the back of her head. Then, life was really tough!

- Mother wouldn't let our friends just come by and pick us up. She had to meet them.
- While everyone else could date as young teenagers, we had to wait until we were 18.
- Because of our mother we missed out on lots of things other kids experienced.
- None of us have ever been caught shoplifting, vandalizing other's property or ever arrested for any crime. It was all her fault.

Now that we have left home, we are all educated honest adults. We are doing our best to be mean parents just like mom was. I think that is what's wrong with the world today. It just doesn't have enough mean mums!

Author unknown

It Counts As Quality Time When You ...

Sharon Lovejoy Autry. Reprinted with permission from MOMSense Magazine July/August 2007

It Counts as quality time when you ...

- **Smile** at your kids and say good job!
- **Listen** to your kids' stories.
- **Show** them (rather than just tell them) how to do ordinary things.
- **Hold** them on your lap or in your arms.
- **Let** your face "light up" when you see them first thing in the morning or anytime you've been away from each other.
- **Watch** them do one more somersault, look at the picture they have drawn or Lego tower they've built.



- **Hug** and kiss them, tickle their toes while changing a diaper.
- **Snuggle** up and read together.
- **Say** good night and tuck them into bed.



Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend. Reprinted with permission, MomSense, May/June 2007

Dealing with the Death of a Pet

Question: *Your older dog is not expected to live much longer and your son wants to know if animals go to heaven when they die. How can you help a preschooler deal with the loss of a beloved pet?*

Answer: *The reality of death is difficult to deal with for grownups and kids alike. Yet at some point, we must all come to terms with it. Though it's a sad time, you can help your preschooler with his pet's death and also prepare him to deal later on with human losses, such as the death of a grandparent and others in his life. In fact, the questions he asks about his pet are often about him at a deeper level: "Will God take care of me when I die?" This is a vital opportunity for you.*

Preschoolers have an unformed and almost magical idea of death. They're not sure what dying is all about. They don't have a clear idea if it's like sleeping or if it's a trip to another dimension. They don't know if it's good, bad, permanent or temporary. Your basic task is to help your child see that the death of a pet is real. And yet it's a reality that's bearable because he has a mom who will help him understand and deal with it.

Here are some steps to follow:
Death is a normal reality. Your preschooler needs to know that pets and people get old or sick and die; this is a normal part of life. Though we don't like death, it's not something

that scares or panics mom. It's "the way things go." Your child needs to know he's with a safe parent who can handle this sort of reality. Then he'll feel prepared to deal with it.

God loves pets (and people). Reassure your child of God's love and care for your pet. He knows what's best for him and for all of us. Read to him David's words from the Psalms: "You care for people and animals alike, O Lord." Psalm 36:6 (NLT) God is involved and protective. And He's stronger than death. Personally, we believe there's a case for the Bible to teach that animals are in heaven! Check out your local Christian bookstore for authors who write about this.

It's OK to feel sad. Sadness and grief are God's way of helping us honour those we've lost, let them go and move on. Tell your child you understand how much he misses his pet. Tell him you're sad, too, and that it's OK to cry. Comfort his sad feelings and talk with him empathetically.

Create a positive memory. Help your preschooler remember what he loved about his pet. Remembering helps a child create a positive emotional memory inside his heart about his relationship with his pet. It also helps with the grief process. Talk about the funny and cute things his pet did in the home and what a great pet he was.

Get back into life's activities. Grief was not intended to be permanent, but a season. Preschoolers will normally not be sad for too long and will be ready for you to help them get busy with their activities and friends. When your son has expressed his feelings and remembered what he loved about his pet, guide him toward his normal activities. And depending on your family circumstances think about getting a new pet.

Use your pet's passing as a learning time about deaths reality and also God's protection. Your preschooler is looking for a way to understand, accept and deal with death so he can continue growing and living.



Practical Help for Childcare in Church

Adapted for Cedar Springs by June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario

There are many ways to encourage parents and their children as they arrive for worship each week. Creating a comfortable environment for both parent and child will make the worship experience meaningful. After a busy week of responsibilities of home life and work, families arriving for worship will benefit from a Church that will value their children in providing them with a warm and comfortable setting.

Try these ideas for making childcare in your church and ministries a positive experience for both parents and children.

Provide enough workers so that one worker can greet each child with a friendly smile.

Have a sign-in sheet with a place for a cell phone number or the room the parent will be in, just in case a need arises.

Be sure all bottles, cups, etc. have labels with the child's name on them, masking tape is great for this.

Provide a numbering system for safety. One group uses two-part-clips, one clip is clipped to the child's diaper bag, and the other part of the clip goes with mom or dad. No matching numbers upon return, no child.

Have a spare set of second-hand baby clothes available, just in case there's an accident, or ask parents to include a spare set in the diaper bag.



Themes for Pre-School Ministries

Nerissa Olsen, Australia, Eastern Territory

GYM DAY

Outline

Have a variety of activities inside and outside.

Craft

Make medals — use cardboard and ribbon.

Painting

Hard boil and paint eggs for an egg and spoon race.

Activities

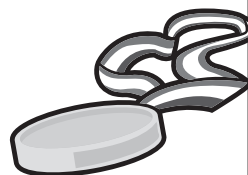
Tables with blankets as tunnels, rolling on gym mat, hopscotch outside, stepping on footprints, star jumps, bend and stretch, balance beam — walk along tape on floor, balance a bean bag on your head, throw or roll balls.

Presentation

Trophy or medal ceremony.

Purpose

To see the amazing way our body works.
Talk about how God has created us.



TEDDY BEARS PICNIC

Outline

A picnic with teddy biscuits and honey sandwiches cut into bear shapes (use cookie cutters). Bring a favourite teddy bear. Have awards for bears: 'A Really Big Bear', 'A Really Small Bear', 'A Really Old Bear', etc. Make sure everyone gets an award.

Craft

Make a teddy bear out of cardboard and collage materials or make a bear mask.

Painting

Use a stencil of 'Winnie the Pooh' or other well-known bears.

Music

Songs about Teddy Bears such as: "Teddy bears picnic"; "Teddy bear, teddy bear turn around" or be creative, make your own up.

Games

Teddy toss; Teddy hunt; Teddy parade and awards.



Story

Choose a story relating to Teddy Bears to read. 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' can be used as a play. Parents take the parts and act it out for the children.

**Activity**

Go on a bear hunt. Hide bears (size of "beanie babies") around the room and have the children collect them and place them in a basket in the centre. Divide the chocolate bears evenly among the children.

BAKING DAY**Outline**

A number of different activities involving food can be used. Have a cooking activity, paint with food, talk about food ie. What is your favourite food? What do you have for breakfast, lunch, dinner? Have an appropriate story and music.

Craft

Gingerbread Man — dough, sultanas, glazed cherries, liquorices.

Cookies — Children can help make the dough or you can have dough already prepared. Have rolling pins and cutters for children to use.

Pizzas — Paper pizzas, pizzas on pita bread; paint on pizza sauce, have cheese, pineapple, ham, etc ready to add.

Milk Arrowroots — Decorate cookies with icing and candy suckers

Fruit Loops — Thread to make necklace, bracelet.

**Painting**

Veggie printing; potato, orange, cucumber, apple. Pasta painting and threading.

Music

Songs about food, such as:

"Mashed potato", "5 fat sausages", "Pat-a-cake", "Bananas in pyjamas".

(check children's section in local music store or Christian Book Stores)

**Story**

Felt puppet story — 'The Gingerbread Man.'

Read 'Bananas in Pyjamas' book.

Purpose

To let the children know that God gave us all good things, that He created food and wants us to eat well and be healthy. To give them a hands-on experience of cooking.



FATHER'S DAY/ MOTHER'S DAY

Outline

Make a card and gift for dad/mom. Emphasize the importance of family. Be sure to acknowledge that not all families are the same.

Craft

Card — use poem 'Hugs' (www.bunnybeat.org)

Ties/paperweights

Flowers — cut out, decorate with dots, glitter pencils, etc and tape onto straw or paddle pop stick

Bookmarks

Badges/key rings

Painting — Marbling on folders

Hand prints

Plaster



Music

Free expression with instruments.

Story

Talk about a special memory that they have with their mom or dad.

Purpose

Mom/dad loves me and looks after me and I love them and appreciate them. (Be sensitive to any children who may have difficult home circumstances.)

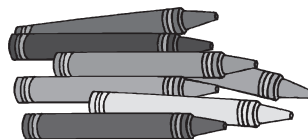
COLOUR DAY

Outline

Choose a particular colour for the day.

Helium balloons are a great way to emphasize colour and the kids love them. Let each child take one home.

Have coloured objects that are well known e.g. yellow — bananas, ducklings, sun, bulldozer, etc.



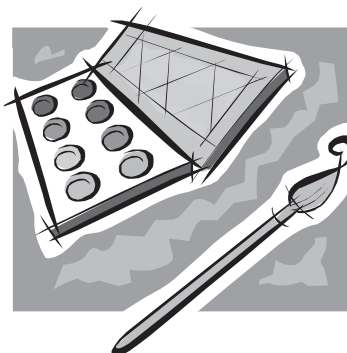
Craft

Use a variety of materials in the chosen colour to cut and paste collage. Combine shapes and make a 'shape' mat. Have a sheet of paper labeled and with an outline of the shape.

Have shapes cut out so that they can paste onto the sheet.

Painting

Utilize a variety of tools (brushes, sponges, rollers, shaving brushes, etc) but one colour paint. Talk about primary and secondary colours. For green use blue and yellow paint to illustrate how colours mixed can make other colours.



Music Play a memory game. Have 4-8 things in chosen colour e.g. a blue cup, ball, boat, etc. Cover items with blue sheet. Remove an item and let the children guess what's gone.

Story Specific story or talk about what is 'purple', etc.

Purpose To learn about colours. Talk about how God created colours.

CREATION

Outline Can be used as a part of a series of days based on TIME ie. seasons, meal times, etc. or can be used over a series of days e.g. Week 1/
Day 1 God created ... etc.



Craft Dependent on above — stars, moon, animal masks, etc. Make a time line wall collage.

Painting Dependent on above — use leaves, flowers, branches to paint with or print.

Story Use the wall collage to tell an interactive story.

Purpose God made everything, plants, animals, birds, fish, sun, moon, me, etc. Wow, God is big! Wow, God is clever! Wow, God is good!

NOAH'S ARK

Outline Can be incorporated with Rainbow Day. Have lots of colours, helium balloons, lots of animals. Weather can also be incorporated into this day.

Craft Group collage. Large piece of cardboard. Draw an ark and rainbow. Animals to paste on, blue cellophane for water, brown paper for boat, crepe paper for rainbow, lots of glitter or make a boat out of boxes. Have lots of stuffed animals. Make animal masks.

Dress Up Have a variety of clothes in a dressing up box.

Painting Hand print rainbow.

Music Songs such as: "Rise and shine"
"Arky Arky" (available at Christian book stores on Action Bible Songs)

Story Noah's Ark — focus on numbers 1 & 2.

Purpose God is faithful. He keeps His promises.



PETER

Outline

Possibly incorporate this into a water-play day. Talk about boats, fish, etc. Talk about being a friend — Peter was Jesus' friend. Weather can also be incorporated into this day.



Craft

Make fish, make a boat, make a fish mobile.
(Out of cardboard)

Painting

Food colouring dropped onto serviettes.

Music

Songs about water or fish such as: "All the fish are swimming in the water" "1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive".

Activity

Role play one or more aspects of Peter's life.

Story

Read a story where the children can act the parts out.

Purpose

To learn more about people from the Bible and how their lives can help us today.

EASTER

Outline

Take advantage of this day to share God's plan for us in sending Jesus to save us. There will be plenty of other places where the Easter Bunny is featured so use this opportunity to concentrate on Jesus. When giving Easter eggs explain that we do this to represent the new life made possible for us when we give our lives to Jesus. Have a simple Easter story/play. Have an Easter egg hunt and tell the story of Easter at the same time ie. first stop cross, second cave, and so on. Be sure to invite to Easter services.

Craft

Cardboard cross, children to decorate.

Painting

Use candle to draw various Easter things, children paint over and picture appears. Paint eggs.

Activity

Easter egg hunt.

Story

There are a number of resources available to communicate the story of Easter — Resurrection eggs are a great way to tell the story in an interesting way.

Purpose

To share the real meaning of Easter — HE IS RISEN, ALLELUIA





Play some music! Choose a song that soothes or inspires, but if you want real refreshment, make it a sing-along.

Bless someone. Bless another mom with a quick note or an e-mail of encouragement, you'll be blessed too.

Read. Read a devotion to kick start your day. Try the Mom's Devotional Bible available in the MOPShop at www.MOPShop.org

Harness the power of visualization. Close your eyes and take a mental trip to your favorite beach, or that café that serves the perfect croissant. Feel the sun. Taste the butter ... with the benefit of no calories.

Make a sweet treat just for you. Some fruit with yogurt, ice and juice in the blender makes

a great, healthy smoothie. For a hot drink, try a steamer with heated milk and a little syrup.

Stimulate your senses. Step outside into the grass with bare feet. Turn your face to the sun, the sunlight will boost your mood.

Get out your journal. No need for a long writing session, just quickly write five things for which you are grateful. It's the quickest way to change your attitude from stressed to blessed.

Move around! A short burst of jumping jacks, crunches or push-ups will give you a much-needed endorphin boost to get through the rest of your day.

Do absolutely nothing. Sound like foreign concept? That's precisely why you should try it. Let your mind drift. Invite the refreshment in.

Souvenir Journey

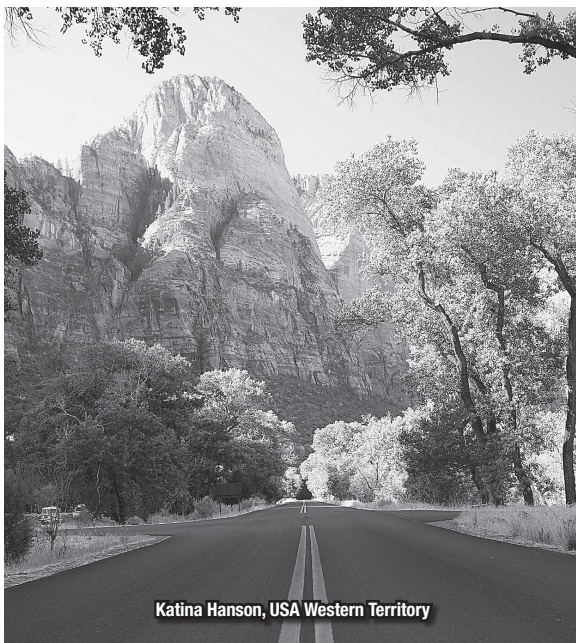
Ask each woman to bring an item that represents a place they have been. Number each one and have the women guess who brought it. Then invite them to share something about the location and why they went there.

Table Decorations

Place small maps in the middle of each table. Add toy vehicles, photographs from trips, postcards and small souvenir items from trips taken.

Refreshments

Picnic style.



Katina Hanson, USA Western Territory

Joy on the Journey



Church Knowledge Scavenger Hunt

Divide the women into groups and have them complete the following:

- Count how many pews/chairs are in the chapel.
- Sing *Jesus Loves Me* to the corps officers for their signature.
- Count how many plants are in the building.
- Add up the years that each woman in your group has attended your church.
- Count how many serving spoons are in the corps kitchen.
- Count how many fire extinguishers are in the building.
- Identify the manufacturer of the church copier and it's model number.
- Bring back an old Sunday bulletin. (Look in the chapel, a hymn book or foyer.)

Joy Choruses/Songs

- *J-O-Y, J-O-Y. This Must Surely Mean Jesus First, Yourself Last and Others In Between* (Sing to the tune of Jingle Bells)
- *If You're Happy and You Know It*
- *Christ is All*, SASB 489
- *Joy in The Salvation Army*, SASB 807

Song Book Scavenger Hunt

(suggestions) (All from the SASB)

- What does chorus SASB 215 say life is? *Life Is A Song When You Walk With Jesus*
- In song 807, what gives the Army joy in verse 2? *Blood and fire*
- Who wrote song 892? *Eliza Edmunds Hewitt*
- What is the song number for *Joy to the World*? 84



- What does chorus #220 say about Jesus? *Make Jesus King*
- Find the song *Joyful, Joyful* and copy down the second verse. (extra points if you can do it from memory)
- In the chorus 206, "Jesus' love is like a ..." (finish the sentence) *Rainbow when earthly skies are gray*
- What is the title of 462? *By the Pathway of Duty*



don't have to worry about God letting you down. Can you believe that some people refuse this offer? Strange but true, some of us want to remain in the horrors of our despair. We want to cling to the negative experiences we have and not get joy back into our lives. Why would anyone choose to journey through life in the ruts and ditches of despair rather than journey through life in joy?

Trade-in and Trade-up

"Is this a good deal?" People ask this constantly at a vehicle auction area or car showroom where many types of cars are sold. Customers can look, touch, carefully examine the cars and pray that they get the one that will be an upgrade of their current driving situation.

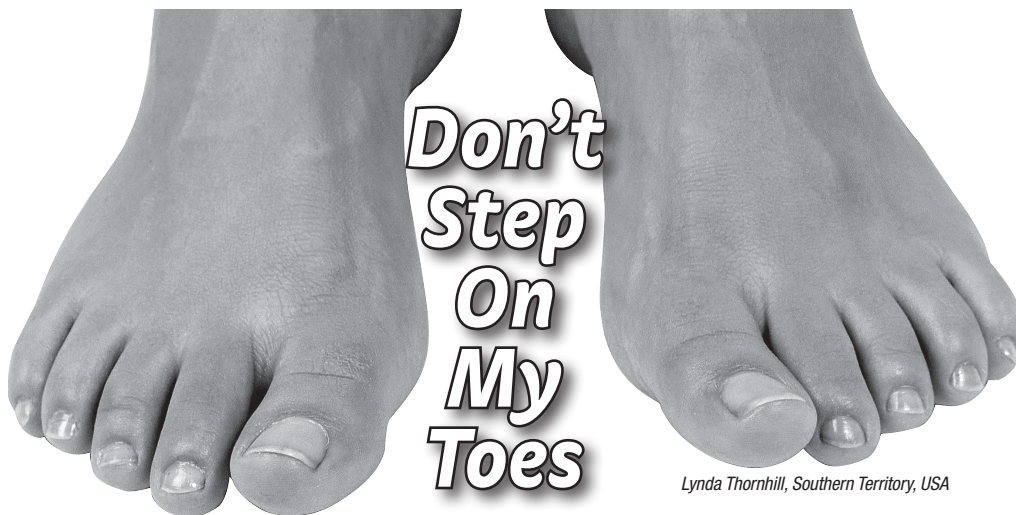
Psalms 34:5,6 (Modern Language) relates how people, even thousands of years ago, were looking for a good deal as well. It states, "They looked to Him and were radiant ... This poor man called and the Lord heard, and saved him out of all his troubles." This means we must be willing to "trade up" our distress for God's help. This verse of Scripture is a simple statement that proclaims the love and unparalleled assistance that we can get from our Creator. The instructions are easy: Look to God for help.



The outcome is even simpler: He will help and you will have joy. You

Perhaps it is fear of the unknown. Some people get comfortable in their distress and pain. They would rather remain in the ditch of despair where they feel comfortable than chance getting run over on life's highway. Their philosophy of life is, "It is better to deal with the devil you know than face the unknown." Do you know anyone like that? They miss out on the great joys of life's journey. Some people just think that looking to God for help is too easy. If something looks too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true. They just cannot believe it is possible to trade-up our old lives and problems for joy.

Is it possible to leave the ruts of pain and ditches of despair to live a higher quality life? Yes, according to God's Word it is possible. Look to God for help. He will give you the help you need. You do not have to worry about God letting you down. You can trust Him. So how about it? Will you trade in your old journey for a new one? Let go of the wreckage of your past and get on the King's Highway. "Trade-up" your problems to God with joy. You won't find a better deal.



Lynda Thornhill, Southern Territory, USA

Decorations

Purchase small foot-care items from a dollar store and place them randomly in the middle of the tables. Display bottles of nail polish, polish remover and cotton balls at the front of the room to represent a nail salon.

Preparation

Announce ahead of time that pedicures will be given and that if the women want to participate, they should dress appropriately — no stockings or panty hose.

Program Ideas

- Invite a podiatrist to speak on such topics as: daily foot care, common foot problems and how to avoid them, surgical and non-surgical treatments.
- Have a Shoe Store Representative to instruct the women on how to select a properly fitting shoe or one that will help relieve foot distress.



- Have some of the women paint the toenails of the other women while the program is going on.

Game: What Is It?

Have volunteers remove their shoes and socks then blindfold them and place assorted containers containing such things as grapes, cotton balls, water, flour, small building blocks, pebbles, marbles on the floor in front of them for them to identify, using only their feet.

Taking Care of Your Toes

Write on 3x5 cards the name of a part of the foot — toes, arch, heel, skin, ankle, nails, ball. On a second set write a problem that might occur — corns, bunions, high arch pain, cracked heels, spurs, odor, burning, blisters, dry skin, athlete's foot, sprains, nail fungus, in-grown toenails.

Have the participants draw a card one at a time and read their word then the woman with the corresponding

issue finds its match. One foot part could have several problems, each requiring different care. For example: foot part – skin, foot problem – odor.

For information on how to care for foot problems check the following websites
www.footcare4u.com.

<http://arthritis.about.com/od//foot/a/footcare.htm>

http://footcaredirect.com/athletes_foot_fungus.html



Feet In the Bible

- Whose feet did not swell or their shoes wear out for 40 years? *The Children of Israel (Deuteronomy 8:4)*
- Who said, “The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children for ever”? *Moses to Joshua (Joshua 14:9)*
- Who uncovered Boaz’s feet and lay down beside them? *Ruth (Ruth 3:7)*
- Who had a son who was lame in both feet? *Jonathan (2 Samuel 4:4)*
- Who said, “And if any place will not welcome you ... shake the dust off your feet when you leave”? *Jesus (Mark 6:11)*
- Two women washed Jesus’ feet. Who were they? *One is not mentioned by name but was simply called a “sinful woman” (Luke 7:37,38). The other was Mary, Lazarus’ sister (John 12:3)*
- Whose feet did Jesus wash? *The disciples (John 13:5)*
- Who said to Jesus, “You shall never wash my feet”? *Peter (John 13:8)*

Be Careful Little Feet Where You Go

If you have a foot problem and don’t take care of it right away, it quickly turns into two or more problems. When we identify the source of any problem and take care of it, we save ourselves from further pain and suffering.

In the children’s song, “Be careful little feet where you go?” it says, “The Father up above is looking down in love, so be careful little feet where you go.” It reminds us to walk in the path He has marked for our feet, to walk in the light of God. If we tread down the wrong road we need to repent, turn around, and go in the right direction.

If we ignore foot odor, the problem only gets worse. Covering up smelly feet with shoes and socks without treating the symptom is foolish. It takes proper care to relieve and cure the problem, then when it is fixed, pain or embarrassment is relieved and we can walk on with confidence. Romans 8:1-4 tells us how to take care of the problems in our lives. God sent His Son to take away our sin. It requires more than just recognizing our sin, we need to ask for His forgiveness and then go on in the right direction. It will relieve us of the pain, embarrassment and heartache that sin brings. When we allow Him to do this for us, we become as new, and are free to share His redemptive power with others.

Instead of focusing on your feet look up! Ask God to reveal those things that need to be changed in you. Even beautiful feet sometimes ache. It is possible to appear to walk uprightly when we desperately need the searchlight of God’s love to forgive us and show us the way. Just say: “Father, I am a sinner, please forgive me of any impurities that I have in my life and allow me to walk through this day knowing that I am free in Christ.”

Stained Glass Windows

Ida Krommenhoek, Toronto, Ontario

Song: A Stained Glass Window, Tune:

969 *I Love To Tell The Story*

*Way high above the altar, the sunlight
beaming through;*

*There is a stained glass window, of
Yellow, Red and Blue.*

*It is a thing of beauty and catches ev'ry
eye*

*Of those who stop to worship, as they
are passing by!*

Chorus

*Oh, may I be a window, of fragments
clear and true;*

*A window of some beauty, with God's Love
shining through,*

*Made up of tiny fragments, which in themselves
mean naught;*

*But when they're placed together, a thing of
beauty's wrought.*

*So in our lives the fragments of tiny deeds
we do*

*Make up a life of beauty, with God's love
shining through!*

Prayer Chorus: Open the Windows of
Heaven, Tune: Showers of Blessing)

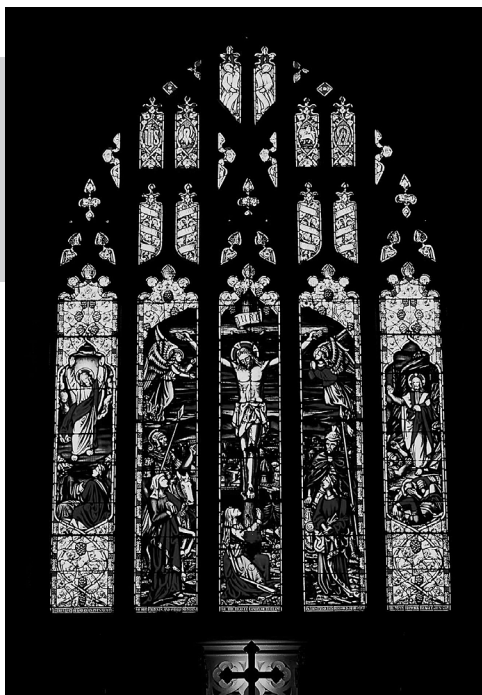
*Open the windows of heaven, Pour out Thy
Spirit on me.*

*Make me a blessing to others, Help me Thy
servant to be!*

Pour out Thy Spirit

Pour out Thy Spirit on me.

*Make me a blessing to others,
Help me Thy Servant to be.*



Introduction

The dictionary has numerous definitions of “window”. *Ask the ladies for their definition.*

- An opening in the wall of a building to admit light and air.
- In early days it was just a hole in the wall.
- A means of entrance or access: opened and shut.
- The transparent panel of a window envelope.
- An interval of time during which conditions are favourable or an opportunity exists.
- Any of the areas in which a computer display may be divided.

Poem: Watching From Windows

*I like to watch from windows — there's oh,
so much to see!*

*The silv'ry spire of a church, a budding lilac tree,
A little girl on roller-skates, who turns to
wave at me!*

*I like to watch from windows — when Maple
Leafs unfold*

*And daffodils against the fence are cups of
purest gold.
And mother sits and watches too, her face
serene and old.*

*I like to watch from windows — there's
always something new
A neighbour walking home from town,
who stops to chat with you
And wishes in a wistful voice, that she
had such a view.*

*I like to watch from windows — there's
something clean and high
About the sweep of purple hills against
a morning sky
That calls and whispers to my heart — I
cannot tell you why!* *Edna Jaques*

Quiz: Bible Windows

- Can you name the first window mentioned in the Bible?
Genesis 6:16
- Someone fell asleep while a long sermon was preached and fell out of a window, can you name the preacher and the sleeper?
Acts 20:9
- Who was the apostle, who was let down from a window in a basket?
2 Corinthians 11:33
- What caused the great flood in Noah's time? *Genesis 7:11*
- What did Daniel do, after he knew that the writing was signed? *Daniel 6:10*
- God asked the people to bring all the tithes into the storehouse and then he would? *Malachi 3:10*
- Who was let down out of a window by a cord, for her house was upon the town wall? *Joshua 2:15*
- Who stood behind a wall and looked at the windows? *Song of Solomon 2:9*
- Who said that he would build a house and cut out windows? *Jeremiah 22:14*

Thought

When you open a window yourself, you get fresh air; when someone else opens it, you get a draught!



Fun Songs

*How much is that doggy in the WINDOW? The
one with the wagging tail ...*

*How much is that doggie in the WINDOW? I
do hope that doggie's for sale!*

*When the sun in the morning peeps over
the hill,
And kisses the roses "round my WINDOW sill,
Then my heart fills with gladness, when I hear
the trill,
Of the birds in the treetops of mocking bird
hill!!*

*Tra la la, twiddle dee dee, It gives me a thrill
To wake up in the morning to the mocking
bird's trill*

*Tra la la, twiddle dee dee, there's peace and
goodwill*

*You're as welcome as the flowers on mocking
bird hill.*

Devotions

A message can drawn from any one of the following poems.

Poem: House Cleaning

*God knocked at the door of my heart, one day
and I looked for a place to hide;
My soul was cluttered and choked with debris,
and things were untidy inside!
I needed some time to put matters right,
surprised He would call on me;
My soul needed cleansing, from bottom to
top, there were things there, that no one
should see!*

*There were tasks neglected — long overdue;
cobwebs to be brushed from the wall
Rugs to be shaken and WINDOWS cleaned
up. I had not expected His call!
I stood with my hand on the latch of the door,
and gazed at the mess in the room,
When I opened the door my soul blushed to see,
God had left on my doorstep a broom!*

Poem: Windows of Gold

*There is a legend, that has often been told
Of the boy who searched for the WINDOWS
of GOLD
The beautiful windows he saw far away
When he looked in the valley at sunrise each
day.*

*And he yearned to go down to the valley
below
But he lived on the mountain that was covered
with snow'
And he knew it would be a difficult trek,
But it was a journey he wanted to make.*

*So he planned by day, and he dreamed by
night
Of how he could reach the great shining light!
And one golden morning when dawn broke
through*

*And the valley sparkled with diamonds of
dew.*

*He started to climb down the mountain
side,
With the Windows of Gold as his goal and
guide.
He travelled all day and, weary and worn,
With bleeding feet and clothes that were
torn,*

*He entered the peaceful valley town
Just as the golden sun went down.
But he seemed to have lost his "Guiding
Light,"
The windows were dark that once had been
bright.*

*And hungry and tired and lonely and cold
He cried: "Won't you show me the WINDOWS
of Gold?"
And a kind hand touched him and softly said,
"Behold"
High on the mountain are the Windows of
Gold"*

*For the sun going down in a great golden
ball
Had burnished the windows of his cabin,
so small,
And the Kingdom of God with its great shining
light,
Like the golden windows that shone so
bright.*

*Is not a far distant place, somewhere
It's as close to you as a silent prayer,
And your search for God will end and begin
When you look for Him and find Him within!*

Helen Steiner Rice

Following the devotional choose an appropriate
closing song then close the evening with a
benediction.

Welcome Back

Ida Krommenhoek, Toronto, Ontario

We are rolling out the WELCOME MAT for you!

First meeting after the summer — or Christmas break

Note to the leader: Rolled up pieces of paper with the songs or program could be given to each. They should be given out when each person comes in with the greeting “Welcome Back”, we are rolling out the welcome mat for you! At the entrance a real red carpet could be rolled out as well.

Song: SASB 293/TB 474, *Just As I Am*
(Make note of verse 5)

Prayer Chorus: SASB 175, *Beautiful Christ* (just chorus)

Introduction

The word WELCOME comes from the old English ‘willcuma’. The word ‘will’ meant pleasure and ‘cuma’, guest, thus people wanted to meet and greet guests with pleasure. This is what we want to do today. We want to meet you with pleasure! “WELCOME”!

From the dictionary, we find that most of the definitions used for the word WELCOME are positive.

- Admitted gladly to a place or activity.
- Producing satisfaction or pleasing!
- Made free to use or enjoy.
- As a conventional response to THANK YOU!
- As a verb ‘to welcome’ means to greet hospitably.
- To receive with pleasure.

As these examples of WELCOME are such positive statements we should sing some ‘happy’ songs. (In your planning for this meeting have some songs ready to sing, or prior to meeting ask people to let you know their favorites, don’t forget music for accompanist)

Solo: *Whispering Hope*

Reading: The Value Of A Smile

The value of a smile ...
creates happiness in the home.
is the countersign of friends.
is daylight to the discouraged.
is nature’s best antidote for trouble.
fosters goodwill in business.
is rest to the weary.
brings sunshine to the sad.
Yet it cannot be bought, begged or stolen, for it is something that is no earthly good to anybody, until it is given away! If someone is too tired to give you a smile, just give them one of yours anyway. For nobody needs a smile as much as those who have none left to give!

Game: How many words can you make out of the letters of the word W E L C O M E !

Devotions: Centre your devotional thought around 2 Peter 1:11, “And you will receive a rich WELCOME into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!”

Song: SASB 879/TB 140, *Give Me The Wings Of Faith To Rise*,

Back to Basics

Nature's Healing Foods

Colleen Cyr, Hamilton, Ontario



Preparation

Set up a table with a display of natural or organic food items, such as honey, different vinegars, fresh garlic, recipe hand outs with any of these items included.

Introduction

We live in a world today that God created perfectly. We read in the Genesis account that everything He made "was good". Unfortunately today because of the fall of man and human nature we have ruined many of the things that He has given to us for our benefit.

One can just visualize the incredible garden that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were placed in with a vast array of wonderful tantalizing fruits for their pleasure and consumption. The Lord made this garden for them, that was "pleasing to the eye". (Genesis 2:8-9)

We know that because Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of the Knowledge

of Good and Evil, (Genesis 2:17) that this was the beginning of a fallen nation, and men, women, and all creation to follow would reap the consequences of their actions.

Because what was created has been tainted, this overflows into our food chain, however all is not lost. Most foods today have preservatives and chemicals in them that really are not at all good for us, but there are also many farmers with a good conscience who realize that we need to take care of our bodies and rid their crops of any harmful chemicals.

***We live
in a world
today that
God created
perfectly***

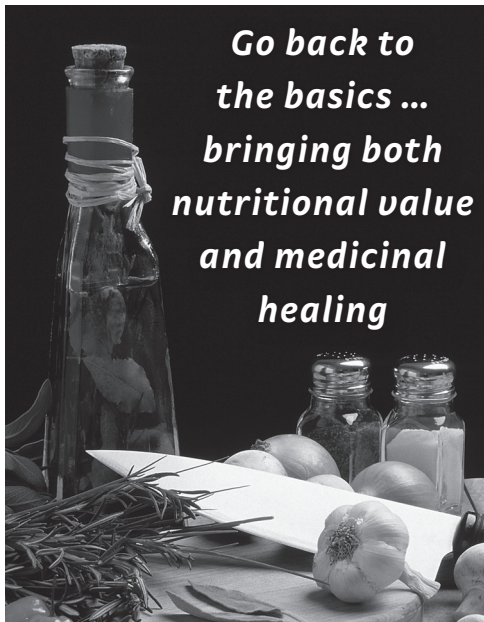
There are many wonderful, healthy foods that we can consume daily. If we were to go back to the basics, in biblical days people lived off of the earth, with natural foods, such as honey and vinegars, bringing both nutritional value as well as medicinal healing. (See

Scripture references)

Genesis: 43-11, Proverbs 24:13, Ruth 2:14

Honey, one of nature's sweetest foods, has many uses, it is:

- great in tea as a natural substitute for sugar.
- a wound healer.
- a germ killer (germs can not survive in honey).
- used in many recipes.



There are so many recipes that can be made with these bountiful items: garlic, honey and vinegar, in particular, have so much in common. They are all inexpensive, healthy, and easy to store, and have a good shelf life.

Recipe

Roasted fresh garlic is wonderful to put in sauces and dips. Here is how to prepare it:
Ingredients

- 1 head of garlic
 - 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil
-
- Preheat oven to 425F.
 - Remove outer paper of garlic and slice

off the top of head so cloves are exposed. Place in a small baking dish, drizzle olive oil over cloves.

- Fold a piece of aluminum foil over garlic, or cover dish with foil.
- Roast about 45 minutes, until garlic is soft and lightly browned.
- To serve, separate the heads. Mix into your favorite dip, or sauce, or whatever.

Note: This is good in homemade salsa.

To store leftover garlic buds squeeze the pulp into a small container and cover with olive oil. Can be stored for about a month.

Program Note: You could bring in a guest speaker from an organic food store to talk about food options and their benefits.

You could also provide recipes with these food items, have a cooking demonstration and give the ladies small taste samples.

If you bring some extra aprons and oven mitts you can have a couple of the ladies assist in the demonstration.

If you wish to make a worship program out of this health/education program you can just add appropriate scriptures, songs, readings, music etc.

This program really is just suggesting ideas and can be readily adjusted.

Remember

Examine your diet (for exposure to unnecessary toxins), your attitude and exercise! God's Word tells us that are bodies are the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

It is our spiritual responsibility to take care of our body, spiritually, physically and emotionally for our mental and healthy well-being.

Bear One Another's Burdens

Mottie Sturge, New Wes Valley,
Newfoundland



**"A true friend can
bear your faults!"**

Preparation

On display have a collection of Teddy Bears (stuffed, ornamental, pictures etc. ask the ladies, to bring in favorite Teddy Bears they may have).

Welcome and Announcements

Song: SASB 179/TB 742 *I Stand Amazed In The Presence*

Poem: Count On Me

*If life becomes too much for you,
And a friend is what you need,
Just place your hand in mine
When things are rough ... I'll lead.
Feel free to lean against me
If your burden is too much,
I'll help you carry all the weight
With just a gentle touch.
I've time enough to listen
To all you have to say,
I'm waiting just to hear from you
All you have to do is pray.*

Charlotte Anselmo

Poem: Whisper Jesus

*Today I got a burden
And felt that I should pray,
For God's spirit seemed to tell me,
That you were having a bad day.*

*I don't know just what the problem is,
But I sure do know the cure
And if' you'll only let Him
God will keep you safe and secure.*

*In life there's always a problem,
Cropping up to spoil our day,
But my friend you know the answer,
All you have to do, is "PRAY".
If you still feel you are defeated,
And you want to run and hide,
Just reach out and I will be there,
Running right there by your side.
So remember — WHISPER JESUS,
For He's just a prayer away.
He's so close that you can touch Him
And all you have to do is "PRAY". (Author Unknown)*

Game: “Beary Fun” Word Search

See below

what the gift is. Maybe have a list of clues to help them. The first one to guess correctly is the winner.

Game: Guess The Parcel

Have a special small gift in a box covered with wrapping paper (teddy bear theme). Pass the gift around and have the ladies try to guess

Chorus: *Burdens Are Lifted At Calvary*

Prayer

**“Beary Fun” Word Search**

Find the following words in the puzzle:

ANOTHER
BEAR
BURDENS
CARE
CAST

GALATIANS
GOD
HELPING
HOPE
KINDNESS

LIGHT
LOAD
PRAY
SHARE
TRUST

A	R	V	L	I	G	H	T	G	S	G	D	B	I	L
U	Z	E	F	A	L	C	A	C	N	S	B	K	D	E
H	M	S	H	T	K	L	C	I	R	N	D	N	C	B
I	J	J	S	T	A	G	P	R	A	E	B	A	V	K
P	R	A	Y	T	O	L	O	C	J	D	J	F	O	V
K	C	G	I	C	E	N	Z	D	K	R	S	F	K	L
E	J	A	A	H	X	U	A	S	U	U	H	V	V	N
R	N	R	P	M	D	C	N	J	V	B	A	I	G	C
S	E	W	A	M	X	D	I	M	L	H	R	P	V	J
S	S	E	N	D	N	I	K	W	F	Y	E	B	V	K
F	A	V	T	K	H	R	R	S	C	L	D	M	V	E
L	T	R	F	R	U	O	G	W	Z	V	A	W	B	P
Q	S	U	P	I	U	B	X	D	J	K	P	T	K	O
P	D	C	S	U	N	S	L	P	V	T	A	H	T	H
H	T	B	N	U	E	P	T	C	X	K	R	S	R	S



Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

*Whenever I am troubled
And lost in deep despair,
I bundle all my troubles up
And go to God in prayer ...*

*I tell Him I am heartsick
And lost and lonely, too.
That my mind is deeply burdened
And I don't know what to do ...*

*But I know He stilled the tempest
And calmed the angry sea,
And I humbly ask if in His love
He'll do the same for me...
And then I just keep quiet
And think only thoughts of peace
And if I abide in stillness
My "restless murmurings" cease.*

Helen Steiner Rice

Scripture: Galatians 6:2-10

Devotional: Bear One Another's Burdens

(Have a teddy bear wrapped up in a blanket)

Galatians chapter 6, verse 2 reads "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ". Here Paul encourages us to carry each others' burdens. This passage of scripture reminds us of God's love for us, sending His Son to bear our burdens on Calvary.



I want you to meet my burden bear. Wrapped up in a blanket this Teddy Bear symbolizes comfort.

The Mennonites, especially the women, are

well known for reaching out to each other during difficult times. They care for each other and carry each other's burdens. They are also famous for the beautiful quilts they make. Did you know that years ago they would only use black thread because they thought white thread was too worldly or extravagant? Every lady would make an obvious error to demonstrate her humility because only God is perfect. We can learn many lessons from these special women.

Verse 7 of our scripture reads, "Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

At the end of the day, what is our harvest

going to look like? Have we reached out in love to those around us? Have we been forgiving? Have we tried to bear each other's burdens? Sometimes we get too complacent and can easily miss the opportunities of sharing in the lives of others. It is easy to become unaware of the needs and pain of others around us.



bearers — to bring comfort to those who are hurting and in need. Sometimes it might be just a gentle touch or hug or simply a kind word spoken that can lift the burden of someone who is hurting and in despair. May we each endeavour to be burden bearers for those in our homes, churches and neighbourhoods who are hurting.

In many communities now, in times of disaster and emergency, agencies like the Red Cross, The Salvation Army, the Police and Fire Departments, provide small Teddy Bears for the children caught up in difficult situations. The children find comfort by cuddling these little bears, it is surprising how much comfort is derived from something so simple.

Verse 9 reads, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for in the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up". Let us be good representatives of the comforting God who cares for us as His children. He is our Burden Bearer and He has told us to "cast our cares on Him for He cares for us". Let us encourage others to turn to Him as their burden bearer.

Paul's challenge to us is to be burden



Burden Bear



*I'm not a very fancy bear,
I'm plain and rather small,
Even so, someone who likes you
Said that I should come to call.
Hide me underneath your pillow
Or sit me on a nearby shelf,
And when you feel discouraged
I will do my best to help.
I brought my favorite blanket,
That I snuggle when I'm sad,
It's a present from my granny
Made for days when things are bad.
My granny always told me
Life is like this patchwork quilt,*

*Just give Jesus all the pieces
And He'll make a pretty quilt.
Sometimes I don't see the pattern,
Sometimes He seems far away,
Then I clutch my favorite blanket
And pray and pray and pray.
Though I don't have all the answers,
(For I'm just a 'Burden Bear'.)
I've been sent here on a mission
From someone who really cares.
So when you're having problems
And are sad and in despair,
Just hold me and remember
You are in my thoughts and prayers.*

Author Unknown

Fun With Advertising

Barbara Frank, Gravenhurst, Ontario

Welcome & Prayer

When watching TV you can't get away from it, all the channels are in sync; no matter what channel you turn to, it seems to be always advertising time.

Sprite: (or any other pop of choice)

The refreshing drink that takes away your thirst. It comes in regular or diet. It tastes great so, do the Sprite thing and get rid of your thirst.



Are you thirsty? Jesus said, "Come drink from the Living Water and you will never thirst again". He comes in one flavour and we don't have to worry about calories. Do the Jesus thing and our thirst will be gone forever. Just remember Jesus is the Living Water.

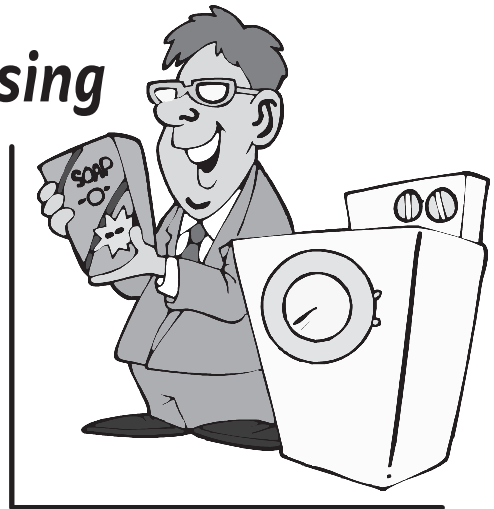
Bible Reading: "Thirst"

Psalms 42:2; Revelations 7:16; John 7:37

Chorus: 147 SASB *All Through The Years His Providence Has Led Me*

Tide: Tide gets the dirt out, even in cold water. There is nothing like it. Your whites will stay white and your colours won't fade.

Jesus: Jesus died on the cross for our sin. When we turn ourselves over to Him, He washes us whiter than snow.

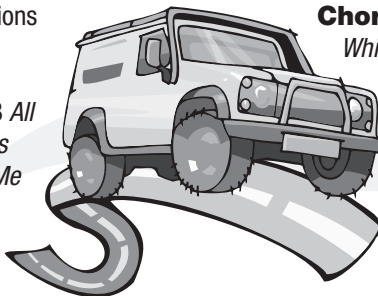


Ivory: Ivory soap is 99 and 44/100% pure. What can be better than that? It floats; you can always find it in the tub. It won't irritate your skin and it's great for babies.

Jesus: 100% pure. He's great for every age. When He takes away your sin, He will wash you whiter than snow. He lifts you up and will never let you down. Just trust in Him and He will always keep you safe.

Bible Reading: "Wash" Psalms 51:7

Chorus: Song 436 SASB/TB 563
Whiter Than Snow



Ford Escape: (or any other vehicle)

Want to escape from the world? your problems? or do you just want to get away? Well, Ford has the vehicle for you? It is the ultimate! It will take you to places no other car has dared to venture. It has gadgets galore. It will cost you about \$40,000 (plus taxes, and other luxury add-ons.)

Jesus: Need to escape? Life getting you down? Burdens too heavy? Well just turn

everything over to Jesus. He will take your troubles and burdens from you. He will be your friend and comforter. He will take you to places you have never been before. He will save a place for you in Heaven; best of all, it is free — no cost, money doesn't factor into this journey. Just turn your life over to Him.

Bible Reading: "Escape"

Genesis 19:17; Proverbs 19:5

Yellow Pages: Let your fingers do the walking in the yellow pages. Everything from A to Z is in this book. Just open it up and run your fingers across the pages until you find what you need. It's that easy!

Bible: Searching for something. Don't really know what you want? Well just open your Bible and run your fingers through the passages. Everything is right there. There is help for the sorrowful, the heavy burdened and the sinner. Jesus said, "I'm the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE". It is all there in the BIBLE. Open it up and read it.

Bible Reading: "Walking"

Proverbs 2:7; Genesis 5:24

Chorus: 152 SASB, *Clear Are The Skies Above Me*

The Master Card: There are some things money can't buy, for everything else there's master card. I'm sure you have received their applications in the mail or even gotten those pesky marketing phone calls at dinner time. However, I'm here to advertise a different type of card. I'm a card carrying representative for The Master's Card.



THE Master's Card: There are no finance charges, no payments due. My debt has already been covered ... It's a prepaid deal. I couldn't afford the price so Christ paid it for me. My name is written on the card for all to see. It is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year and is accessible all over the world. It has so many benefits it's hard to list them all and you can apply for a personal card for yourself.

Just for starters there is UNLIMITED GRACE — no preset limit to the amount of grace you receive from THE MASTER'S CARD.

THE MASTER'S CARD offers the greatest rate on love that has ever been offered.

The MASTER'S CARD gives you access to many "members only" benefits. Want real joy despite the difficulties in life? Apply for the MASTER'S CARD. Want a lasting peace? Apply for the MASTER'S CARD. Looking for something you can always rely on? The MASTER'S CARD is perfect for you.

It never expires and will never be cancelled. Once a member, you're a member for life ... eternal life that is. Membership has its privileges so why not apply today? It's only a prayer away.

Closing Prayer

Chorus: 173 SASB, *I'm Living My Life For Jesus*

Game: Laundry Soap Game

Everyone gets a sheet of paper and pencil. They each write down as many kinds of laundry soaps as possible within a 3-minute time limit.



Lamps of Motherhood

Josephine Oxford, Springdale, Newfoundland

Program can be used for Mother's Day or Mother and Daughter Program

Preparation

Display lamps to represent Infancy, Toddler, Teenager, College Student, Newlywed — Living Room Lamp, Grandmother's Lamp and Oil Lamp. Begin program with lights off, have lamps ready for lighting during the program. Have a small candle for each lady to light at the end of the program.



Introduction

A light can make a frightening room into a place of warmth and security. A light can transform fear of the unknown and unseen into the welcoming glow of familiarity. A light can create cozy warmth and cheerful rays from dark and mysterious shadows. A light can cause dark and deserted streets to become brilliant displays of night life. A light can change the cold, unfriendly night into a warm and friendly companion. It's the light that makes the difference.

A mother can make a house a home. A mother can make a sad face smile. She can make a rainy day sunny and a lonely heart feel needed and wanted. She can make the insecure feel confident. It is the mother that makes the difference.

Song: SASB 841/TB 698, *Jesus Bids Us Shine*.

Prayer

Devotional

The Lamps of Motherhood — they're varied, they're unique and they fulfill different needs. But they all have one thing in common. Their purpose is to give light.

Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men (before your family) that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The lamp of motherhood is lit by the divine hand the day you bring that tiny life into the world. The lamp doesn't go out until that same divine hand chooses to remove the earthly light to a place of eternal light. No matter what size or representation of lamp you are, or what small corner God has given you to light, to Him you are one of His very special lamps. You are a lamp of Motherhood.

Nursery Lamp

Your baby arrives and suddenly you find

yourself in the thrilling, perplexing, frustrating and exhausting new role of motherhood. You are now the lamp of a caretaker. Often your lamp burns around the clock, there are long hours and sleepless nights of feedings and caring for your child.

Your days are scheduled, so busy that sometimes the breeze of busyness almost blows your lamp out. In these times it's important to keep focused as your little one becomes aware of their environment and surroundings.

Psychologists tell us that by three years of age, a child has developed 90% of their personality, their disposition and attitudes. God instructs us "train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22: 6

How has your lamp of caretaking been shining?



Song: SASB 843/TB 304, *Jesus Loves Me This I Know*

Toddler Lamp

The lamp of Caretaker never goes out, but as the years go by, a new lamp is added. Baby

paraphernalia is replaced with books, games, coloring books, dolls and doll houses. You begin to hear, "Mommy, let's play a game" or "colour this page with me" or "let's go play outside".

Your baby has grown and the light of companion-ship is lit. The toddler stage provides a whole new world to explore. There are new skills to encourage and untapped abilities to develop. There are new wonders of nature to examine, new games to play, and new lessons to learn.

God lit the lamp of Companionship because some little life needs more than tasty food, nice clothes, a clean playroom and more than the new toys you purchase. This life needs someone to listen, to notice, to talk with. Your child needs you.

Has your lamp of companionship been glowing brightly?

Soon that tiny bundle you brought into the world has blossomed into a lovely young person. You watch the development with mixed emotions as you realize how fast childhood's carefree years have passed. The young shoulders are beginning to bear the weight of life's responsibilities, tensions and perplexities. As a mother you find yourself in a new role — rearing a teenager.

Teenage Lamp

The lamp of Consultant brings new challenges to motherhood.

In this stage you recognize that your wisdom and insights are far too limited to cope with the fast-moving world in which your teen lives. There are times when you wonder if your dim light will withstand the storms that come with adolescent years. Depending on

the divine wisdom of God you will experience strength far beyond your own supply.

Storms will be experienced, but take the time to experience the sunshine of happiness and understanding between you and your teen. Your lamp of consultant will shine effectively if you allow the strong rays of consistency, humility, loving words and actions, openness, honesty, understanding, trust and most of all, prayer. Nothing can put out this lamp faster than inconsistency, distrust, hasty condemnations and accusations, and just plain disinterest.

How has your lamp of consultant been shining before your teens? Have they seen your sincerity and understanding?

College Student Lamp (Desk Lamp)

The light of Stability. The trunks are packed. The little room that was once a nursery, which has been your child's during all the years since then, is strangely empty. There's a strange emptiness in your heart as you realize he is really leaving the security and protection of home. College will open his eyes to a world that can be impersonal and unconcerned.

The pressure to conform to an un-Christ like world is great. The intellectual, anti-God theories of man will seek to win his mind. Honest doubts will come. Man's logic will sound convincing. He will evaluate people and things. He will note inconsistencies within and injustices without. He will wonder and question. Through all of the instabilities of college life you, mom, will be his lamp of stability.



Throughout the past eighteen years, you have laid a foundation. Now as he builds his own life, you will be his stability and strength with your consistent prayers, unconditional love and concern, your e-mails and phone calls of encouragement. Above all, your lamp of stability will say I'm with you all the way.

Newlywed Lamp

The light of Example. A new home has begun. The little girl, who for so long was yours, now belongs to another. You shed tears as you see the radiant bride walk down the aisle on the arm of her husband. As the days go by, you watch with satisfaction as you see emerging domestic skills you never dreamed were there. How can that little girl, who couldn't even dust the furniture without leaving behind streaks of dust, ever keep such an immaculate house? How can that amateur cook who always managed to ruin a batch of cookies by reading the recipe wrong, ever produce such tasty meals?

She learned, and is learning by your lamp of example. As the new homemaker arranges her

home, she will almost unconsciously follow your example. She will find herself doing what mom always did. You are her lamp of example. It's an important lamp. It's a lamp that will shine into a home for years to come. Do you like what you see in your daughter's home? Many times it's a reflection of your own home. So carefully and prayerfully keep the lamps of example burning, and the beauty of your home will be seen in the home of your daughter.



Chorus: *Let's All Get Together In Communion Sweet*

Grandmother Lamp (Oil Lamp)

The Lamp of (guidance) Sharer. The house has been silent during the past few years. But now, once again you hear the happy sounds of children's voices and little feet. Once again you visit the children's department in stores, and watch for special bargains in children's toys.

A new lamp glows from your window. From the moment of that first phone call when you hear, 'Congratulations, you are a Grandmother' you become a sharer in the joys of another

life. You share in the miraculous wonder of birth, the first days when all is strange and perplexing to the new mother. You share with pride the growth, development and the new achievements. You share your life and your love with those who hold such a special place in your heart. You eagerly share your time and money, for everyone knows that grandmothers always have special surprises and treats.

But more than all this, you share yourself.

Your days of responsibility for the physical care and guidance of little ones are over, but in a new way, you care and you guide as you share and give of yourself. Grandmothers give a special kind of love that no one else can give, special times that no one else can share.

The challenge is to give your grandchildren love that is far greater than a human love — the love of Christ. Share with your grandchildren the meaningful things in life. The truth of God's Word and the reality of His working in their lives. Show them the divine character of Christ shining through your life.

There's a dark world waiting outside — waiting for the light of Christ. As we think of where God has placed us to be His light, let us light a candle to symbolize our desire to be a light in a dark world. By lighting your candle, you are saying, yes I'll shine for Jesus in my home, in my work place, or wherever I am.

Closing Chorus: *Shine Jesus Shine, Fill This Land With The Father's Glory*

Closing Prayer



God bless Thy year! Thy coming in, Thy going out,
Thy rest, Thy travelling about,
The rough, the smooth, the bright, the drear,
God bless Thy year.

Song: SASB 916/TB 237, *Father, Let Me Dedicate This New Year To Thee!*

Poem: A New Year Has Begun!

*As we meet at the beginning of a New Year
yet untried,
We can trust God's loving guidance, as new
mercies open wide.
New Creation He has promised, unto all a
new name gives,
Who accept His great salvation, and through
Him a new way lives.*

*He will grant us greater blessing, a new song
put in our hearts;
And our spirits will be quickened by the joy
which He imparts.
Oh what peace and great rejoicing shall be
ours as we obey,
For we know that He shall lead us into realms
of endless day!*

Song: SASB 566/TB 299, *Day By Day The Manna Fell*

Prayer Chorus

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know, He holds the future*

*And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!*

Prayer

Scripture

Prepare clocks on card stock with the following sayings: Distribute to several people to read out:

- Take time to be friendly! Read Proverbs 18:24
- Take time to give! Read 2 Corinthians 9:7
- Take time to read! Read Revelation 1:3
- Take time to laugh! Read Proverbs 17:22
- Take time to pray! Read James 4:2

Others could have the following sayings:

- More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.
- Prayer means power — power to live above the cares and frustrations of contemporary life.
- The Bible should have first claim on our time and then other good literature should be read!
- Take time to think! As an old saying goes: Some people sit and think; some just sit!
- Right thinking means right living.
- Sow a thought — reap an act; sow an act — reap a habit, sow a habit — reap a character; sow a character — reap a destiny.
- A big soul is an unselfish soul. This speaks of time, love as well as other gifts.
- A good sense of humour is a great asset. If it is sanity you are after, there is nothing like laughter!

Game: Day Search

DDMAREYA	Day dream
KAAEWYD	Day wake
TRESEYYAD	Yesterday
YLHDIOA	Holiday
AAYYDN	Any day
HDTBIYAR	Birthday
YSAODEM	Someday
EDMYATI	Daytime
YDTOA	Today
RUOBALYDA	Labour Day

Ask the ladies to think, of the New Year's resolution that they kept for the shortest period of time!

Poem: Questioning

I asked the New Year: "What am I to do the whole year through?"

The answer came: "BE TRUE"

I asked again: "And what am I to say to those who pass my way?" "The kindest words."

Game: What's New?

- A Province of Canada. *Newfoundland or New Brunswick*
- A part of the Bible. *New Testament*
- Prints current events. *Newspaper*
- Just married. *Newly Weds*
- A city in the U.S.A. *New York*
- A country 'down-under'. *New Zealand*
- Someone coming for the first time to an event. *Newcomer*
- A person who gossips. *Newsmonger*
- A large Shaggy Dog. *Newfoundland dog*

Song: SASB 917/TB 175, *My Times Are In Thy Hand* – verses 1 & 2

Poem

*I do not know, I cannot see what God's kind hands prepares for me,
Nor can my glance pierce through the haze,
which covers all my future ways;*

But yet I know that o'er it all rules He who notes the sparrow's fall.

I know the Hand that hath me fed and through the years my feet has led!

I know the everlasting Arm, that hath upheld and kept from harm.

I trust Him as my God and Guide and know that He will still provide!

So at the opening of the year, I banish care and doubt and fear

And, clasping His kind hand, essay to walk with God, from day to day.

Trusting Him who has me fed, walking with Him who has me led!

Farewell Old Year, with goodness crowned, a Hand Divine hath set thy bound

Welcome the New Year, which shall bring fresh blessings from my God and King

The old will leave without a tear, the new we hail without a fear!

Following the reading of this poem ask the ladies to share:

- Their joys, even doubts or fears experienced during the year past.
- Their anticipation of what the New Year could bring.

Song: SASB 917/TB 175, *My Times Are In Thy Hand* – Verses 3 & 4

Close with this Blessing

I said to the man, who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown"

And He replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God!

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way!"

An Inside Campfire

Adapted from Home League Resource Material – U.K. Territory

It doesn't matter if your meeting is held in the afternoon or evening for this event — the members will enjoy the atmosphere and fun of the campfire. If you can darken the room to some extent, so much the better.

This program provides an excellent opportunity to invite new people. It should be light-hearted and fun. There is a note of seriousness at the end.

Preparation

There is a good deal of preparation for this event, so try and delegate as much as possible to other people. Arrange the chairs in a circle around the hall.

Equipment Needed

Indoor campfire (instructions given below)
Refreshments (recipe suggestions below)
Indoor sparklers

The Story Of The Gunpowder Plot In England

Bonfire Night is held on November 5th, celebrating the defeat of a conspiracy to blow up the English Houses of Parliament and King James 1.

On November 5, 1605, soldiers discovered a man called Guido (Guy) Fawkes in a cellar under the Houses of Parliament. He had with him numerous barrels of gunpowder and was arrested and tortured. He told his torturers about a plot to blow up Parliament together

with the King, James 1, his ministers and Members of Parliament. Guy Fawkes was a Roman Catholic who was angry with King James, the son of the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, because he wanted more religious tolerance towards Catholics. He had joined a group of four other Catholics in the plot to kill the king. One of them, Francis Tresham, wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Lord Monteagle, warning him of the plot, who warned the government and Guy Fawkes and his fellow conspirators were arrested, tried and executed as traitors.

In 1606, British Parliament agreed to make November 5 a day of public thanksgiving for the saving of its members and ever since "Guy Fawkes Day" has been celebrated in various parts of the world with fireworks and bonfires.

Instructions for Making the Indoor Campfire

You need

- 4 or 5 pieces of wood
- some red, yellow and orange clear plastic
- a light with a red light bulb in the socket on a long extension cord
- Long nails and a hammer

Nail the wood together, leaving a fair-sized hole in the middle at the bottom so that it can be placed over the light bulb. Cut the plastic and stuff it in the top of the wood to look like flames coming out of the top.



Bonfire Night Recipes

Try one or two of these recipes to add to the sense of occasion.

- **Bombs on Sticks Taffy Apples (Caramelized Apples)**

Scrumptious, crunchy taffy apples for the young and young at heart.

One of your ladies will probably have a favorite recipe that can be used to make these.

- **Fireworks Fruit Punch Centerpiece**

Ingredients:

1 pint (570ml) orange juice

1 pint (570ml) ginger ale

1 pint (570ml) bottle of apple juice

1 pint (570ml) pineapple juice, unsweetened

Selection of fresh fruit such as grapes, strawberries, apples and oranges

Instructions:

Wash the fruit and arrange in a glass dessert or punch bowl

Blend together the apple, orange and pineapple juice, and then pour over the fruit, chill thoroughly

Chill the ginger ale, pour into the punch bowl and ladle into glasses.

- **Houses of Parliament Soup**

Create your own homemade soup from a variety of hearty vegetables (potatoes; carrots; onion; celery — add any other vegetable of your choice). Serve with warm crusty bread.

- **Creamy Ember Jacket Potatoes**

Baked potatoes with a sour cream and chive topping and a knob of butter, ideal on a cold winter's evening.

Campfire Songs

There are many songs that can be sung around a campfire and you probably have your own favorites. Here are some suggestions; they are all popular songs, words and music easily available.

Swing Low Sweet Chariot

He's Got the Whole World

Michael Row the Boat

Bicycle Built for Two (Daisy, Daisy)

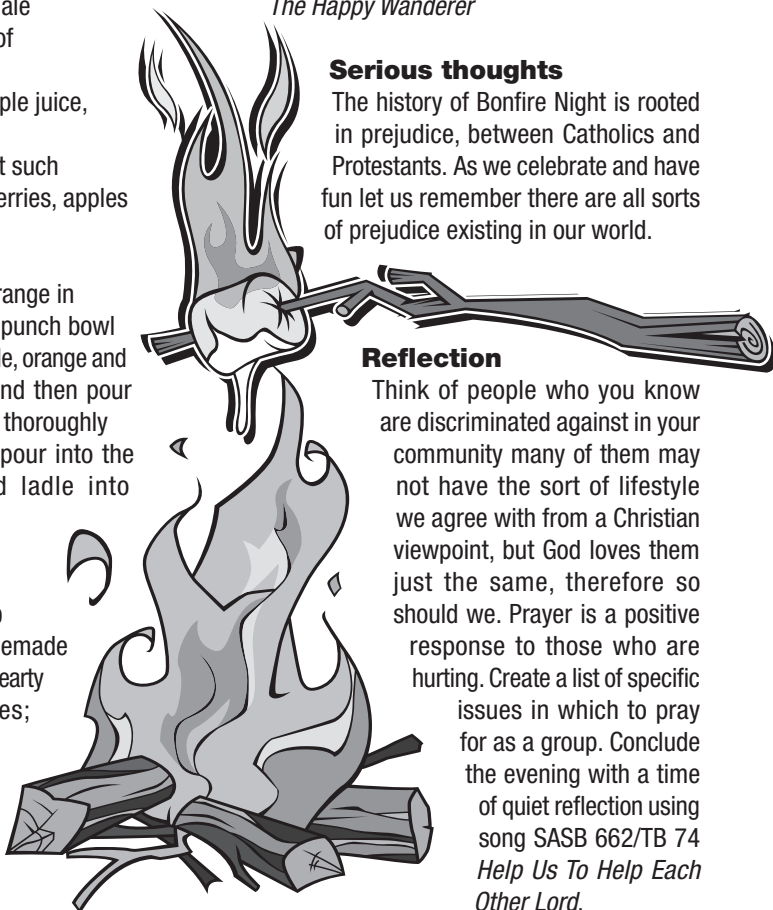
The Happy Wanderer

Serious thoughts

The history of Bonfire Night is rooted in prejudice, between Catholics and Protestants. As we celebrate and have fun let us remember there are all sorts of prejudice existing in our world.

Reflection

Think of people who you know are discriminated against in your community many of them may not have the sort of lifestyle we agree with from a Christian viewpoint, but God loves them just the same, therefore so should we. Prayer is a positive response to those who are hurting. Create a list of specific issues in which to pray for as a group. Conclude the evening with a time of quiet reflection using song SASB 662/TB 74 *Help Us To Help Each Other Lord*.





Welcome & Introduction

A Monologue: The Stranger

A few months before I was born my father met a stranger who was new to our town. From the beginning Dad was fascinated with this newcomer and soon invited him over to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later. As I grew up I never questioned his place within our family. Mom taught me to love the Word of God and Dad taught me to obey it but the stranger was our storyteller. He could weave the most fascinating tales. Adventures, mysteries and comedies were daily conversations. He could

hold our family spell bound for hours each evening. He was like a friend to the whole family. He took Dad, Bill and me to our first major league baseball game. He was always encouraging us to see the movies, and he even made arrangements to introduce us to several movie stars. The stranger was an incessant talker.

Dad didn't seem to mind, but sometimes Mom would quietly get up while the rest of us were enthralled with one of his stories of a far away place, go to her room and read her Bible and pray. I wonder if she ever prayed that the stranger would leave. You see, my dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions,

but this stranger never felt an obligation to honour them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our house — not from us, from our friends, or adults. Our longtime visitor, however, used occasional four letter words that would make my ears burn and make my dad squirm. To my knowledge the stranger was never confronted. My dad was a teetotaler who didn't permit alcohol in his home, not even for cooking, but the stranger felt like we needed exposure and enlightened us to other ways of life.

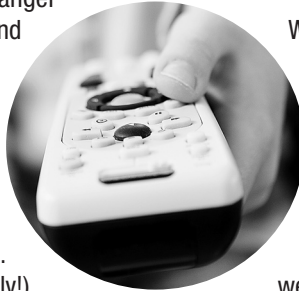
He offered us beer and other alcoholic beverages. He made cigarettes look tasty, cigars manly and the pipe distinguished. He talked freely (much too freely!) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive and generally embarrassing. I know now that my early concepts of the man/woman relationship were influenced greatly by the stranger. As I look back, I believe it was because of the grace of God that the stranger did not influence us more. Time after time he opposed the values of my parents, yet he was seldom rebuked and never asked to leave. More than thirty years have passed since the stranger moved in with the young family on Morningside Drive. But if you were to walk into my parent's den today, you would still see him, sitting over in the corner, waiting for someone to listen to him and watch him draw his pictures. His name? We always just called him T.V. (Source unknown)

Song: SASB 271/TB 583, *There Is Life For A Look* (verse 1 & Chorus)

Six Guidelines for Kid's Viewing

- Know what is on television.
- Control viewing — especially important is the example of the parents.

- Talk about television. Discuss how a program agrees with or contradicts Christian values.
- Watch television with your children.
- Focus on your children and your family. Younger children brought up with these guidelines will be equipped to choose TV programs for themselves as they grow older.



We all feel that we cannot do much to change programs on TV, but we can control what our family and we ourselves watch. When some bad language or picture comes onto the screen, don't say it's only part of the movie or all movies are alike these days... we can chose what we watch on our TV — it has an "OFF" button!

Aimee Dorr Leifer Asst Professor of Research for Children's Television

Song: SASB 570/ TB 364, *Father Hear the Prayer We Offer*

Prayer

Game: Name that Product

- Experience a world of freshness in your fabrics. *Ultra Downey*
- Apply directly to where it itches. *First On*
- Together they bring out the best in your skin. *Nivea*
- Put your scalp to the test. *Head & Shoulders*
- For your cough and cold symptoms you can always count on Mom and *Robitusson*
- Try the tip for an all day grip. *Polygrip*
- It gives cleaning a whole new meaning. *Swiffer*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 8:23-27

Chorus: 152 SABB, *Clear Are The Skies Above Me*

Devotional: Jesus Our Hiding Place — A Refuge in the Storms of Life

As a child we all liked to play the game “Hide and Seek”. It was a fun game but we knew that it was only pretend. We were not actually hiding from anything harmful or frightening. However, as children there are times when things seem scary or frightening and we go to our rooms and hide because we know that there is a place of shelter there. There are also places of refuge during rain showers or cold blustery day. These places provide refuge in times of storms. I’m sure each of us here had our favorite hiding places — a fort set up in the basement, a tent made out of blankets and chairs, a playhouse or even a secret hiding place (like in the bottom of the China Buffet or out under the big old Pine Tree). For many of us these were more than hiding places — they were places of refuge and safety, fortresses where we felt safe and protected from the storms going on around us.



In Matthew 8:23-27 we read about a storm that the disciples experienced. Jesus and His disciples were in a boat after a busy day of preaching, teaching and healing. Jesus was exhausted and fell asleep. We read in verse 24 that without warning a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat, but Jesus kept on sleeping. The disciples then began to panic as the boat

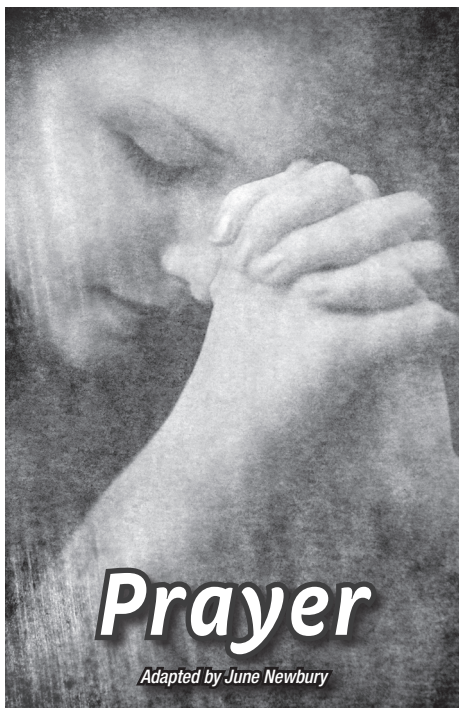
was being tossed about by the wind and the waves. They didn’t know what to do in this dangerous situation. They woke up Jesus and said “Lord save us! We’re going to drown!” We read in verse 26 that He rebuked the wind and the waves and it was immediately calm and still.

In Christ the disciples found a shelter, a refuge from the storm. We read throughout the Psalms about God being a shelter and a refuge ... In Psalms 18:2 it says that “the Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock in whom I take refuge”. In Psalms 91 it tells us “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust”. We see then that David was convinced that the Lord was his strength and his refuge, his shelter and fortress to which he could run in times of storms.

Today, you and I still experience storms and we still need places of refuge in which to hide. Often we have fears, anxious hearts, and weary minds. Although we leave many things from our childhood in the past, we still need a refuge and a hiding place. Where could we find a better hiding place in the storms of life? Where could we go for shelter when the winds and waves of life seem overwhelming? Jesus is our secure hiding place. In Him we find a refuge, a shelter, a mighty fortress, a solid rock, a shield, and a Saviour. If we turn to Christ when the storms alarm us or threaten to destroy us, He will hold us in the sheltering arms of His love. He will hold us and protect us, and we will be able to experience peace and inner calm even though the storms still rage around us.

Chorus: SASB 98/TB 265, *Tell Me the Old, Old Story*

Game Idea: Create a TV Jeopardy game. Ask questions with 5 topics, Jeopardy style.



Welcome and Introduction

Preparation: Set up a table display using available books on prayer, a cross, praying hands and box of promises.

Reading: Share in reading song 625 to set the tone for the evening.

Prayer Chorus: SASB 94 *Prayer Gently Lifts Me to Highest Heaven*

Opening Prayer

Reading: *An Office Person's Prayer*
(make copies for everyone)

Song: SASB 583/TB 519 or 522 *How Wonderful It Is To Walk With God*

Scripture Reading: Psalms 146

A Prayer for Patience

God, teach me to be patient, Teach me to go slow;

Teach me how to "wait on You". When my way I do not know

Teach me sweet forbearance, when things do not go right;

So I remain unruffled when others grow uptight.

Teach me how to quiet, my racing, rising heart

So I may hear the answer, You are trying to impart.

Teach me to "let go" dear God, and pray undisturbed until

My heart is filled with inner peace; and learns to know Your will!

Song: SASB 588/TB 180, *I Often Say My Prayers; But Do I Ever Pray*

Creating a Prayer Journal: Invite the ladies to bring along a small journal book for the purpose of writing out a personal prayer list. Have quiet music playing in the back ground as the ladies write.

Instruction: Choose one or two areas of prayer from the following list and encourage the ladies to write quietly without sharing what they have written.

- Prayer of praise ...
- Prayer of confession ...
- Prayer for guidance ...
- Prayer for strength ...
- Prayer for Loneliness ...
- Prayer for Salvation of family members ...
- Prayer for the sick ...
- Prayer for Leaders ...

Conclude by sharing Philippians 4:6-7. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present you request to God. And the peace of

God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus". Be sensitive to those who may struggle with this idea.

Prayers for Tourists (with some light humour!)

*Heavenly Father, look down on us your humble obedient tourist servants,
Who are doomed to travel this earth, taking photographs, mailing postcards,
buying souvenirs and walking in drip-dry underwear.*

*Give us this day Divine Guidance in the selection of our hotels;
That we may find our reservations honoured,
our rooms made up
And hot water running from the faucets.*

We pray that the telephones work, and the

*operators speak our language.
Lead us dear Lord to good, inexpensive restaurants, where the food is superb,
the waiters friendly and drinks included in the price!*

*Give us wisdom to tip correctly in currencies we do not understand.
Forgive us for under tipping out of ignorance and over tipping out of fear.
Make the community love us for what we are,
and not for what we can contribute to their worldly goods!*

*Grant us the strength to visit the museums, the cathedrals, the palaces and castles, listed as "MUSTS" in the guidebooks!
And if perchance we skip a historic monument to take a nap after lunch ...
Have mercy on us for our flesh is weak!*

An Office Person's Prayer

*Lord my sphere of service for your kingdom is not some pulpit carved of finest wood,
From which I may extol the profoundest truths of Your Gospel as I should;
No congregation can I claim my own to lead in Sunday prayers
Which inspire them to greater faith, to cope with life's trials and cares.*

*But into the hectic world of Finance, Your will has taken these legs and feet of mine
Walking where men grapple with the economy — its increase or fast decline.
Often the man behind the impressive desk, to whom I go for some aid,
Is a man with a heavy heart, many burdens upon it laid?*

*Through all of the years I've encountered him, behind many different desks and faces
But it's been my one aim, as I talk with him, to show forth Your Spirit's graces.
For this is Your sacred trust to me, to blend the practical and the Divine
Though I may ask and may seek his help, I would leave him in touch with Thine*

*For who is to say on that great Day when You at last, we shall so joyfully meet
Where lies the greatest harvest — the pulpit grand or ministry of legs and feet?
Both are Your tools, O Master of men, to employ for Your highest good;
So only the best You shall have of me; I give it ... in deep gratitude.*

Author Unknown

Song: SASB 589 /TB 482, *I Want That Adorning Divine*

Time of Reflection: The Touch

The Law forbade her join the crowd, but she was sick ... the noise was loud, Jesus was passing by. And as He went, she heard the people cry ...

He goes to Jairus' house, to heal his daughter, whose loving ways and happy laughter have been silenced! I need Him too! Her heart was crying: For twelve long years I have been trying to rid me of this plague, from which I'm dying ... I've got to touch Him!"

"If I can get to Him by stealing through the throng; I know His healing ... will then to me belong; He'll never know I touched Him!"

Tumultuous thoughts her mind invades, but purposely and undismayed ... she reaches out ...

Her groping fingers find His robe, and instantly she feels the probe ... of surging power.

Soothing and relieving, all pain is gone, and now believing ... she rejoices!

But suddenly ... He stops and turns, shaken she whispers as her spirit yearns,

"He knows, He knows my bliss! No mere man this ...

Who so aware, can one piercing glance lay bare ... My troubled heart!"

Trembling she kneels before Him, to declare and then adore Him,
His tender smile removes her fears

"Thy faith has healed thee, dry thy tears, Go

in peace, be not afraid ...
From this time forth thy plague is stayed!"

Mollie Thomson

Song: 600 SASB/TB 705 Jesus, Tender Lover of My Soul

Reading: A Simple Prayer

There is a frequently quoted prayer, attributed to an unnamed Mother-Superior that we should all keep in mind:

"Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will some day be old. Keep me from becoming talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details. Give me wings to get to the point. I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of other's pains. Help me to endure them with patience. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains — they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming stronger as the years go by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint — some of them are so hard to live with — but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all — but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end. Amen"

Southern Africa Territory Resources - Jan-Dec 2002

Closing Prayer and Fellowship

Thoughts For Easter

Adapted from Resource Book U.K. Territory - 2002



Preparation

Display items that depict the Easter season:
Sacred — basin and towel, palm branches, moneybag, crown of thorns, large nails, small wooden Cross.

Secular — chocolate eggs, fluffy chicks, spring flowers, etc.

Have a special “Easter” theme for lunch e.g. Hot Cross buns with homemade jams.

Fellowship

Ask several ladies to share an Easter memory. From the display table speak of each item and its link to Easter, e.g. Palm branches: people cried ‘Hosanna’ and waved these in praise of Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem. Large nails: this was the cruel way Jesus was fastened to the cross. Compare it with the commercial emphasis we place on Easter today — Easter egg hunts, new “bonnet” to wear on Easter Sunday.

Education

Learn of Easter traditions from other countries and cultures:

- Perhaps the finest Easter eggs were those given by the Czar of Russia to members of his family. These were beautiful expensive works of art created by the great court jeweler, Fabergé, in gold and precious stones. One such egg was in the shape of a nest of frosted silver made

of hundreds of silver twigs and leaves, scraps of moss and heather sprigs, with an egg sitting in the middle. Inside the egg were three large pearls.

- In the Middle Ages eggs were among the foods forbidden during Lent and were joyfully welcomed at Easter. They were painted in bright colours and presented as Easter gifts to friends, relations and servants.

- Chocolate eggs were introduced as recently as the 19th century. A Dutch company in 1860 invented a machine to make chocolate flow smoothly into egg moulds. The first hollow chocolate Easter egg was made in England in 1875.

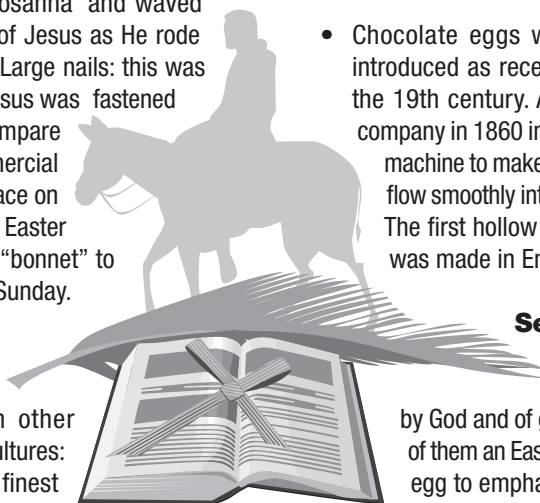


Service

Remind each lady that they are loved by God and of great worth. Give each of them an Easter card and chocolate egg to emphasize this.

Worship: Three Trees

Three trees were growing on a hill together. The first said, ‘I want to be a baby’s cradle when I am cut down.’ The second said, ‘I want to be a big boat and sail the seas.’ The third said, ‘I don’t want to be cut down, I want to grow on





the hillside forever and point men to God.'

Men came along and cut down the first tree and took it to be made into a cattle stall. 'I want to be made into a cradle,' said the tree, but into a cattle stall it was made and later the baby Jesus was laid in this stall, for no cradle could be found in which to lay Him.

The second tree was cut down and made into a fishing boat. 'I want to be a big ship sailing the sea,' it said, but Peter bought it and Jesus stood in this boat to preach on the Sea of Galilee.

The time came for the third tree to be cut down. 'I want to stay here on this lovely hill, tall and straight, to point men to God,' was the tree's cry. 'I don't want to be made into a cross, a thing of shame.' But that cross bore the body of Jesus and it stands for all time, towering over centuries, pointing men to the love of God.

It's only a story of course. Each tree wanted to be something special; God used them in spite of their own wishes not coming true. Perhaps the trees were of greater value than they would ever realize. We must be careful that we pray 'Thy will be done', rather than 'Make my dreams come true'.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:36-42
Here we have a picture of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane before facing crucifixion. From a human point of view the task that lay ahead of Him was a very difficult one and so He said to His Heavenly Father:

'Father, is this the way You really want me to go? It's not what I want but I will do Your will.' There was no other way. This was God's only way of saving mankind from sin and bringing them to new life. Prophets had come and gone and had shown something of the character of God but it was this final act of God, giving His only Son to die on a cross, that would bring reconciliation between man and God. And Jesus was prepared to say, 'Not as I want but Your will be done.'

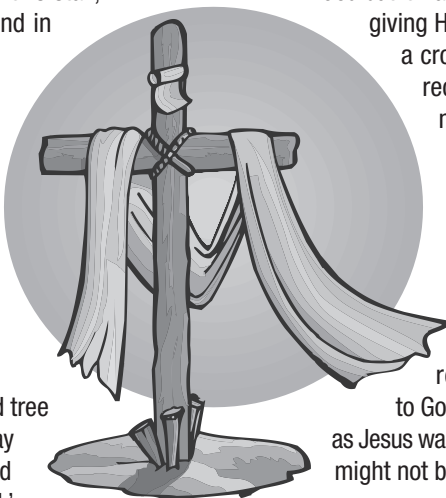
As Christians we, too, need to be ready and available to God for Him to use, just as Jesus was. What we want to do might not be what God wants.

Sometimes God has a special plan or work that only we can do. The work God wants us to do may only be small; it may seem very insignificant but if we don't do it — no one else will. What would have happened if Jesus hadn't been willing to go to the cross and die for the sins of humankind? Who else would have reconciled us to God?

As we approach Easter may the Lord help us to see clearly what He wants from us, and in knowing God's will for our lives may He give us strength and guidance to fulfill His plan.

Suggested Songs/Choruses

- *Not My Will Father But Thine Be Done*
- *All That I Am, All That is Me*
- *Man of Sorrows*
- *O Love Upon A Cross Impaled*
- *The Old Rugged Cross*





Gifts Come Down at Christmas

Luanne Barrow Toronto, Ontario

Preparation

Decorate the room with Christmas gifts of all sorts ... gift bags, boxes, gifts wrapped in different ways. A small, inexpensive gift could be given to each lady in attendance.

Welcome

Ice Breaker

Ask each lady to tell about a special gift they have received, i.e. something someone did especially for them, a special gift received as a child etc.

Song: SASB 76/TB 306, *As With Gladness Men Of Old*

Chorus: SASB 85/TB 52, *O Come Let Us Adore Him, Christ The Lord*

Heart Gifts

*It's not the things that can be bought
That are life's richest treasure,
It's just the little 'heart gifts'
That money cannot measure ...
A cheerful smile, a friendly word,
A sympathetic nod
Are priceless little treasures
From the storehouse of our God..
They are the things that can't be
bought
With silver or with gold
For thoughtfulness and kindness
And love are never sold ...
They are the priceless things in life
For which no one can pay,
And the giver finds rich recompense
in giving them away.*

Helen Steiner Rice

Prayer: Thanking God for the special gifts He gives us.

History of Gift Wrap

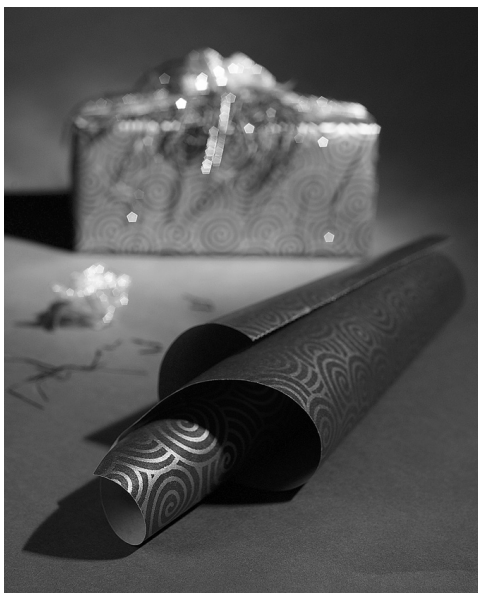
Gifts have been wrapped since the invention of paper in 105 A.D. in China. The paper-making process was kept a secret by the Chinese for centuries, but by 800 A.D. the process was known in Egypt. The secret spread to Europe, where the first paper mill was started in 1085.

Wallpaper, first made in England in 1509, was the forerunner of gift wrap and was used briefly, but it cracked and tore when folded. By the early 20th century, gifts were wrapped in plain brown paper or tissue.

America's gift wrap industry had humble beginnings in Hallmark founder Joyce C. Hall's downtown Kansas City, Mo., store in the early 20th century. Hall is known for being the founder of the greeting card industry, but he can also be credited with the "invention" of present-day gift wrap. Hallmark's launch of printed gift wrap came about almost by accident.



Before Christmas in 1917, the Hall Brothers' store had sold out of the white, red and green tissue and the one holly pattern being used



to wrap holiday packages. Some decorative envelope lining papers from France were brought from the manufacturing plant and put on top of a showcase, for 10 cents a sheet, and they sold quickly. The next year, the sheets were offered three for 25 cents and they again sold out. Soon gift wrap became the first product Hallmark made that was a departure from greeting cards.

In the 1930s, Hallmark introduced Hall Sheen ribbon, the shiny kind that sticks to itself when licked like a stamp. It's still the company's most popular ribbon, even after all those years.

Hallmark introduced jumbo plastic gift bags for large items in the 1970s, paper gift bags with handles in 1987, and curl cascade ribbons in 1994.

Today, Hallmark is the leader of the gift wrap industry.

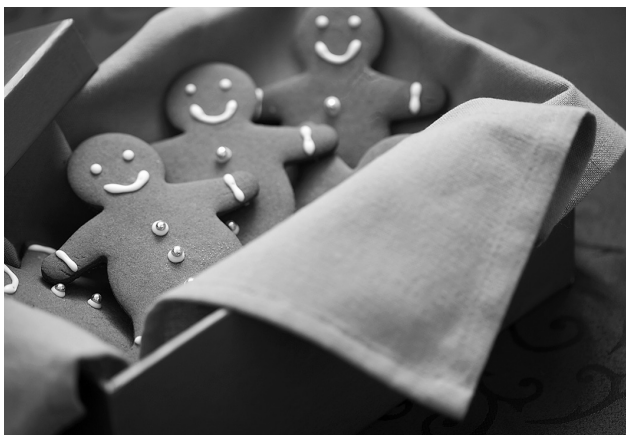
Gift Wrapping Ideas: These can be printed on a sheet and given to the ladies and perhaps the group may have other suggestions

- For an elegant package start with gold foil wrapping paper. Set off the gold with a fabulous topper made of small evergreen twigs and holly berries, or a 2" grapevine wreath with miniature pinecones. Place the arrangement in a large box and lightly spray with artificial snow or glitter, then tie it onto your package with elegant burgundy ribbon. Heavy kitchen foil can be used in place of the gold foil.

- Giving a cookbook to someone for Christmas? Wrap it in a tea towel. Tie the package up with colorful ribbon and add some measuring spoons to the bow. Practically any kitchen gift can be wrapped in tea towels, dish cloths, table cloths or put into decorative tins.



- If using heavy kitchen foil, either wrap the gift straight in the foil, or you can scrunch the foil up to create an interesting effect and then wrap the gift. Add some green, red, or gold ribbon. Why not tie a personalized Christmas Ornament to the bow?



- Use ordinary brown wrapping paper (or clean, paper grocery bags), With a festive rubber stamp, stamp all over the non-shiny side with black ink. Then using a metallic pen (red, green, gold, silver, purple or blue), add little squiggles. Tie with metallic ribbon.
- Tie tinsel around a package instead of ribbon, or you can use raffia and string if you want a natural look to your gift.
- Pack Christmas baking into decorative tins, purchased at the dollar store. Line the tins with waxed paper, add your baking, put on the lid and tie it up with pretty ribbon. How about adding a recipe card and measuring spoons to the bow?
- Give your gift an antique look by using old books of poetry, sheet music or beautiful illustrations from resources that are no longer needed. Carefully separate pages from their binding, to wrap your tiny treasures in.

- Use tulle when you can. Buy tulle either by the yard or as ribbons in various colors (tulle is much cheaper than regular wrapping paper). To wrap, simply place item or items in the center of a piece cut large enough to cover all items with approx. 5"-6" as selvage. Gather all the fabric to the top and tie with a scrap piece of tulle or ribbon. Remember that you will be able to see through the tulle, but that's OK!
- Bag it. Purchase decorative bags at the dollar store. Tie various lengths of colorful ribbon to the handle to close the bag.
- Put it in a basket or box. The dollar stores have a great selection of pretty holiday baskets and decorative trinket boxes. All you need is a little see-through wrapping and a colorful bow with wisps of ribbons hanging down.

www.my-gifts-for-men.com; www.youthonline.ca/giftwrappingideas.shtml



Meditation: The Gift Goes On

That time is here again! The time for choosing and searching for *the* perfect gift. Gift giving can be fun but sometimes the process leading up to it can be very frustrating and confusing. Many of us can recall spending many hours in search of the perfect present and then



panicking as the day drew nearer. At times like these we need to bear in mind that it's not so much the gift that's important but the thoughtfulness that goes into the selection. Think about gifts you have received, perhaps from your children, that they selected with such great care, they were things that you could have easily done without but you loved them and treasured them because of the thoughtfulness (give personal examples). Gifts don't always have to cost money or be purchased in a store (give an example of someone doing something for you that didn't cost money).

Unfortunately, for many people, the entire concept of Christmas is bound up in the gifts

they may or may not receive. Louisa May Alcott in her well known book, *Little Women* writes “Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents.”

When we give a gift and it is received with delight and appreciation it gives us great joy.

When we think of gifts at Christmas time we are reminded of the Wise Men with their gifts.

Story: 3 Wise Women

Do you know what would have happened if it had been *Three Wise Women* instead of Three Wise Men? They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole and brought practical gifts.

The Wise Men who visited the infant Christ child understood the idea of gift giving. Their gifts were chosen carefully because of their symbolism.

What they tell us in their gifts.

They brought GOLD — Sign of Royalty

They offered FRANKINCENSE

— A specific tree sap, dried, ground, and burned as part of their worship service.

They presented MYRRH — A different tree sap, used for relieving pain and embalming at the time of death.

What might these three gifts symbolize for us?

The Wise Men brought gold, and confessed

their acceptance of His kingship.

They brought frankincense and admitted their recognition of Jesus as being worthy of their worship.

They brought spices (myrrh) of suffering and death, predicting that this royal king, worthy of worship, would be rejected, would die.

These gifts represented Jesus in three ways, as King, as Lord, as Saviour. They knew that this baby was unlike any other and it was this knowledge that encouraged them to give the very best that the world had to offer. What



gift have you given to Jesus? Have you given yourself, your time, your talents? He deserves our best!!!

The Gift that goes on forever is the gift that God gave at that first Christmas. God's gift, Jesus Christ, didn't end at Bethlehem nor did it end at Calvary. John 3:16 reminds us that God gave the most wonderful present of all time, a gift that was truly given out of a heart

of love. He gave His very best, His only Son.

Many people today celebrate the coming of this gift but they do not know the reality of God's presence in their lives. They get caught up in the celebration but they have not unwrapped the message of salvation and all that it encompasses. Only those who have accepted and experienced the gift can truly know the joy and excitement that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A joy that continues, even when the Christmas season is over. It's a gift that keeps on giving!

Scripture About God's Gift

Romans 3:23. "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ephesians 2:8. "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves it is the gift of God."

James 1:17. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

John 3:16. "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."



Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift



2 Corinthians 9:15. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift."

Song: SASB 82/TB 322, *Hark The Herald Angels Sing*

Closing Prayer (in unison)

"Dear Lord, we enjoy gifts. You understand that, don't You? You give to us when we don't deserve it or earn it. You give freely because You love us and we want to say thank You. We accept Your gifts of grace and love with joy in our hearts." Amen

Fun Time: Pass The Parcel

Wrap the gifts in many layers with a fun thing to do written on each layer. When the music stops the person must do what is written on the gift wrap.

Conclusion and Refreshments

Conclude with festive refreshments, ask ladies (who are willing) to bring baked goodies. Enjoy with hot apple cider.



Christmas Symbols

Simone Robertson - Australia Southern Territory

The Bells: Bells are used at Christmas to announce a time of great joy. Their message peals forth loud and clear; yet a bell is just a useless lump of iron unless the bell-ringer is there to play it.



the message of the bells before us as we prepare for Christmas.

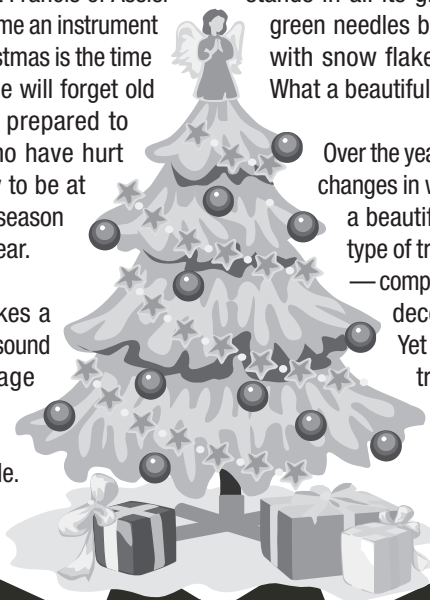
The Tree: What joy and pleasure we, along with the younger members of our family, can have as we put up the Christmas tree. The idea of the Christmas tree came from Germany where there are no flowers to be found in

Bells remind us that we are ineffective in our living unless we allow God, the Heavenly Father, to use us as His instrument. St Francis of Assisi prayed, "Lord make me an instrument of Thy peace". Christmas is the time when many people will forget old grudges and be prepared to forgive those who have hurt them. We should try to be at peace not only in this season but throughout the year.

the hard winter ground, but the fir tree stands in all its glory with the strong green needles being gently covered with snow flakes glistening on it. What a beautiful sight.

A cracked bell makes a dreadful sound. To sound our God's message of love we must have no sign of an unforgiving attitude. May we keep

Over the years there have been changes in what we now see as a beautiful tree. There is every type of tree imaginable for sale — complete with sophisticated decorations and lights. Yet the message of the tree is quite simple. It grows straight and tall and always points upward. The





Christmas tree reminds us that when our arms are raised in prayer, the burdens that we unnecessarily carry will be taken away. Matthew 11:28 says "Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." Christ's strength flows through us giving us the power to face life's storms.



perceive to be big jobs but we must do the ones He gives us as cheerfully as we can. The candle gives itself as it burns and its purpose is to light the way. May our light so shine that we light the way for others to follow.

The Candle:

Many Christmas cards feature candles.

Around the world, in major cities and small country towns, carols by candlelight have become a Christmas tradition, with hundreds of people joining together, holding candles to sing the carols that tell out the Christmas story. Watching candle-light services on television reminds us what hundreds of little candles can do to brighten a darkened place.

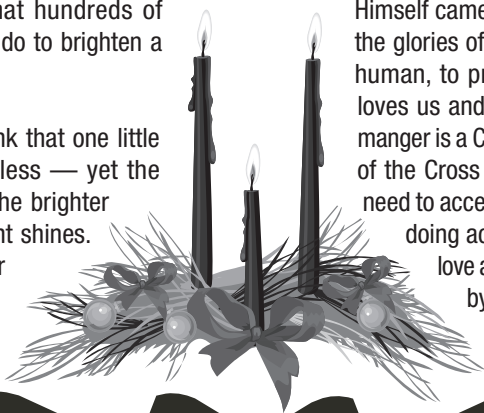
We tend to think that one little candle is useless — yet the darker it is, the brighter the small light shines. God may never call us to do what we



The Manger Scene:

Surely this is what Christmas is all about! Without the manger scene being in the centre, there is no celebration. We may ring bells, put up decorated trees, light candles and bring family together, but the manger must be at the centre of our celebrations.

As we consider the manger scene, we see that here in a stable, God Himself came right down from the glories of eternity to become human, to prove to us that He loves us and cares for us. The manger is a Christmas reminder of the Cross at Easter — we need to accept both and in so doing accept the saving love and grace offered by a God who loves us all.



Snowflakes

Patricia Tuppenney, Toronto, ON

Greetings/Introduction

Carol: SASB 85/TB 552, *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13
(Christmas Version)

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shining balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, sing carols in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crystal snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.



Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust.

But giving the gift of love will endure.

Time to sing some favourite Christmas Carols

Song: *I'm Dreaming of A White Christmas*

Devotional: White As Snow

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Psalms 51:7

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."



What is your favorite season? How many like springtime the best? How about those warm summer days, or what about the beautiful colors of the fall season? Ah, but who among us would choose the long, cold winter? Some people do! If you lived or live in Winnipeg where it is so cold you would bundle up the children so that only their eyes showed, otherwise their skin could freeze in 30 seconds. There is nothing wrong with 40 below weather as long as you dress accordingly. Remember no germ can survive in that cold!

But when it snows, it can be beautiful! If you took the time to study snowflakes you would discover that just like finger prints, no two are alike. Each one created individually by a loving God with lots of imagination and forethought, rather like the way He created us. We are all individuals, and all unique, we don't all perform the same tasks or fill the same needs. One thing we have in common is that we can allow God to use our unique gifts, talents, abilities and our willing spirit to perform various tasks to be useful; and to help others in need. So admire the snowflake, think of how God cared enough to make us unique and then realize that just as He took care of a

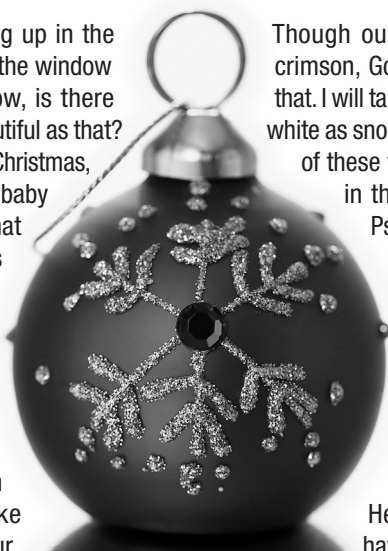
bird, or a snowflake, the same careful thought and precision went into your creation

As we anticipate the first good snow fall, think of the positive — what a beautiful time of year the winter can be. Think of the gentle snowflakes falling, the crunch of snow under your feet. Remember the snow ball fights, and trying to catch a snow flake on your tongue. The snow is beautiful to look at, and it can serve as a reminder to us of something that comes straight out of the Word of God.

In the Old Testament the prophet Isaiah gives us a wonderful, wonderful thought. Isaiah 1:18 it says, "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." — that beautiful white fluffy wool! White as snow!

In many areas of our country snow is just a way of life — lots of it — everywhere! If we look at the snow, it is a reminder of the

goodness of God. Waking up in the morning and looking out the window at the freshly fallen snow, is there anything in nature as beautiful as that? We think of the miracle of Christmas, and it is not so much that baby Jesus was born — but that this was all part of God's divine plan to rescue our fallen race. On that first Christmas night God was putting into play His plan of Salvation. The Lord tells us that if we come to Him in confession, with repentance, He will take away the ugly sins in our life and wash them away, and make us as pure and as white as that freshly fallen snow. What a beautiful picture of God's forgiveness!



Though our sins be like scarlet and crimson, God says, "I will get rid of all that. I will take it away and I will wash you white as snow." David knew the meaning of these verses and found true grace in them and in God's mercy. In Psalm 51, after he had sinned and fallen into adultery with Bathsheba, he wrote about the Lord and said, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." David had accepted God's forgiveness for his sins. He knew what it was like to have his relationship with God restored, to be washed and cleansed and made indeed, as white as snow. When you see the snow fall this year instead of dreading all that shoveling pause and reflect. Here is God's plan falling afresh around us, another opportunity for each of us to know our sins forgiven and to know that our hearts can be washed as pure as the driven snow.

Chorus: SASB 436/TB 563, *Whiter Than The Snow*

Special Prayer

Closing Thought

Just think — you were fashioned by a God who created the whole universe.

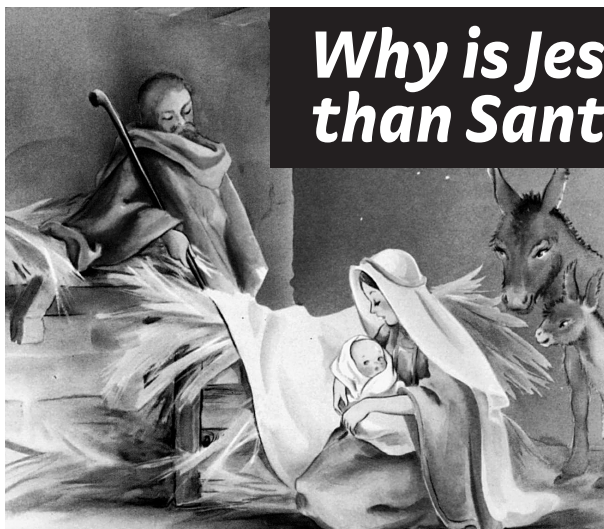
A God who took the time to make each individual snowflake.

At this Christmas season remember how special you are to Him.

May you have the gift of faith, the blessing of hope and the peace of His love at Christmas and always.



Why is Jesus better than Santa Claus?



address too. He knows our history and future and He even knows how many hairs are on our heads.

Santa Claus has a belly like a bowl full of jelly ... JESUS has a heart full of love.

All Santa Claus can offer is HO HO HO ... JESUS offers

Santa Claus lives at the North Pole ... JESUS is everywhere.

health, help and hope.

Santa Claus rides in a sleigh ... JESUS rides on the winds and walks on the water.

Santa Claus says, "You better not cry" ... JESUS says, "Cast your cares on me for I care for you."

Santa Claus comes out but once a year ... JESUS is an ever present help.

Santa's little helpers make toys ... JESUS makes new life, mends wounded hearts, repairs broken homes and builds mansions.

Santa Claus fills your stockings with goodies ... JESUS supplies all your needs.

Santa Claus is a "jolly old elf" ... JESUS is the King of Kings.

Santa Claus comes down your chimney uninvited ... JESUS stands at the door and knocks, then enters your heart when invited.

You have to wait in line to see Santa Claus ... JESUS is as close as the mention of His name.

Santa Claus doesn't know your name, all he can say is, "Hi little boy or girl, what's your name?" ... JESUS knew our name before we did. Not only does He know our name, He knows our



Santa Claus may make you chuckle but ... JESUS gives you joy that is your strength.

While Santa Claus puts gifts under your tree ... JESUS became our gift and died for us on a tree.

It's obvious there is really no comparison! Jesus is still the reason for the season. Yes, Jesus is better, He is better than Santa Claus.

Chinese New Year

Estee Lau, Toronto, Ontario

The Chinese Lunar Calendar is a yearly one, just like the Western calendar. The start of the lunar, however, is based on the cycles of the moon. As a result of this cyclical dating, the beginning of the year will fall anywhere between late January and the middle of February.

Chinese New Year is the most significant celebration for the Chinese. New Year festivities traditionally start on the first day of the month and continue until the fifteenth, when the moon is full and brightest. The Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the New Year is celebrated at night with lantern displays. Some of the lanterns may be works of art, painted with birds, animals, flowers, zodiac signs, and scenes from legend and history. People hang glowing lanterns in temples, and carry lanterns to an evening parade under the light of the full moon.

In most parts of the China, people may take weeks of holiday from work to prepare for and celebrate the New Year. New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are celebrated as a family affair, a time of reunion and thanksgiving. People will be coming home from far away.

The following are some of the traditions and taboos of the Chinese New Year.



Jai Traditional Vegetarian Dish

Traditionally eaten on New Year's Day, Jai consists of root or fibrous vegetables. The ingredients consist of foods that represent good fortune.

- Jai will include lotus seed, representing the hope for many male offspring.
- Ginko nut, representing silver.
- Black moss seaweed, the hope for wealth.
- Dried bean curd, wealth and happiness.
- Bamboo shoots for good wishes for everything.
- White is an unlucky colour for New Year, therefore any white foods such as tofu are avoided.

New Year Activities Set Precedent

All debts had to be paid by this time. Nothing should be lent on this day, as anyone who does so will be lending all the year. Back when tinder and flint were used, no one would lend them on this day or give a light to others. Everyone should refrain from using foul language and bad or unlucky words. Negative terms and the word "four" (Ssu), which sounds like the word for death, are not to be uttered.



Death and dying are never mentioned and ghost stories are totally taboo. References to the past year are also avoided as everything should be turned toward the New Year and a new beginning. If you cry on New Year's Day, you will cry all through the year. Therefore, children are tolerated and are not spanked, even though they are mischievous.

House Cleaning

The entire house should be cleaned before New Year's Day. On New Year's Eve, all brooms, brushes, dusters, dust pans and other cleaning equipment are put away. Sweeping or dusting should not be done on New Year's Day for fear that good fortune will be swept away. After New Year's Day, the floors may be swept. Beginning at the door, the dust and rubbish are swept to the middle of the parlor, then placed in the corners and not taken or thrown out until the fifth day. At no time should the rubbish in the corners be trampled upon. In sweeping, there is a superstition that if you sweep the dirt out over the threshold, you will sweep one of the family away. Also, to sweep the dust and dirt out of your house by the front entrance is to sweep away the good fortune of the family; it must always be swept inwards and then carried out, then no harm will follow. All dirt and rubbish must be taken out the back door.

Personal Appearance and Cleanliness

On New Year's Day, we are not supposed to wash our hair because it would mean we would have washed away good luck for the New Year. In the same way that having a bath will wash away the good fortune.

Red clothing is preferred during this festive occasion. Red is considered a bright, happy color, sure to bring the wearer a sunny and bright future. It is believed that appearance and attitude during New Year's sets the tone for the rest of the year. Children and unmarried friends, as well as close relatives are given "lai see", little red envelopes with crisp one dollar bills inserted, for good fortune.



- Candy is eaten to ensure the eater a "sweet" year.
- Talking about death is inappropriate for the first few days of Chinese New Year, as it is considered inauspicious as well.

Superstitions During the New Year Period

The following is a list of beliefs that vary according to dialect groups/individuals.

- Buying a pair of shoes is considered bad luck. The word "shoes" is a homophone for the word for "rough" in Cantonese.
- Buying a pair of pants is considered bad luck. The word "pants" is a homophone for the word for "bitter" in Cantonese. (Although some perceive it to be positive as the word 'pants' in Cantonese could be a homophone for the word for "wealth".)
- A hair-cut is considered bad luck. The word "hair" is a homophone for the word for "prosperity". Thus "cutting hair" could be perceived as "cutting your prosperity" in Cantonese.
- Buying books is bad luck, because it is a homonym to the word "lose".
- Opening windows and/or doors is considered to 'bring in' the good luck of the new year.
- Switching on the lights for the night is considered good luck to 'scare away' ghosts and spirits of misfortune that may compromise the luck and fortune of the new year.
- Almanac should be consulted to find the best time to leave the home and the direction which is most auspicious to head out.



- The first person one meets and the first words heard are significant as to what the fortunes would be for the entire year. It is a lucky sign to see or hear songbirds or red-colored birds or swallows.
- It is considered unlucky to greet anyone in their bedroom so that is why everyone, even the sick, should get dressed and sit in the living room.
- Do not use knives or scissors on New Year's Day as this may cut off fortune.
- There are not many people practicing these taboos anymore except some rural communities in China. The Chinese New Year is mainly a time of celebrating family reunion and wishing for a healthy and prosperous new year.



was discouraged. Until the 1960's, restrictions on immigration kept the Chinese population in Canada fairly small.

Over One Million and Growing

1,029,395 — The number of Chinese living in Canada in 2001, up from 626,435 just ten years earlier and 17,312 a century before.

They also accounted for 3.5% of the total population in 2001, up from 2.3% a decade earlier.

Chinese represented just over one quarter of the visible minority population in 2001.

Source: "Chinese Canadians: Enriching the cultural mosaic", Canadian Social Trends, Spring 2005.

Chinese History in Canada

In Canada since before Confederation, the Chinese communities now make up the largest visible minority group in the country.

History played a role in Chinese immigration to Canada, first with the gold rush in British Columbia and during the late 1800's when Chinese labourers arrived in western Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. For decades following its completion, Chinese immigration



Ways To Help Children Focus On The Real Meaning of Thanksgiving

Lettie Kirkpatrick, Adapted from Christian Parenting Today

Children love stories. Take advantage of their natural interest by using Scripture stories to reinforce the importance of gratitude.

Act it out. Read the story of the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Remind the children that Jesus was pleased with the one man who returned to give thanks for being healed. Provide rags for bandages, and let your children play the roles of the lepers and Jesus. Let them dramatize the healing, with them all rushing off while only one returns.

Make Noise

Look up the story of the Israelites' celebration after Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt (Nehemiah 12:27-47). Talk about the instruments they used and the two great choirs that marched atop the walls to the temple. Then put together a homegrown band using real or improvised instruments. Practice joyful praise songs, and march around the "walls" of your home or yard. Kids will love the idea of the joyous, active "thanksgiving" that could be heard "far away" (v. 43).

Think Differently

Corrie ten Boom's book *The Hiding Place* teaches a great lesson in thankfulness. Share Corrie's story with your kids, pointing out her

struggle to be thankful in all things. She even thanked God for fleas in her barracks. She later learned the fleas kept the guards away and allowed her and others to study the Bible without interruption.

Create A Chain Reaction

Help your children make a "God is good" chain. Gather scissors, stickers, pencils, crayons, glue, and construction paper. Cut the paper in strips, and ask the kids to think about the





many ways God is good. Have them write or draw these attributes on the strips. Connect the strips to form a chain, and hang the chain in a place where it will remind your family of God's goodness.

leaves things for which they are thankful, and then tape the leaves to the tree. Ask younger children: "What do you want to thank God for today?" Encourage your family to add to the tree daily.



Focus On Blessings

Choose a family project for the month that will draw your focus to God's goodness.

Make A Blessing Basket

Place a basket containing a pencil and pad of paper in an easy-to-reach location. Throughout the month, encourage family members to jot down ways God has blessed them. Younger children can draw or cut out pictures from magazines. Each day, read these together and give God thanks, or set aside some time for this activity on Thanksgiving Day.

Trim A Tree of Thanks

Draw and cut out a large paper tree, then cut out lots of loose leaves in autumn colors. Mount the tree in a prominent place, and put the leaves nearby in a box with tape and markers. Ask your family to write on the

Serve Up A Memory

Bring an eternal perspective to your Thanksgiving table. Consider adding these touches to the family feast.

Find Your Seat

Help your children make a place card for each place setting. On one side, write names of guests and family; on the other, write a

Scripture verse about being thankful. Let each person read a verse before the blessing.

Encourage Participation

Include a paper leaf at each place setting with an "assignment" written on it. Each person adds to the festivities by completing his or her assignment. Assignments might include:

- Read Psalms 100.
- Share a Thanksgiving memory (use this on several paper leaves).
- Say the blessing for our meal.

Set The Mood

Give an unlit votive candle to each person. Light your own candle, and thank God for specific blessings. Then continue the process around the table until all the candles are lit. Lead your family in a candlelight service of thanksgiving.

Story of Christmas

Barb Pearce, Napanee, Ontario

Preparation

Have the words: HOPE, JOY, SALVATION, GUIDANCE, PRAISE, WORSHIP and LOVE printed on tree ornaments and following each reading, place the ornament on the Christmas tree.

Chorus: *O Come Let Us Adore Him*

Prayer

Christmas Carol: SASB 77/Tune of choice, *Away in a Manger*

Hope

The long awaited King came to earth fulfilling the age old prophecies. All through the years, the people of Israel awaited their Messiah. Each succeeding generation became acquainted with the prophecies and must have wondered, 'will He come in our time?' They lived in hope that He would come to earth in their lifetime. This hope has been fulfilled for you and me, because Jesus did come, and we know that the highest of all hopes has been revealed. The Incarnation is a beautiful mystery. The coming of God in Christ begins with a birth, a babe in an earthly manger.

Scripture: Psalms 98:1-4

Christmas Carol: SASB 84/TB 103, *Joy To The World*

Joy

Christmas is a joyous time. Isaac Watts must have felt something of this joy when he wrote the beautiful carol. At Christmas time, there are

some hearts that are grieving; some missing the physical presence of loved ones. Others may not feel so joyous at Christmas because of problems of distress, age, health or loneliness. Yet somehow, because Christ came, those problems seem a little easier to bear. When we know Christ, no earthly hardship can erase the hope and joy we have in Him.

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-21

Christmas Carol: SASB 85/TB 552, *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Salvation

Salvation! What a wonderful word this is. What does Christ's salvation save us from? It saves us from sin, that awful gulf separating people from their creator. Christ's purpose in coming was to bridge that gulf. Can you picture Mary wondering about this awe inspiring miracle that had come to her? What about Joseph? Can we begin to understand his feelings after learning Mary is pregnant? The angel of the Lord spoke and suddenly Joseph received the greatest message of all time. Salvation was to come through the child who they were told to name Jesus.



Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

Vocal Solo: *O Holy Night*

Guidance

The time was right for the fulfillment of the prophecies of the ages. Sometimes we wonder if certain promises will ever be fulfilled. It seems the wait is so long. We need to remind ourselves that God's timing is always perfect and sure. The prophets had foretold that the Son of the Most High would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. We find Mary and Joseph among the travelers going to Bethlehem to be taxed because they were of the household of David. Joseph and Mary had taken the first steps on the journey of God's guidance, then little by little God unfolded His plan for them as He does for each one of us along our journey of life.

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14

Christmas Carol: SASB 93/Tune of choice, *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks*

Praise

The sight of the heavenly chorus must have been as glorious as the sound of music that echoed on the Judean hills. Ever since this event, music has had a high and holy place in Christmas celebrations. May our Christmas music and our lives praise Him, who is worthy of all praise and honor and glory.

Scripture: Luke 2:15-20

Christmas Carol: SASB 90/TB 816, *The First Nowell*

Worship

Jesus is the very centre around whom the whole Christmas experience revolves, that high and holy season when God came to earth

as man. What a mystery! Who can explain it? Christ came to earth to sacrifice Himself for our sins. When He returned to heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to live with us. We can't see God but He is as near as the air we breathe. We can't explain it. We stand before the Babe, as the shepherds did, in wonder and worship.

Scripture: John 3:16

Chorus: *Yes Jesus Loves Me*

Love

Everyone needs love, from the youngest to the oldest. God showed us how to love when He gave His son Jesus, who lived, died and rose again. We have received such great love from God. Could we do any less than give love to others who need it?

Scripture: John 8:36

Christmas Carol: SASB 82/TB 322, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

Freedom

One of the greatest gifts God gives to us is freedom, freedom from sin, fear and guilt. Jesus gives us this precious gift.

Scripture: John 10:10

Life

Immanuel — (God with us.) God works in the lives of people. Jesus came that we might have abundant life. Jesus is the source of all life, the heartbeat of Christmas. Jesus lives, and in Him we have the promise of eternal life.

Christmas Carol: SASB 89/TB 800, *Silent Night*

Benediction Song: *Go Tell It On The Mountain*

Creative Giving

Adapted from Discipleship Journal (Issue 88 – 1995)

The Adventure of Creative Giving

Giving can be a blast. Paul told the people in Corinth that “God loves a cheerful giver!” (2 Corinthians 9:7). Regular, planned, and generous giving is the backbone of a responsible giving program, but throwing in some creativity multiplies the joy! Here are a few ideas to whet your creative appetite.

Anonymous Giving

Listen for specific needs people have and then figure out a way to meet them undetected. Several years ago, a leader needed \$150 to attend a conference. Every day the entire week before the conference, she found money tucked everywhere: in her Bible, purse, unmarked envelopes in her mailbox. It all added up to \$150.

Taking Someone Shopping

Rather than just lending someone money, take them shopping. It is great to take furloughing missionaries to a mall and give them a budget so they can choose what they want, and it's a great time to build a relationship.

Hiring for Services

A talented single mom on a meagre income was “commissioned” to make floral arrangements, so she earns extra money with dignity and, someone gets hand-crafted decorations.

Footing the Bill

Pay some of the tuition, or cover for the textbooks, or supply the paper and pens for someone going back to school.

Recycling Things You Don't Need

If you are upgrading to a new computer



system, rather than sell the old system, put more memory in it, add a couple of programs, and give it to a high-school student with the promise of tutoring her in word processing skills. In return, this student will be equipped to get a summer job.

Giving as a Family

Many families have rediscovered the joy of holiday exchanging token gifts, pooling the rest of the money they would normally spend on each other, in getting gifts for people less fortunate. Why not try this at non-holiday times of the year?

Just 'Cuz Gifts

Giving gifts for no apparent reason is a creative way to express care and love, especially when you give them in unusual ways. Send gifts to your kids or spouse in the mail. Create a scavenger hunt to find the gifts. Give someone bulbs to plant or a gallon of paint if he or she is redecorating.

Spontaneous generosity is contagious. Creative ideas generate more ideas. If you look for ways to give hilariously, you will find them. Have fun!

Ways of an Influential Woman

Adapted from YourSITE.com

As women, we are all influencing someone; our children, our husband, friends, or co-workers. Intentional influence is using our influence for a purpose. As Women's Ministry leaders, our goal should be to intentionally influence women to more effectively use their God-given strengths and life experiences to accomplish the will of God.

Timothy gives us characteristics of a good leader by describing them as a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. The soldier is described as focused and single-minded. An athlete understands the benefits of training, follows the rules, and finishes the race. A farmer is hard-working and has learned to endure hardships. These are qualities to aspire for and to model to those whom we lead. To be able to lead effectively, you must first be an effective leader.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul explains an important aspect of leadership, the multiplication process. "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Paul understood that he must train others so his ministry would continue. The key is to find faithful women who are willing and able to "carry on" when the Lord leads you down another path.

Ask yourself these questions:

Are Your Current Leaders STARS?

S - Spiritually mature
T - Teachable
A - Authentic
R - Responsible
S - Sensitive

Ask the Lord show you those who fit this description and invite them to prayerfully consider being a part of your team. Invite them to sit in on meetings and let them be involved in any training so they will be ready when the time is right.

Have you communicated their responsibilities clearly?

It is best to provide a written description of their responsibilities and also a list of important dates and deadlines so that they fully understand the skills needed and time commitment necessary for this leadership role.

Are they committed?

Ask for a written agreement from your prospective leaders stating that they have prayed about this position and are willing to make a commitment for a designated time period.

Keep praying that God will provide you with STARS, and stay tuned for ideas on encouraging, empowering and equipping.

Suggestions for Small Groups

Disciple Journal 1999

Getting More Personal

Members of one small-group, were diligent in Bible study and discussion, but were not sharing much of themselves. Although different ways to make the discussions more personal and less academic, were tried, none worked. One evening the leader arrived at the meeting with an exciting story to tell of seeing Jesus at work in her life that day during a difficult situation at the office. His presence and power had been very real, in the face of temptation, and she hoped the experience would encourage the group. It did that and more. It was decided to begin each small-group meeting with a question, "How have you seen Jesus work in your life this week?" Not only did that question increase the amount of personal interaction in our group, but it made everyone more sensitive to Christ's daily activity in their lives.

Back to Nature

A small group can enjoy the Creator and His creation – and find personal, spiritual refreshment in this way:

- Have people bring or borrow a Walkman-type player, then make a date to meet at a local forest preserve, park, or other scenic spot.
- Purchase or make your own tape recordings of narrated Scripture (do not use illegal tape duplication). Try to select passages that speak of the character of God. Give a tape to each person in the group, then all go in separate ways and spend the next 30 – 60 minutes listening to God's Word on



tape while surrounded by His creation.

Meet up again later and take time to talk about this experience and discuss what was learned. Enjoy a picnic lunch or supper together afterwards.

Gifts for Gifts

This can be used at a retreat or in a small group setting. Ask each lady to write her name on a slip of paper and place in a box — give the box a good shake then ask the ladies to draw a name and create for that person a gift representing a spiritual gift they have observed in her.

Have available — construction paper, tape, pipe cleaners, scissors, markers to create a gift. Choose an appropriate Bible verse to highlight a gift-giving presentation during which the participants explain what spiritual gift their creation represents:

- A gift could be a small clipboard, with a list of things to do for someone gifted in administration, or
- A hand, fashioned out of construction paper to pat people on the back, for the gift of encouragement.
- 'Build' an oven for someone who has the gift of helping and who bakes homemade goodies to give to people who need cheering up.

Each of these 'acts of kindness' remind us that someone else saw God at work through the spiritual gifts of others.



Many small-group leaders try to do what Moses was doing in Exodus 18:21 — handle everything on their own. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, rescued him with some good advice: "Select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials"

Delegation is a biblical principle and a crucial one for small-group leaders to understand. Here are a few ways to practice delegation in your group.

Begin with yourself.

What do you see as your primary responsibility as the group leader? Your main role could be discipling those in the group, that is, helping them grow closer to Christ. All the other group functions are activities that could help you achieve that. Ask God to help you discern the specific role to which He has called you in this group.

Discover the spiritual gifts of the group.

Each small group will have a variety of spiritual

gifts among its members. Ask your pastor or another church leader to help your group members discern their gifts. There are a variety of tests available to aid in this process. Then try to match tasks with the appropriately gifted people. This will empower the group and ensure that members enjoy their roles.

*Select
capable men
from all the people
... and appoint them
as officials ...*

Exodus 18:21

Define your activities.

Small-group activities can be extensive teaching, praying, outreach, hospitality, and so on. Clearly define, as a group, which activities are important, this will give your group a common vision and clear priorities.

Ask people to pray about their roles. Encourage them to ask God how He wants them to contribute their gifts in a meaningful way.

Delegate over time. The process of deciding who will do what may take weeks of group discussion, or it may fall into place immediately. Don't be surprised if delegation is a process that defines and refines itself as you grow to know more about each other.

Quilled Cross Card

Crafts supplied by Beverly Voisin, Kitchener, Ontario

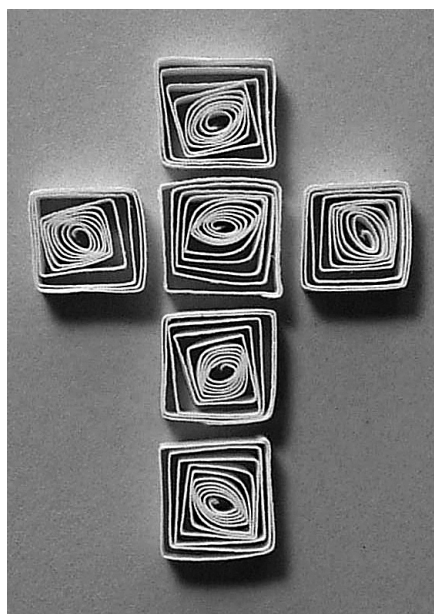
Materials

- Card Stock
- Quilling Paper or Coloured Paper cut into ¼ inch strips
- White Glue
- Toothpicks or Straight Pins (to apply glue)
- *Quilling Tool (a bamboo skewer with a slit cut into the top lengthwise works well)

*A quilling tool is not essential, the paper can be rolled by hand. Cut the strip to the length required and run the end between your thumb and the nail of your index finger to soften. Dampen your thumb and index finger and roll the paper this way. Roll the strip as you would a tape measure.

Directions

Place the very end of a strip of quilling paper into the slit in the quilling tool. Turn the tool, rolling the paper around the tool as tightly and evenly as possible, then when you are finished rolling it, let it go. Place a small dab of glue onto the loose end of the strip. Gently remove from the end of the quilling tool. This will produce a loose circle. Pinch two opposite sides of your loose circle, turn ninety degrees and pinch it again on the two opposite sides to form a square shape. Make six square shapes in total. Glue the squares down onto the card stock, forming a cross. Only a small amount of glue is needed.



Basic Quilling Shapes

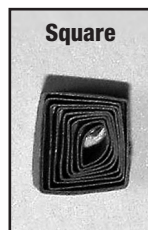
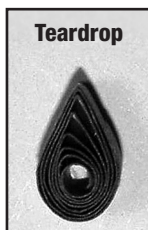
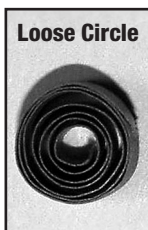
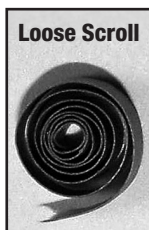
Loose Scroll: Roll the strip of paper tightly and evenly around the tool. Remove from the tool and allow the roll to expand.

Loose Circle: Roll a tight circle and allow it to expand. Glue the end once it is the desired size.

Teardrop: Make a loose circle; pinch one end between your index finger and thumb.

Marquise: Make a loose circle; pinch it on opposite ends.

Square: Make a marquise. Turn it ninety degrees and pinch it again on two opposite sides.



Woven Paper Bookmark

Materials

- Paper Cut Into Strips (different colours or one colour)
- Glue Stick
- Laminate Sheet
- Scissors

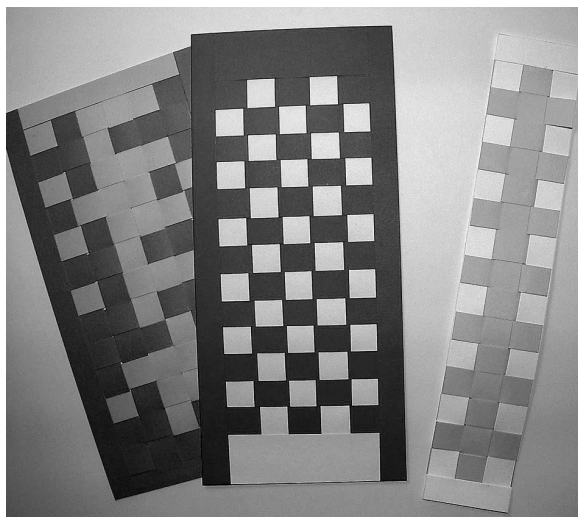
Directions

Place one strip of paper over another making an X, glue together. Weave strips of paper beside each other either over or under (opposite) to the paper strip beside it. It is not necessary to continuously glue, but it could be periodically glued here and there to keep the weaving tight. Continue to weave the paper over and under, until it is the shape and size desired. Trim the ends until even and glue all around the edge.

String, thread or ribbon can also be woven

into your design for added interest. Weaving different types and width of paper add a nice touch. To finish off, glue a strip of paper down on each of the four sides, as a border.

Laminate if desired. This idea can also be used to make placemats. (Continue to weave a large rectangle and laminate.)



Recycled Christmas Balls

Materials

- Old Christmas Cards
- Scissors
- Hole Punch
- Paper Fasteners
- Decorative String

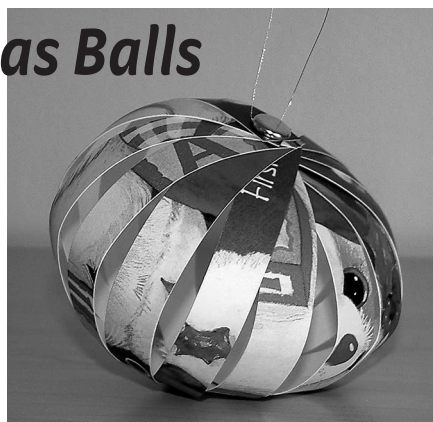
Directions

Cut the card into narrow strips. You will need 8 to 20 depending on how dense you want the ball to be.

Punch holes in both ends of every strip.

Stack the strips and put a paper fastener in the top and bottom.

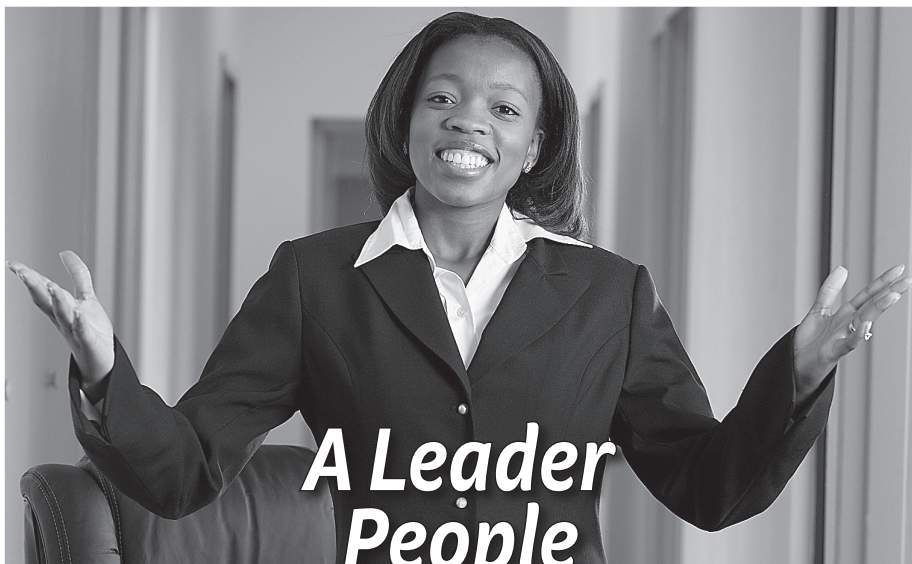
Bend the stack into a C shape.



Fan the strips apart to form a ball.

Hang with a string from the top paper fastener.

Close the ball back into a stack for storage.



Small groups need good leaders. People, however, are not quick to follow. They are watching closely to see if we will lead them with godliness and integrity. How do you become such a leader?

Make An Honest Appraisal Of Your Character. Who are you supposed to be in Christ? Confess if necessary, and commit to a holy life. Remember, character is who you are when no one is looking.

Discipline Yourself To Live As A Whole Person. Give attention to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects of your life. What activities or attitudes are causing you to neglect one or more of these areas? You may have to deny the lesser to gain the greater.

Practice Vulnerability. Speak honestly about your failures, struggles, and questions. Be quick to admit your need of forgiveness.

Understand The Vision Of Small Group Ministry. If you have no purpose for meeting,

people will find better things to do.

Be Equipped. Be a student of life, always looking for the lessons taught by the Master Teacher. Be prepared and “prayed up” for each meeting. Excellence only comes as the reward for labor.

Learn To Handle Criticism. Ask yourself: Is the criticism the truth? Have I created a critical atmosphere by being critical myself? Allow criticism to make you stronger, not defeat you. And remember, the only way to avoid criticism is to say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing.

Earnestly Pray. Ask God for wisdom, compassion, and His perfect will. Prayer may not alter our circumstances, but it changes us.

Lead With Passion and Compassion. Show leadership with intense love for each person in your group, for the ministry, the Scriptures, and especially for God. Such love changes everything it touches.

Benefits of Team Leadership

Discipleship Journal 1994

How much easier might it be to recruit new leaders ministry if they knew they'd have a team to share the load? Each small group should be led by a team of three. A leader, an assistant and a shepherd. The leader conducts the Bible study, trains the assistant and keeps the team focused on the group's purpose. The assistant handles group business, opens the meeting, and occasionally leads the study. The shepherd leads the prayer time, oversees and organizes group missions projects, and sees that refreshments are available at each small group meeting.

What are the benefits of this type of leadership team?

A team is more effective than an individual in keeping the group focused on its purpose. Staying on purpose is difficult, especially when one person is trying to keep a group of eight or more people focused. When all three members of the leadership team are involved in keeping the group on track, the job becomes easier.

Why is focus so important? Bible study groups that exchange Bible study for socializing will eventually cease to meet. It is wrong to say that socializing is not important. It's the Bible study that brings about inside-transformation. It must remain the emphasis.

A leadership team shares tasks. Here's how the process might work. The assistant opens



the meeting, makes announcements, and gets everyone settled. The leader then facilitates the Bible study discussion. An hour later, the shepherd takes over for the prayer time. No one person is responsible for leading the entire evening. No one person carries the load of keeping a group running smoothly, relating deeply, studying effectively, and reaching outward.

A leadership team creates a larger base for future leaders. When team roles are clearly defined, group members easily identify with one of the roles. Some may not want to lead the Bible study but would happily lead the prayer time. Those interested in eventually leading a Bible study can start out as apprentices. The best training is hands-on, and that is what the leadership team can give its small group members.

A leadership team fosters accountability. Quality training, occasional coaching, and the combined common sense and wisdom of the leadership teams mean problems are handled by the groups themselves and seldom get out of control.

Building a Prayer Support Network

Eleanor Shepherd, Toronto, On



There are many ways to build a prayer support network. Following are some ways and methodology that could put one into place.

Members of the Prayer Team

Who could be members of the team? Making contact with different people is important. There are certain people who make comments like, 'I remember you folks often in my prayers,' or ask "Is there anything specific I could pray for? I know that your ministry has many challenges."

If it is appropriate to do so, you could ask these people if they would like to be a part of the prayer support team. When the response is positive, request that the individual send their e-mail address, letting you know they are interested.

With a written response to the invitation you can be sure the individual would take the commitment seriously and follow through as a member of the prayer team.

When adding people to your prayer partners, do not lay out any expectations that you have for them as prayer partners, other than that they pray for specified requests, then send the requests in order to help them to be able to do that. Do not specify that they are expected to pray every day or at any specific intervals.

***Hold yourself
accountable. Keep
prayer partners
informed of
prayer requests***

Generate the group

The group can be generated in an address book on the computer, on in a book, or simply prepare one e-mail and letter once a month and send it out to all prayer partners.

Prayer Request

In order to hold yourself accountable for keeping the prayer partners informed of prayer requests, set yourself a date each month for sending out the prayer requests. Prepare a list

of current prayer concerns to share and keep the ongoing concerns on the list. For those individuals not on e-mail, create a hard copy of the monthly prayer letter for mailing.

Information in the Prayer Letter

One of the challenges is to provide the prayer partners with enough information so that they can pray intelligently about a subject yet respecting the necessary confidentiality of some concerns, especially as they relate to personnel issues. It's important to avoid using the names when requesting prayers for specific individuals. Create a description of the situation and the person, respect their privacy.

Develop the regular prayer requests newsletter however, it is good to limit the number of requests so as not to make it too complicated. Settle on a maximum of no more than seven. One prayer request each day is good. Be aware that while your prayer partners pray for those you mention, they may have many other people and concerns to pray for as well.

Up Dates

Providing updates the following month, or months on subjects of prayer from previous months is beneficial to the prayer team. This gives an opportunity for thanksgiving to God for the answers to prayer.

Prayer partners need not contact you when

they received their prayer requests every month, though some people may regularly acknowledge them. The main concern is that the partners pray for the requests, whether or not they contact you.



***A team of prayer partners
... gives a clear understanding
of what it means to bear
one another's burdens***

Conclusion of Prayer Newsletter

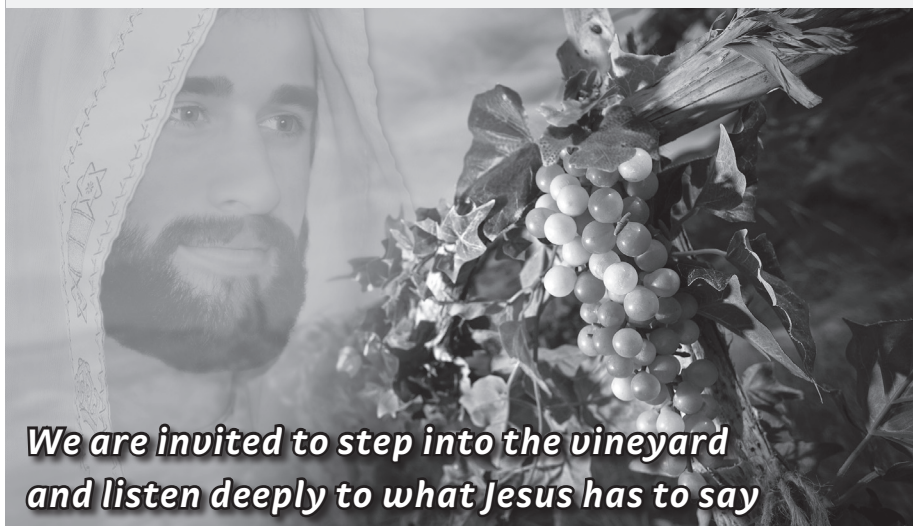
Conclude each prayer request newsletter with an encouraging thought. This can be something new that God reveals in private prayer times during the month. Always remember to express appreciation to your prayer partners as you seek to build up their faith.

It's wonderful to have a team of prayer partners taking the concerns shared to the Lord in prayer. It also gives a clear understanding of what it means to bear one another's burdens.

INTRODUCTION

Seven Days of Scripture, Reflection and Prayer

June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario



***We are invited to step into the vineyard
and listen deeply to what Jesus has to say***

Through an unexpected journey of grief the Lord has revealed Himself to my heart. He has given me wonderful pictures of grace through Scripture and song. After 24 years of marriage my heart was broken when my husband, after a brief illness, went home to be with the Lord. After losing him, I was desperate to feel connected to the one I loved so deeply and who had loved me deeply, but I had no way of feeling connected. I read a quote by Jack Lemmon which stated "Death ends a life not a relationship". As I thought about the relationship my husband and I shared with each other through Christ, the Lord began to paint a new picture of my connection with Darrell.

It was an ordinary day, driving to work when the Lord chose to use a song to bring this picture to fruition. Twilla Paris was singing

"Hold Me Close, Hold Me Near". As I listened to these words, the Lord spoke clearly to my heart. I came to realize that when the Lord holds me close to Him here on earth, He is holding Darrell in heaven. Immediately, I had a wonderful picture of the 'Vine' and my mind went to John 15 when Jesus said, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener."

I would love to have been with the disciples when Jesus shared His heart with them as recorded in John 15. Jesus stands in a vineyard and speaks to His disciples words that were, and still are life changing if we heed this invitation to connect with Christ.

We are invited to step into the vineyard and listen deeply to what Jesus has to say to our hearts. May we be reminded of the profound connection we have with our heavenly Father.

DAY 1

Connected ... Connecting To The True Vine

“I am the real Vine ...” John 15:1, *The Message*

Life is filled with connections to family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. Over the years I have come to appreciate the connections the Lord has provided in my life. I have been especially blessed with a deep earthly connection, as an identical twin sister. We look, talk, and walk the same, have the same mannerisms, and finish each others statements. One of the things I appreciate about my sister, is that we can be together, without speaking because we enjoy spending time in one another's company. While I cherish deeply this connection, my spiritual connection to God, is the centre of my life.



friendship you have. Are you are able to sit in silence, enjoying the moment together. If this is a reality for you, Thank God for such a relationship.

In John 15: Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that He was the source of their lives. From Him alone would flow the power and strength necessary to accomplish the Father's will in their lives. When we connect with Jesus, He provides the opportunity to experience His

abundant life. This can only happen if we take time each day to sit quietly in the presence of God and allow Him to speak to our hearts.

Prayer

Dear Lord, as we draw near to You, help us to connect deeply with You. Our desire is to sit quietly in Your presence and experience Your love and grace pouring into our lives. Thank You for the abundant life You provide through Your Son, Jesus.

Action

Write note of appreciation to people you are closely connected to. Take the time to thank God for His divine connection in your life.

Jesus experienced a deep connection with His Father while on earth. God was the source of life for Jesus, and likewise Jesus, the Vine, is the source of life for us through the Holy Spirit. Scripture reveals again and again, that Jesus withdrew into a solitary place to meet with God, His Father. I wonder how many occasions they just sat in silence, spending time together as they enjoyed each other's company?

Take a few minutes and think of a close

DAY 2

Cared For ... God Our Father Is The Vinedresser

“... and my father is the vinedresser“ John 15:1b, *The Revised Standard Version*

I have experienced God, the Vinedresser care for the broken branches of my life that have been deeply affected by grief. His tender care of my broken heart has become an oasis in the midst of the driest season of my life. His 'Word' has watered my soul, filling my heart with hope for the future.

The New English Bible uses the word 'gardener' to describe the vinedresser. I like this thought, as I can picture a gardener spending time as he cares for each vine in the garden. Watering and pruning will produce a wonderful harvest.

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible uses the word 'vinedresser' as a reminder that, as the Vinedresser, Jesus longs to water the soil of our hearts, refreshing every dry area of our lives. Jesus also prunes the branches that are soiled by the world, making our lives free to produce a harvest that is bountiful.

On a particular occasion I experienced an oasis when I spent a few days of spiritual retreat. God used this time to speak tenderly to my heart. I was challenged to reflect on my approach to God in worship. I was participating in worship yet, my arms were folded, refusing to allow the Lord to wrap His arms around me as He desired. This, I believe was a broken branch of worship that required the "Vinedressers" care.

Through quiet reflection I was able to hear the voice of the Lord and respond in obedience. I was able to allow my arms to unfold and experience His warm embrace. How grateful I am for the tender care the Father gives to my heart.



Prayer

Thank you Father for Your tender care. You truly are the gardener of our lives, wrap Your arms of love around us, providing Your hand of guidance through Your Word. Above all, we thank You for Your unconditional love, that lifts our spirits and allows us to embrace others with the same love we have received.

Action

Purchase a plant and share it with someone who needs encouragement. Add a note reminding them that the "Vinedresser" longs to care for all areas of their lives.

DAY 3

Cultivated ... The Vinedresser's Pruning

"He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more." John 15: 2, *The Message*

The gardener, who prunes his vine, works with extreme care. In John 15: 2 the words 'cut off' are used. We have a picture in this passage of God, the Gardener, pruning His vine. Jesus talks about two kinds of pruning; separating and cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth.



At times in our Christian life, God needs to discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. Then there are times, when branches need to be cut back to the trunk because there is a lack of fruit bearing.

If we desire to become more Christ-like, bearing an abundance of fruit for the Kingdom,

we must ask the Lord to look deep into our hearts, and reveal the areas that require change. The pruning experience develops our Christian character, enabling us, to live up to our full potential. When the Holy Spirit cuts away the bitterness, anger, resentment, and greed in our lives, the spiritual sap is redirected toward positive growth. Through the pruning process we become transformed into the likeness of Christ.

This transformation is only possible when we are able to pray the words of song SASB 600:

*Jesus, tender lover of my soul,
Pardoner of my sins, and friend indeed.
Keeper of the garden of my heart,
Jesus, thou art everything to me.*

It is when we receive this pardon that growth in our relationship with Him will be experienced.

Prayer

Lord, I know that You want what is best for us. You are an amazing gardener who desires that we bear fruit for Your Kingdom. You cut away the things in our lives that hinder our spiritual ineffectiveness. Help us to surrender to Your work in our lives even if it's painful.

Action

Create a list of things in your life that is obstructing your spiritual growth.

DAY 4

Completed ...Abiding in the Vine

“Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.” John 15:4, *The Message*

Jesus, when sharing with the disciples, desired that they would understand that He was with them in the everyday events of life. They could draw strength from His unlimited resources. The word ‘abide’ is used 112 times in the Greek New Testament. It is also one of John’s favourite words. It means ‘to sojourn, to tarry, to dwell at one’s own house, to tarry as a guest, to lodge, to maintain unbroken fellowship with one.’

We have the wonderful privilege of abiding with Jesus, our heavenly Father in the midst of everyday life. The disciples experienced the abiding of Jesus in person and when He was leaving this earth He promised them the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to accompany them.

In the midst of our busy lives we can maintain unbroken fellowship with Jesus, the Vine through the Holy Spirit. As we abide with Jesus, He provides all that we need for life. Recently I have become more aware of my need to abide in the Vine, drawing nourishment from the true source of abundant life.



William Brosend put it, “Being present to the presence of God in our midst, wherever and everywhere we are.” This constant sense of His presence is truly abiding.

Take a few moments to reflect on a verse in song 740 from the Salvation Army song book:

*In the love of Jesus there is all I need,
While I follow closely where my Lord may lead;
By his grace forgiven, in his presence blest,
In the love of Jesus is perfect rest.*

Prayer

Lord, forgive us for the times we fail to abide in You as deeply as we should. Our desire is to enjoy unbroken fellowship with You and to rest each moment of this day in Your presence. Help us to be keenly aware of Your presence in the business of our lives.

Action

Share with a friend a situation that is filled with distractions causing you to struggle in your ability to abide in the Vine. Make time in your day to sit in the presence of the Lord in prayer.

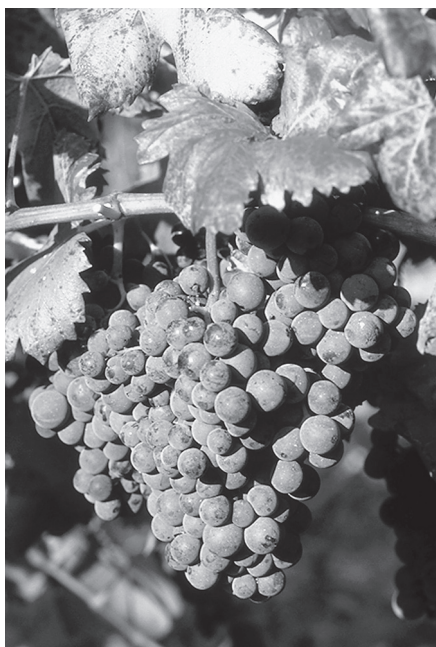
DAY 5

Compelled ... Bearing Fruit From The Vine

“I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”. John 15:5, NIV

Scripture reminds us that we are “compelled by the love of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Reflecting on this truth, we are reminded that all that we do for Christ’s sake is to be done with a sense of urgency and a keen awareness, that we can not rest unless we are daily drawing from the Vine.

We draw from the Vine a passion for life in the spirit. We feel alive in Christ. When we, the branches, are united to the Vine, we produce fruit. Our spirit is nourished through His Word and our obedience to the Holy Spirit’s leading



in our lives. Many writers suggest that the fruit referred in John 15:5 is the good works we do and the offerings we give to the Lord through the use of our time, talent and treasures.

Paul reminds us in Galatians 5:22-24 that the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, etc., (take a moment to read these verses). We bear inner fruit when we allow God to nurture our hearts creating a Christ-likeness in us. The outflow of our love for God and others will be seen in the fruit we bear. We just can’t help it! We have to do it!

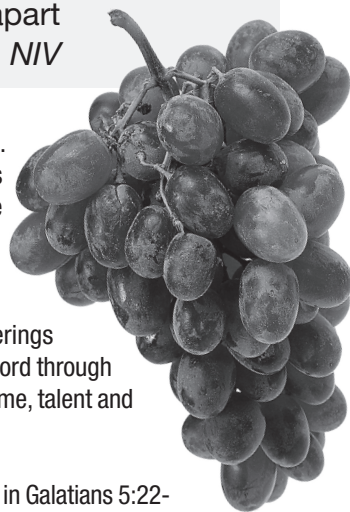
Prayer

Father, we thank You for Your Word that challenges our hearts to be obedient to the Holy Spirit’s workings in our lives. Forgive us for the times when we fail to be loving toward others. Forgive our lack of joy when You provide for all our needs.

Action

Take time to ask yourself the following questions.

- When did you last feel compelled to do something for God’s Kingdom?
- What makes you feel alive in Christ?



DAY 6

Commissioned ... Living A Life Of Love Through The Vine

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” John 15: 12, *NIV*

As women connected to the vine, we are commanded to love each other as Jesus loved us. It was out of His sacrificial love, that Jesus gave His life on the cross for our sins providing eternal life. This mandate from Jesus “love each other as I have loved you” is unmistakably clear. We are to love sacrificially. We are to exemplify and express Christ-like love in the world. To love at this level requires our total dependence on the Holy Spirit.

How can we love as Christ loved? The truth of the matter is, the love of Christ becomes our love. Only as we embrace God’s love deeply will we be able to love at the level Jesus is referring to. God’s unconditional love in our lives will overflow to all relationships if we chose to allow Christ’s love to become ours.

We may never be asked to give our life physically for someone, however, there are many opportunities to express our love for others in all circumstances. The giving of our time, talents and treasures out of our love for God, will produce a harvest of fruit from the Vine, Jesus.

When we take the time to listen deeply to the pain of others, to encourage a single mom, a widow or widower, a senior, a child we are in

fact, expressing our love in the way we live. As we seek to live a life of love it is necessary that we take a good look at the relationships we are privileged to share for the purpose of examining our thoughts and actions. When life is filled with business that causes stress it’s difficult to speak in a caring, loving manor. Keeping a clear perspective on God’s love for



us, will enable our heart to reach out in love through His strength.

Prayer

Dear Lord, our desire is to love as You love. Help us to see opportunities to listen deeply to the hurts of others and offer help as needed.

Action

Seek out someone to show this kind of love to and extend your hand of compassion in a practical way.

DAY 7

Chosen ... Friendship With The Vine

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you”. John 15:14-15, *NIV*

Women value friendship in a significant way. We need friendship. Jesus identifies Himself as a friend of the disciples. He makes this statement because He had communicated to the disciples everything His Father had shared with Him. Their connection was heartfelt and honest. The depth of this friendship was an indication of the quality of the time they had shared.

Joseph Scriven wrote “What a friend we have in Jesus”. The words of this song have touched the lives of countless people because it draws people to a God of love, who desires to share in a deep spiritual friendship with them. We are invited through the words of this song to take everything to the Lord in prayer. I wonder how many times I’ve carried the burdens of the day when Jesus, my Friend would have carried them for me? My life has been blessed with many friends and I cherish every chat, smile, hug from my friends. In our connecting with Christ, the Vine we experience fellowship of the Spirit. God, my Father has chosen me as His friend. This friendship goes both ways as I experience a connection with the Vine. Today, we can live an abundant life in the here and now.



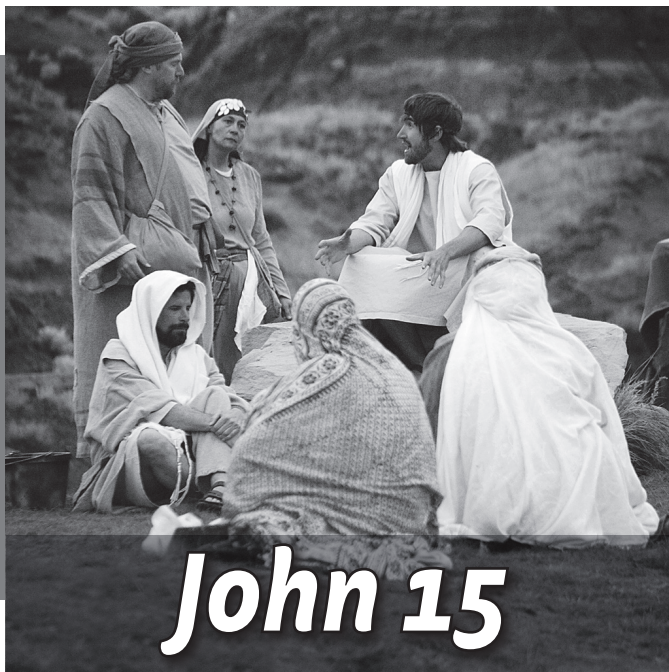
Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for the friendship that we share with You. We are privileged each day to enter Your presence, surrendering the cares of our lives to You. Help us this day to deepen our friendship with You.

Action

Take time to reflect on the words of one of the following songs. Give thanks to God for His friendship in your life.

- *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*
- *A Friend Of Jesus! O What Bliss*



John 15

What a thrill it is when one of our athletes wins an international competition, the Maple Leaf is raised and the strains of “O Canada” are played. That flag links all Canadians regardless of race, colour or creed; we are together in that proud moment. That red and white flag signifies our connection with each other.

The Jews felt something like that about the image of the vine. They were a subject people and hence had no flag in New Testament times, but for many centuries the vine had been the symbol which linked them as a people, not only to each other, but, more importantly, to God. You could see it in the facades of their ancient buildings, particularly in the ornamentation of the temple in Jerusalem.

The parable of the vine and the branches is part of the very last conversation Jesus had with His disciples. The last of the “I am” statements by which Jesus described His mission in the world. (The others are: John 6:35; John 8:12; John 10:7; John 10:11; John 11:25; John 14:6.)

You can be sure His followers took special note when they heard Him mention the vine and branches. Jesus was the vine, His apostles were the branches. That was the vital connection between them and it was a new concept.

In unpacking this passage of Scripture for today’s world, we need to look at it from three angles: History, Context and Significance.

History

There are numerous references to the vine throughout the Old Testament, we are going to confine ourselves to Psalms 80. There are no hallelujahs in this Psalms. It is tearful, not cheerful; scholars call it a community lament. Since the Psalms were known as the Hymn Book of the Second Temple, we can assume that this was sung in community gatherings.

Note: Since the submission of this Bible study, Lt Colonel Margaret Hammond has been “Promoted To Glory”. Through the years many people have been enriched through the gifted Bible teaching of this godly woman.

The tune must have been in a minor key for sure! (It would not bring much inspiration to a Sabbath service!)

We cannot know definitely when it was written but it was either after the ten northern tribes were overrun by the Assyrians (720 BC) or when the southern tribes were taken into captivity by the Babylonians and the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed (597 BC). They were desperate times. It is interesting to speculate as to just how this “hymn” was used. Verses 3, 7, and 19 sound like a chorus. Maybe some individual sang the other verses and the congregation joined in with these fervent prayers.

Notice: The historical reference to Israel’s beginnings as a nation in vs8-11.

Who was the vine brought out of Egypt? (vs8, 9). Who planted it?

Something dire has occurred which has brought judgment on the people.

What has happened to the vineyard? (vs12, 13).

What has happened to the vine? (v16).

Israel is the vine planted by God. Remember that; the disciples are told something different — but enormously important for them and for us.

Context

Our chapter of focus is John 15 but no scripture can be understood without looking at it’s context — think of the W5 Questions: who, what, why, when and where.

We need to go back to John 13 (in reality, we need to read the entire Gospel!) to understand the setting.

What is Jesus preparing His disciples to face? (v13:1). What is the setting? (v2). We call it the _____

It began with an act of service quite common in that day though not in ours.

Who did what to whom? (vs4-16). It was an act of humble service. What lessons were Jesus’ disciples to learn from this?

What ominous news did Jesus announce? (vs18-30). Notice especially v30. Judas has left the company. There are now only 11 disciples left. What further bad news did Jesus predict? (v33).

Now for chapter 14. After the foreboding words in the previous chapter what words of comfort does Jesus bring to the perplexed men? (v1)

What word of prophecy concerning their future (and ours)? (vs2-4).

What amazing promise does He make to them? (vs15-21)

Now, with just that cursory glance at the preceding chapters, we are ready to move into the 15th chapter, and explore it’s significance for both the disciples and ourselves.

Significance

Back in Psalms 80 who is the vine and what happened to it? (Look at Psalms 80: 8-16).

Hosea 10:1, 2 gives us the answer in the plainest terms. Fast forward to the New Testament and who is the vine? (v15:1)

That makes a huge difference

The Father is still the planter but the nature of the vine has altered. It is no longer a nation but

a person — Jesus. As a nation the vine has withered and almost died. But this is a new day and we have better news and the news is for US — not just the Israelites.

What is our relationship to the Vine? (v5). (There's a hint as to how this happened in 2 Corinthians 5:17.)

As gorgeous as vineyards appear to the eye when harvest time approaches, it would be a mistake to think that the fruit developed all on its own. There is a gardener. Who is He? (v1) He works powerfully in our hearts (if we let Him).

What work has He been trying to do in your life? Would you like to grade your progress?

We note the Gardener's expectations in this chapter. What are they?

His people will REMAIN (v4). The connection must be kept intact. There is no such thing as a casual disciple! (Think about that. What do casual disciples look like? How do they behave?)

His people will be PRODUCTIVE (vs5-8). What does that mean? Take a careful look at Galatians 5:16-26. 'Nuff said? (Maybe you would like to talk about the fruit of the Spirit)

His people will be OBEDIENT (vs10-17). This passage needs some careful reading. Obedience and love are connected to each other. The implications of vs12-14 are staggering. Do we love each other that way? If we do we are really connected. It is important to note, however, that we are connected, not because we like or even love each other, but because we are all part of the Vine. We are all getting our nourishment from the same source. Notice v17. This is NOT a suggestion.

What is it?

His people will ENDURE (vs18-25). He never promised us a rose garden! He was misunderstood, He was persecuted. What does Jesus tell us to expect? (vs18, 19). Please don't have a "pity party." It is in times like these that our CONNECTIONS to GOD and to EACH OTHER are vital.

His people will have a TESTIMONY (vs26, 27). Strange, that in this list of expectations, Jesus should leave the "testimony" to the end. Perhaps it is because the word of testimony is made valid by what has preceded it.

The branch (believer) has been pruned (all gardeners do that — see v2), she has kept her connection with the vine; she is fruitful. (The fruit of the Spirit is being reproduced.) She has been obedient and shown endurance under opposition. Now she has proven herself by the way she lives and her word of testimony will be valid. It will not be mere words — it will be backed up by a life lived in connection with God.

Let us reflect on these words by Charles Wesley.

*Help us to help each other Lord,
Each other's cross to bear;
Let each her friendly aid afford.
And feel her sister's care.*

*Help us to build each other up,
Our little stock improve;
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
And perfect us in love.*

*Up into thee, our living vine,
Let us in all things grow,
Till thou hast made us free indeed
And spotless here below
(with apologies to Charles Wesley)*

Connecting in Worship



Call To Worship

Leader: Come with me, and we will sit and open the Word.

Response: We will sit, and study, and understand.

Leader: Come with me, and we will break bread together.

Response: We will break, and eat, and be satisfied.

Leader: Come with me, and risk the possibility of something new.

Response: We come, we worship, and we shall be changed.

Choruses

- *As The Deer Panteth For The Water*
- *Power Of Your Love*
- *My Life Is In You, Lord*
- *Draw Me Close To You, Never Let Me Go*
- *Eagles' Wings*
- SASB 36 (Chorus Section), *Constantly Abiding*
- SASB 176 (Chorus Section), *In Him Abiding*

Songs

- SASB 361/TB 257, *My Soul Is Now United*
- SASB 512/TB 135, *My Life Must Be Christ Broken Bread*
- SASB 973/TB 973, *Near To The Heart Of God*
- SASB 521/TB 192, *Saviour, I Long To Be*

Special Music: SASB 628/Tune: O Man of Galilee, *Saviour Of Light, I Look Just Now To Thee.*

Worship Table

Create a worship table using the theme 'Connecting to The Vine'. Gather a glass bowl, a variety of fruit especially grapes, and a large Bible. Arrange the fruit in a glass dish and display a Bible open at John 15. Complete the worship table by adding a 6-foot foliage garland of ivy (you can purchase this at a Wal-Mart or Dollar Store). This idea could also be used to create a prayer room.



Branching Out

Steve Pavey, Richmond Hill, Ontario

Themes

- staying connected with God through prayer
- listening for His promptings
- bearing fruit for the kingdom

Characters

- Narrator
- Woman 1
- Woman 2
- Girl 1
- Girl 2

Props

All props can be imagined, but suggested props are a small bed, a table, a phone, and a flower arrangement.

Setting

A room of a house; a church craft sale. The two women should be situated on either side of the stage, to show contrast between each character.

Narrator: “I am the vine you are the branches. The one who remains in me — and I in him — bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing.”

Woman 1: *(arising from bed, looking at watch, then screams)* Ahhh! I overslept! Today’s the craft sale at the church I’m so late! There’s so much yet to do! I’m dead! *(rushes offstage)*

Woman 2: *(arising from bed, looking at watch)* Oh, dear. I overslept. I have to call all the ladies about the craft sale. Go set up tables at the church. Decorate. I have so much to do today. *(pauses, then kneels at bed to pray. She slowly rises and exits.)*

(Woman 1 enters brushing her hair frantically)

Woman 1: Where are my keys? *(the phone rings and she picks up)* Hello? Susan? Are you ... what! You can’t watch my kids today! *(she faints, then gets up)*. This is awful. What am I going to do? I’ve got to be at the church in 30 minutes. *(hears a knock at the door)* Oh, what now? *(opens the door)*

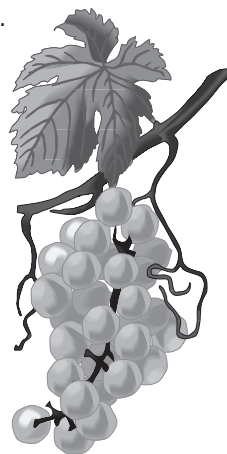
Girl 1: Hi, Mrs. Randall. My mom sent me over to talk to you. You see, I just finished taking an early childhood education course at school, and she wants me to get some experience with children. And so, I was wondering ...

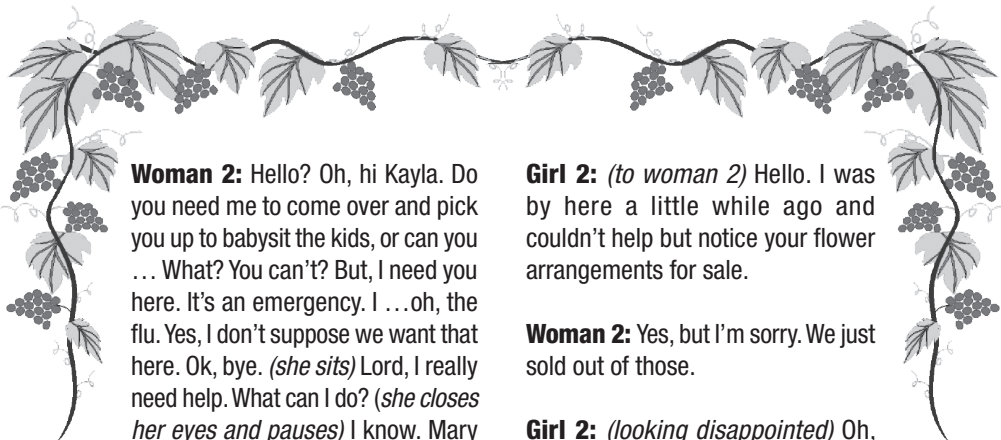
Woman 1: Look, Barbie.

Girl 1: It’s Barbara.

Woman 1: Whatever. Listen. I don’t have time to hear about your school life right now. I’m in a real jam, and have to figure something out. Come back later. *(pushes her away and pretends to close a door)* Oh, who can I get to watch the kids? *(pauses to think)* I guess I’ll have to take them with me. *(she exits)*

(Woman 2 enters, brushing her hair. A phone rings. She answers.)





Woman 2: Hello? Oh, hi Kayla. Do you need me to come over and pick you up to babysit the kids, or can you ... What? You can't? But, I need you here. It's an emergency. I ... oh, the flu. Yes, I don't suppose we want that here. Ok, bye. *(she sits)* Lord, I really need help. What can I do? *(she closes her eyes and pauses)* I know. Mary is off work this week. I'll swing by her house with the kids. She'll understand. Thank you, Lord. *(she exits)*

(Woman 1 enters, appearing to be arranging crafts on a table. Enter Girl 1)

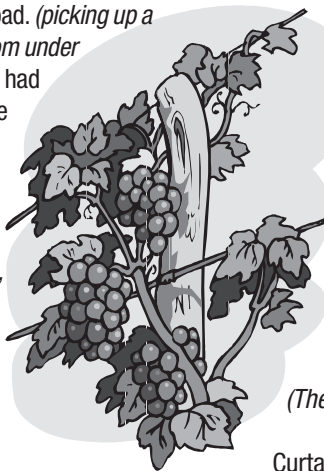
Girl 1: *(to woman 1)* Hi. I was by here a little earlier and noticed some beautiful flower arrangements for sale.

Woman 1: We just sold out on those.

Girl 1: *(looking disappointed)* Oh, really? It's my mother's birthday today. It would have made her day.

Woman 1: That's too bad. *(picking up a flower arrangement from under the table)* Fortunately, I had one of the ladies put one aside for me. Aren't they beautiful? *(Girl 1 walks away with a sad face. Woman 1 shrugs her shoulders, then exits.)*

(Woman 2 enters, appearing to be arranging crafts on a table. Enter Girl 2.)



Girl 2: *(to woman 2)* Hello. I was by here a little while ago and couldn't help but notice your flower arrangements for sale.

Woman 2: Yes, but I'm sorry. We just sold out of those.

Girl 2: *(looking disappointed)* Oh, really. That's too bad. I didn't have enough cash with me to buy it, and so I went all the way to the bank and came back.

Woman 2: Really? *(pauses, then reaches under table to pick up a flower arrangement)* One of the ladies gave this to me as a gift ... but, I want you to have it.

Girl 2: Really? I couldn't do that.

Woman 2: It's all right. I'll explain it to her. Perhaps, she'll make me another one.

Girl 2: That's so kind. Who is the person that made these?

Woman 2: A woman from our church.

Girl 2: Do you attend this church?

Woman 2: Yes. We have a service here tomorrow at 11. Care to drop by. I'll introduce you to the maker.

Girl 2: I might just do that. What time was that again?

(They both exit together.)

Curtain.

Text: John 15: 1–17

A newspaper in England offered a reward for the best definition of friendship. The winning entry? “A friend is one who comes when everyone else goes.” Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play baseball in the major leagues. He faced hostile crowds in every stadium. Playing one day at his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans jeered him. He stood at second base humiliated while the crowd booed. Then, without a word, shortstop Pee Wee Reese went and stood next to Jackie. He put his arm around him and together, white man and black man, they faced the crowd. Suddenly the fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that that arm around his shoulder is what saved his career. A friend is someone who comes when everyone else goes. John 15 points us to the ultimate friend who will “come when everybody else goes.”

Jesus and the disciples had just finished celebrating the Passover meal together, the “Last Supper”, and it had definitely not been your typical lunch at Swiss Chalet. Jesus had told them he was going to die, that one of them would betray him and another deny him; it had been heavy going. Even though Jesus had promised them that the Holy Spirit would be sent to teach and guide them (John 14:25-29), it must have been an anxious group who left the Upper Room that night and made their way towards the Mount Of Olives. Jesus knew they desperately needed reassurance

Making the Right Connection

Beth Pearo, Richmond Hill, Ontario



that when He left them their connection would be maintained.

As they walked, Jesus called them friends for the first time. (v14) He described the nature of their friendship with an illustration that would have significance for them all: “I am the vine; you are the branches” eight simple words.

The cultivation of vineyards was a common feature of Palestinian life. They might have passed by one of the many fields of grape vines even as Jesus spoke of Himself as the “true vine.” The disciples could relate to his metaphor. They knew that it was the vine that would draw nourishment from the earth and pass it to the branches, enabling them to

maintain their connection. Without that, the branches would be mere withering sticks. The vine was essential to LIFE. Jesus was the vine. They were the branches.

Jesus was preparing His followers for the future. They needed to know that their connectedness to Him was not just for the present moment, but would be their means of sustenance in the coming days when He was no longer present with them in the flesh. Their life would be found in the true vine and they needed to be sure that the connection was secure.

For those first disciples, life was uncertain, the future unclear. Sound familiar? Life moves so quickly we really don't know from one day to the next what could happen, what joys or sorrows we might face. As I write these lines the media is full of the dreadful events at Virginia Technical University. Think how the lives of thirty-two families changed in that one week. Hopefully that isn't what any of us will deal with, but the reality is that our tomorrows are filled with unknowns. Our future, too, is dependent on making the right connection with the true vine.

What does that mean? Let Jesus explain.

The RIGHT CONNECTION Is About An Ongoing Relationship

The connection begins with and is sustained by Jesus. This is critical. Notice that eleven times in this passage Jesus uses the word "remain." The Thesaurus helps us fully understand what that word means: "Stay, stay put, stay behind, lingers, wait, hang about, continue." Do you get

the idea? To remain is an ongoing action; our relationship with Jesus is not about a one-time connection but a continuing activity.

The relationship is mutual (v4). It's as if Jesus said to the disciples, "You hang with me and I'll hang with you." He stays connected to us, we stay connected to him. That means continually working at developing our relationship with Him; talking to Him, praying to Him, becoming aware of Him all around us.

This relationship involves sharing in the work (v4). There are challenges and responsibilities ahead for the disciples — but Jesus said they would work at this together. "Remain in me and I'll share the load with you."



The relationship is based on His Word (v7). Don't miss this point. Seeking to understand the Word of God is critical to the right connection. The Word of God is our greatest gift; it is essential to our relationship.

My best friend from high school was maid of honor at my wedding. Back then we were inseparable; we were connected in so many ways; even after my family moved away, we stayed connected via phone, mail, and the occasional (expensive) flying visit. But then things began to change; life got more complicated; we started to go in different directions. We stopped calling as often, time became an issue and we used our money for other things and what we always swore as young girls would never happen — did happen: we lost our connection. When we stopped investing in our relationship the connection was lost.

It is impossible to stay connected with someone unless we interact. It is no different with Jesus; no relationship, no connection; the connection is lost when we don't actively work at our relationship with Him.

The RIGHT CONNECTION Bears Fruit

The disciples understood that it was the vine which would enable the branches to produce; no vine, no fruit. The vine was essential to productivity. "I am the true vine." Jesus said, "I am the one who will enable you to produce much fruit". Productivity is a sign of a right connection. We must be careful not to confuse a scriptural understanding of productivity with our cultural understanding. Our culture defines productivity by what we do and how much we have, but scripture clearly defines it by who we are. Paul reminds us, "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control" (Galatians 5:22). This is what will be produced from our lives as we stay connected with the Vine (Jesus). We were created to bear fruit, fruit that will not only make a difference in our lives, but in the world around us. Productivity is the outcome of a right connection. However, it comes at a personal cost.

The RIGHT CONNECTION Requires Pruning

When I was twelve our family moved to Vancouver; we were all excited about the fruit trees in our backyard, but when spring, summer and fall came and went and no fruit was produced we thought our dream was dead. Our neighbors on both sides told us the same thing: "We have been here for twenty years. Those trees have never borne fruit and they never will."

That might have stopped some people from

trying — but not my Dad. He believed that a fruit tree was meant to produce fruit; so the next spring he began to prune the trees. He cut so much so that we thought he had killed them. But by fall, we were eating fresh picked



apples. My dad had been right; when the trees were pruned they were free to do what they were naturally meant to do: produce fruit.

The disciples understood that the pruning process was essential; they knew that dead wood could harbor disease and decay which would affect the whole vine; they knew that untrimmed, long rambling branches produce little fruit because most of the strength of the vine is given to growing the wood; they knew that pruning was critical to productivity.

We were made to produce fruit, but our productivity, just like the vine and branches, is dependant on the pruning process. A right connection with Jesus is about trusting the gardener to prune; to cut off, to weed out, the sin that inhibits our productivity. That's why Paul said; "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander, along with every from of malice" (Ephesians 4:31).

“Put to death therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed; rid yourselves of anger, rage, malice and slander.” (Colossians 3:5-8).

Our sin inhibits productivity. How can we be gracious when we are filled with greed? If we have evil desires how can we do God’s will? If we harbor bitterness and hatred, how can we produce love? Pruning is essential to a right connection; but don’t miss the blessing of the connection, because . . .

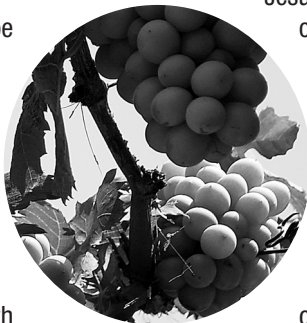
The RIGHT CONNECTION Results In An Experience Of REAL LOVE (vs9-17)

Real love is “Agape love.” Agape is one of several Greek words for love. Jesus uses it here to define love — not a romantic kind of love — but a deep, sacrificial love; the love that Jesus showed on the Cross. That is the kind of love which enables us to keep and maintain our connection with Jesus. It begins with Him and it is ours to rejoice in, to bask in, to cling to when life gets rough. It will never let us down.

The one who has this real love connection with Jesus proves it by living a life of obedience. Obedience is a dirty word these days because everywhere we look we are encouraged to look out for ourselves, to get ahead, to stand up for our rights, to do what feels good; everywhere we go the message is “If you want it, go for it!” But a connection with Jesus is about living differently from the world around us; a connection with Jesus is about going first to Him and saying “Is this something you want for me?”

Love involves doing things we might not

choose to do: saying no to a promotion, or yes to more responsibilities. It means honesty and integrity; it may mean mending poisonous relationships, being patient when we have every reason NOT to be. It means taking the high road when the low road seems easier; it’s about doing what God wants. Please note that this real love that Jesus gives us is meant to be shared. Jesus said My command is this: “Love each other as I have loved you.” (v12) and just in case you missed that one He says it again in verse 17, “This is my command: Love each other.” These are commands — not suggestions.



Real love is shared. A right connection with Jesus is about sharing His love with others. It’s about taking what He has done for us and offering it to someone else. A right connection with Jesus is not exclusive but inclusive; a connection that reaches out beyond our comfort zone to love someone else. It may be inconvenient, awkward, costly or uncomfortable, but it is the unmistakable mark of a right connection with Jesus.

Jesus said to the disciples in v14, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” What are the essentials of that friendship connection with him?

- An ongoing, active, developing relationship with Jesus.
- A fruitful harvest.
- The painful pruning process.
- The thrill of experiencing and sharing REAL LOVE.

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches” What kind of connection do we have with the Vine?



Fruit of the Vine

Lynda Watt, Toronto, Ontario. Adapted by June Newbury

Theme

“Connecting in relationship with Christ”

Preparation

Create a display table using fruit basket and a Bible. Decorate the room with green ivy and grapes.

Introduction

When we read the words of Jesus in John 15:1 “I am the Vine you are the branches” we are drawn to a wonderful picture of a vineyard with vines loaded with grapes. Jesus was a master

at taking the simplest examples to teach profound truths, i.e. the vine, branch, fruit. God, our Father longs for us to be connected to Him through the Vine, Jesus. Let’s celebrate our relationship with Christ and give Him thanks for providing family and friends in which to live a connected life.

Song: SASB 361/TB 257, *My Soul Is Now United To Christ The Living Vine*

Connected Through Prayer

Create a worship table using the theme

'Connecting to The Vine'. Gather a glass bowl, a variety of fruit especially grapes, and a large Bible. Arrange the fruit in the bowl and display the open Bible to show John 15. Complete worship table by adding a 6 foot foliage garland — Ivy (you can purchase this at a Wal-Mart or Dollar Store).

Blank Cards

Have available blank cards to encourage the ladies to take a few minutes to write an appreciation note to someone they have a meaningful relationship with.

Prayer Cards

Prepare a prayer card to encourage the ladies to write down a name of an individual who's relationship has been challenging. Invite the ladies to seek the Lord for guidance to work on this relationship.

Scripture Cards

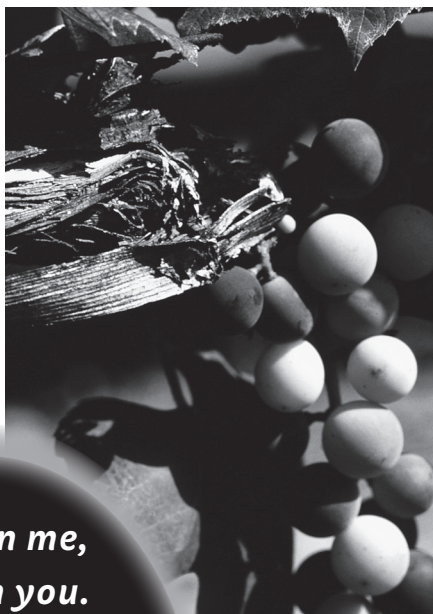
Print the following Scripture on cards for the ladies to take with them as a reminder of their connection with Christ.

John 15:4, (New Life Version)

Get your life from Me and I will live in you. No branch can give fruit by itself. It has to get life from the vine. You are able to give fruit only when you have life from Me.

John 15:4, (American Standard Version)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.



*Abide in me,
and I in you.
As the branch
cannot bear fruit
of itself, except it
abide in the vine;
so neither can ye,
except ye abide
in me.*

John 15:4,

(Amplified Bible)

Dwell in Me, and I will dwell in you. [Live in Me, and I will live in you.] Just as no branch can bear fruit of itself without abiding in (being vitally united to) the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in Me.

John 15:4, (New Living Translation)

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

John 15:4, (Contemporary English Version)

Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.

Matthew 6:14, (The Message)

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

Ephesians 4:5, (The Message)

What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself.

Connected Through Song

- SASB (Chorus 176), *In Him Abiding, My All Confiding*
- *My Life Is In You, Lord*
- *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*
- *Draw Me Close To You*

Facts About Vines

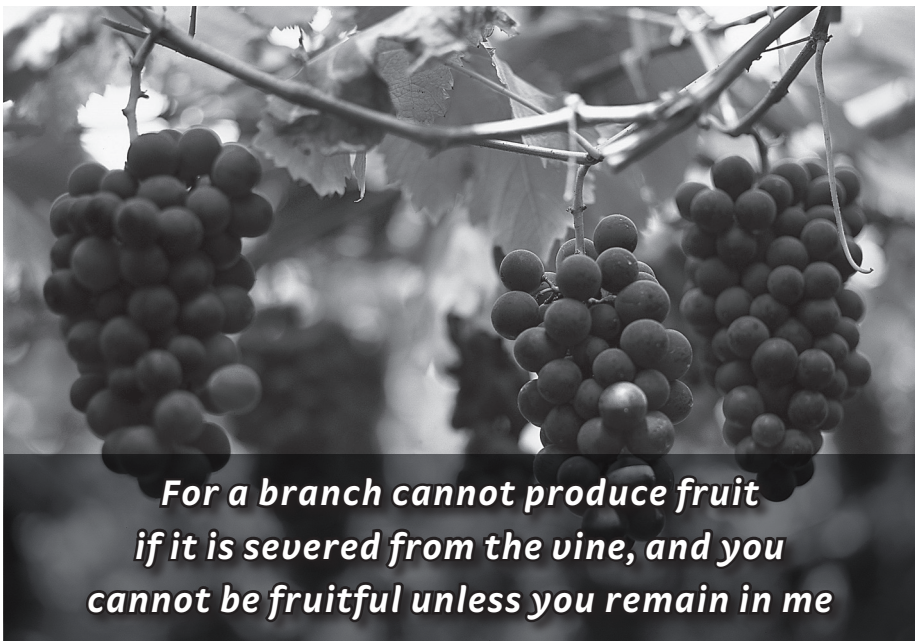
The best fruit is produced from soil where

the vine is forced to work the hardest. The deeper the roots go in search of water and nutrients, the more elements in the soil will be absorbed.

Devotional: Connected to Jesus, our Vinedresser, John 15: 1-8

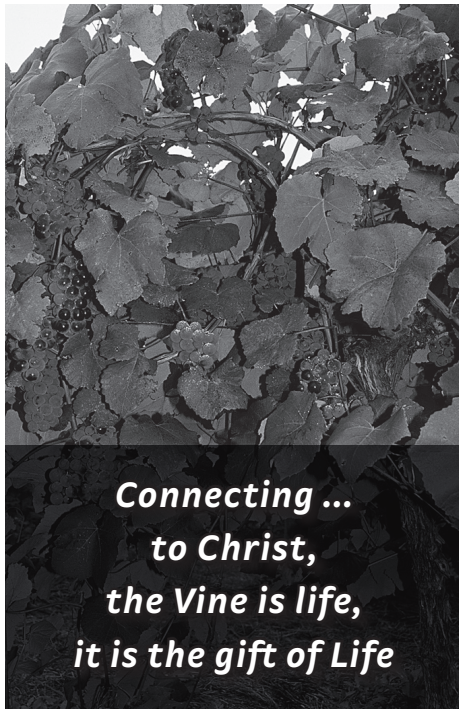
In my mind's eye, I see the vine dresser ... or the vine grower walking his fields as he keeps his eyes on the vineyard. Bruce Wilkinson in his book "Secrets of the Vine" suggest that the vine dresser comes to inspect his vineyard, and when he sees the branches in the dirt, with loving care lifts them up and cleanses them. The NIV states trims clean.

The original language talks about "lifting up and cleansing". He does whatever is necessary to repair any damage that has been done. The prevailing thought of John 15:2 is not an act of judgment. It is not that of severing a disappointing fruitless branch from the parent stem. Rather, it is the loving patience of a wise



vine dresser who rejects nothing if there is the slightest chance of restoring a branch to full fruitfulness.

The Vine Dresser sees a branch fallen to the ground. He gently lifts it up and cleanses away the dirt. Then He restores it to its place. If He thinks it necessary, He removes any further hindrance so that the harvest will not be impaired. That is when the pruning would happen



John 15:3 Jesus tells us that the agent of cleansing was His own word. It is most important that we see this and understand this task of the Vine Dresser. The Lord sees a fallen branch and immediately He lifts it from the surrounding filth and dirt. Then, He begins to cleanse it by the application of the Word of Truth. It is the application of that same Word to my conduct that begins the pruning.

How thankful I am that the vinedresser loves me so! He will get rid of (prune away) those "useless shoots, "which are hindering the fulfillment of my Lord's full and complete use of me

The vine has its storage of life and sap and strength, not for itself, but for the branches. The branches are and have nothing but what the vine provides and imparts. The believer is called to a life of entire and unceasing dependence upon the Vine which is Christ. What a thought!

We are blessed with an amazing connection for this life and the next if we live in obedience to God's word. Connecting ... to Christ, the Vine is life — it is the gift of Life" This of course begins with our physical life (connected to our mothers), our spiritual life (connected through the Vine) and our daily life as we are connected to each other ... All give us life.

Grapevine Wreath

Have available small grapevine wreaths that are ready to decorate. These can be made from vines found growing on fences and tress and can be cut and twisted into natural wreaths of any size. An alternative would be to provide purchased wreaths.

Decorate with eucalyptus, statice and other dried flowers and stems.

Make loopy bow to coordinate with the dried items.

Grapevine Cards

With the new interest in card making, invite one of the ladies to prepare samples of card stamping or scrap book cards. Invite the ladies to create a grapevine card using stickers with grapes and ivy to embellish the cards.