

cell outlines
FEBRUARY 2018

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our web site. For more information and other Cell resources, visit salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources

OVERVIEW

DISCIPLESHIP

As well as providing material for gathered group times, this year we will also be facilitating day-by-day discipleship journeys through the 'Remind' app. By signing up to this, young people (and anyone else) will receive daily discipleship questions, thoughts and challenges directly to their phones. Please encourage your young people to sign up to this by going to www.remind.com/join/followsa and downloading the 'Remind' app to their mobiles. Alternatively you can search for YCMUSA on the app.

ZACCHAEUS

WELCOME

Activity: You are in a hot air balloon with 16 other people. It is losing height rapidly and will soon crash because it is overweight. You have to decide which eight of the passengers to get rid of to enable you to save yourself and the other eight! Who would you choose? The passengers are:

- * Nurse
- * Politician
- * Engineer
- * World-class footballer
- * Social worker
- * Homeless man
- * Research scientist
- * Policeman
- * Salvation Army officer
- * Lawyer
- * Farmer
- * School teacher
- * Bank manager
- * Architect
- * Airline pilot
- * 5-year-old girl

Say: Jesus came to save all of creation and everyone in it – no matter how much we think they do or don't deserve to be saved! This week we are going to learn about someone called Zacchaeus and how his life was changed when he encountered Jesus. You could say Zacchaeus had a 'new start', but many thought he didn't deserve it and couldn't understand why Jesus wanted to spend time with him.

WORD

Say: Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Tax collectors were among the most unpopular people living in Israel at that time. Tax collectors were often Jewish by birth, but they chose to work for the Roman Empire and so were considered traitors. Tax collectors were known for being corrupt, making themselves rich by exploiting and cheating people out of money and keeping it for themselves. Zacchaeus came to try and see Jesus out of curiosity. Let's read what happened...

As a group read Luke 19:1-10.

Jesus and Zacchaeus (*Good News Translation*)

19 Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through.² There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich.³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd.⁴ So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way.⁵ When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, 'Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.'

⁶ Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy.⁷ All the people who saw it started grumbling, 'This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!'

⁸ Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.'

⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham.¹⁰ The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

Discuss: Is there anything that stands out to you in this story?

Say: Jesus was on a journey towards Jerusalem and had a number of encounters on this journey. Through these encounters and the parables (stories) he tells, Jesus is teaching about the coming Kingdom of God – the rule and reign of God over all he has made – and that God wants to save and heal ALL of creation. Just before the account of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus, we read of Jesus healing a blind beggar. This shows that Jesus has come to save the poor and sick like this beggar, as well as the rich and ostensibly corrupt like Zacchaeus – the oppressed and the oppressors.

Discuss:

- * The fact that Jesus knew Zacchaeus' name without needing to ask. Everyone is important to Jesus.
- * The fact that Jesus was 'passing through' but stopped to spend time with Zacchaeus. Jesus was a busy man and there were a lot of demands on his time. Jesus chose to spend time with Zacchaeus, a sinner who was believed to be corrupt and cheating people out of money.
- * The reaction of 'the people' – they thought Zacchaeus didn't deserve to spend time with Jesus.
 - ▶ Were people in the crowd jealous?
 - ▶ Did they think you had to behave in a certain way before you could meet with Jesus?
 - ▶ Do you ever think you are not good enough to spend time with Jesus?
 - ▶ Are you ever envious if someone else seems to have an amazing encounter with Jesus but you don't?
 - ▶ Does Jesus love Zacchaeus any more or less than everyone else in the crowd?
- * The instant change and conviction in Zacchaeus's attitude from meeting with Jesus. He turned from wrong and acted to start to put things right. When we meet with Jesus, sometimes we are convicted that some of our thoughts and actions are wrong and we might have to do something to put that previous behaviour right.
 - ▶ Just because God forgives us, does it mean that there won't be practical consequences to our actions?
 - ▶ Do you have an example of a time you have done something wrong and had to do something practical to put it right?
- * Being around Jesus was enough to change Zacchaeus. We don't read that Jesus was telling Zacchaeus to repent or change his ways.
 - ▶ What have been the times or experiences that have had the most influence on your faith and discipleship?
 - ▶ How do you best connect with and spend time with Jesus?
- * What do you think verses 9-10 mean?
 - ▶ Zacchaeus was someone who was of Jewish heritage but who had turned away from their faith. However, he was welcomed back and saved.
 - ▶ We are not saved because of our family or heritage, but only by faith in Jesus.
 - ▶ Jesus loves to bring the lost into his Kingdom, no matter what their background or previous way of life. Jesus offers everyone 'a fresh start'.

Activity: Split into groups of three or four. Spend about 10 minutes thinking about a modern re-telling of this story. Then gather back together to act out or present your story.

Think about:

- * How do people connect with 'famous' people today? (Crowds were gathering to try and see and be with Jesus.)
- * Who are the people who are known in society for being corrupt and who we might not consider worthy of having Jesus spend time with them?
- * What might it look like for these people to be saved and to have a fresh start? What changes might be seen in their behaviour? (Zacchaeus gave half his possessions to the poor, and told everyone that if he had cheated anyone out of their money he would repay four times the amount.)

WORSHIP

Say: Just as with Zacchaeus, Jesus knows our names and offers us each 'a fresh start' by healing and forgiving. Listen to and watch this music video and reflect on the truth that God knows and calls you by name.

Francesca Battistelli - 'He Knows My Name'

▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYpBgJHmGmw (extended version with testimonies)

▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtIDVleJBtA (video with lyrics)

(Note: the extended version with testimonies might not be appropriate for all groups)

Spent today in a conversation
In the mirror face to face with
Somebody less than perfect
I wouldn't choose me first if
I was looking for a champion
In fact I'd understand if
You picked everyone before me
But that's just not my story
True to who You are
You saw my heart
And made
Something out of nothing

I don't need my name in lights
I'm famous in my Father's eyes
Make no mistake
He knows my name
I'm not living for applause
I'm already so adored
It's all His stage
He knows my name oh, oh,
He knows my name oh, oh

I'm not meant to just stay quiet
I'm meant to be a lion
I'll roar beyond a song
With every moment that I've got
True to who You are
You saw my heart
And made
Something out of nothing

I don't need my name in lights
I'm famous in my Father's eyes
Make no mistake
He knows my name
I'm not living for applause
I'm already so adored
It's all His stage
He knows my name oh, oh,
He knows my name oh, oh

He calls me chosen, free forgiven,
wanted, child of the King
His forever, held in treasure
I am loved
I don't need my name in lights
I'm famous in my Father's eyes
I don't need my name in lights
I'm famous in my Father's eyes
Make no mistake
He knows my name
I'm not living for applause
I'm already so adored
It's all His stage
He knows my name
He knows my name oh, oh
He knows my name

WITNESS

Say: This week you are invited to take on two challenges:

- 1) Look in the mirror each morning. Remember God loves you and offers you forgiveness and 'a fresh start' each day. He knows you by name and nothing you do or think that day will make him love you any more or any less.
- 2) Try and see everyone you meet this week through Jesus' eyes. If you meet someone who you struggle to get on with or who you don't think deserves God's love, pray that you will see them through God's eyes. Jesus came because he loves and wants to heal and save everyone!

PAUL

WELCOME

Discuss: How did you get on with the two challenges from last session's Witness section? (Looking in the mirror and remembering God's love/Trying to see others through God's eyes.)

Activity: Print off and cut out the table below. Ask the group to try and match the book or character to the author.

Miss Marple	Agatha Christie
<i>Macbeth</i>	William Shakespeare
The Famous Five	Enid Blyton
Harry Potter	J.K. Rowling
<i>The Cat in the Hat</i>	Dr Seuss
<i>Fantastic Mr Fox</i>	Roald Dahl
<i>The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe</i>	C.S. Lewis
<i>The Da Vinci Code</i>	Dan Brown

Say: Today we are going to look at how the New Testament apostle Paul met with Jesus and was given a new start. Much of the New Testament is made up of Paul's letters and writing.

Discuss: Can you name any of the books of the Bible that Paul wrote?

It is generally agreed that Paul wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon – though not necessarily in that order. Some also believe he wrote Hebrews, though this is unlikely.

Say: Paul's story was far from a simple one. Paul, who before his encounter with Jesus was called by his Jewish name Saul, was one of the biggest persecutors of Christians in the earliest days of the Church. But when Saul met with the risen Jesus, his life was transformed and he was given a new start! From then on, the Bible refers to him as Paul (his Roman name) to signify the change that had occurred in him.

WORD

Together read Acts 9:1-31 (it is quite long so you might want to break it up by stopping a couple of times to check everyone understands what is going on).

Something that might help the group understand today's reading: Explain that 'the Way' (v2) was a name given to the early-day followers of Jesus. Saul was a devout Jew who thought that the teaching of Jesus was blasphemous and so he needed to stop those of the Way who were following and preaching about him. He had a well-known reputation for arresting and persecuting any followers of Jesus that he found.

Acts 9:1-31 (NIV)

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'

⁵ 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked.

'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. ⁶ 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'

⁷ The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!'

'Yes, Lord,' he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.'

¹³ 'Lord,' Ananias answered, 'I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.'

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem



Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, 'Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?' ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

²³ After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, ²⁴ but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵ But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

²⁶ When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰ When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹ Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Discuss:

-  Can you remember the first time you were aware of and had an encounter with Jesus? (Some are dramatic encounters like Paul had, but for many it is just an awareness that he is there with you.)
-  Paul had done some pretty horrendous things (vv1,2). Do you think there is anything you can do that means that

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God would be unable or unwilling to forgive you and offer you 'a fresh start'?

- 🗣️ If you had been persecuted by Saul (Paul), could you have forgiven him and offered him 'a fresh start'? How easy or hard do you find it to forgive people who have hurt you?

Say: God is the same God who met with Saul and who spoke to Ananias about going to pray with Saul. God still speaks to people today.

Discuss: How would you feel if, like Ananias, you heard God asking you to go and pray with someone who had a reputation of persecuting people?

Say: Ananias was faithful and did as God had asked him, and because of this a miracle happened. Saul's sight was healed and he was baptised in the Holy Spirit. However, Ananias had to be brave and step out in faith!

Read this extract from *Naturally Supernatural* by Wendy Mann (or print it out for people to read themselves):

“ I will never forget the first time I prayed for someone and saw them healed. I was walking home from a lecture with a friend who started to complain about pain in her knee. I told my friend God loves to heal and asked if I could pray for her. She was happy for me to do so. It did not occur to me that I could have prayed for her right there on the street, so I invited her back to my house.

When we got home I simply copied what I had seen the Alpha course leader do a few weeks earlier. I put my hand on my friend's knee and said a very short simple prayer. When I asked how her knee was she told me that nothing had changed. I apologised that my prayer had not worked and she left to go home. I did not know I could have prayed more than once. I had only seen one person healed, and they had been healed instantly!

Later that day, there was a knock at the door. It was my friend with her housemate, and my friend was grinning from ear to ear. She told me that when she got home the pain in her knee suddenly got really intense and then it completely disappeared. God had healed her knee and it happened as a result of my prayer.

Say: Wendy was a student and had only been a Christian for a short time when she offered to pray for her friend's knee. God is a good God who wants only good things for his creation, including us. The Bible is full of stories of God's healing. Healing can take many forms: physical healing, emotional healing from painful thoughts and experiences, and spiritual healing.

Discuss:

- 🗣️ Are we surprised when God heals and saves today?
- 🗣️ Have any of you got any stories of God's healing?
- 🗣️ Do you or anyone you know need to experience God's healing?

Say: For more stories about how God is at work today, get a copy and read *Naturally Supernatural* by Wendy Mann.

WORSHIP

Activity: Give everyone an ice cube.

Say: As you hold the ice cube in your hands, allow it to melt as you spend some time reflecting on God.

- * In the quietness, study the uniqueness and complexity of the ice cube. Ask God to help you see him afresh. (Pause)
- * As you hold the ice in your hands, know that the God of all creation holds you carefully in his hands. (Pause)
- * Do you need to experience God's forgiveness? If God can forgive and use Saul, he can forgive and use you. Say sorry for anything you know is separating you from God. As you do, know God's love for you and that he will forgive, and his warmth will melt away any sin from your life. (Pause)

* Water refreshes, cleans and brings life. Thank God for a fresh start today and every day. (Pause)

Amen

(It's a good idea to have a towel or tissues available to dry hands and drips from the ice following this reflection.)

WITNESS

Say: Ananias heard God asking him to go and pray for Saul. Ananias was understandably fearful. This week try being aware of people or situations God wants you to pray for. It might not be for physical healing as it was for Wendy and her friend (but it might be). Just try to be aware of what God is saying to you, and if you sense God asking you to pray for a friend or family member, why not give it a go – and if you feel comfortable why not ask them if you can pray for them and if there is anything they want you to pray for.

Prayer:

God help us to:

- ▶ be OPEN to hear from you,
- ▶ be BRAVE to act when we do,
- ▶ be EXPECTANT that you are at work today and want only good things for us and all your creation,
- ▶ be THANKFUL when we experience you at work.

Amen.

TURNING AROUND

WELCOME

Watch this video of a car trying to turn around: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWZHfXP41TM

Say: Today's session is called 'Turning around'. When we become a Christian we turn from selfish and sinful 'life is all about me' living, to follow Jesus' example of sacrificial, selfless love. It says in the Bible that we become 'a new creation'. For some, like Zacchaeus and Paul, there is a dramatic change. But for others this is a process of transformation, perhaps over many years. What is important is that we are sorry for our sin, we trust in Jesus for our forgiveness and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

WORD

Ask someone to read 2 Corinthians 5:17:

“ ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone, the new is here!’
(NIV)

Question: Does anyone know how many doctrines (statements of belief) The Salvation Army has? (Answer: Eleven)

Read: Doctrines 7 and 8 (Large version to print off attached).

Doctrine 7: We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.

Doctrine 8: We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth has the witness in himself.

In other words: To be saved we must be truly sorry for doing wrong and trust in Jesus, then the Holy Spirit will make us new people. Salvation is a free gift from God. It is received when we believe in Jesus, and when we are saved we know it and show it!

(It might be a good idea to print these out, as well as the paraphrased version taken from the *To Serve* soldiership preparation material.)

Discuss: When we become Christians, we are told we are 'a new creation'.

Using the doctrines to help you, what do you think this means?

Is it easy to still think and live in our old ways?

Say: When we become followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and begins the process of transforming us to become more like Jesus and more into the person he created us to be. We are turned around – from making choices that make us more distant from God, to starting a journey of being guided by the Holy Spirit, making choices that bring us into the presence of God.

Read together: Galatians 5:16-26 (NCV) – The Spirit and Human Nature

¹⁶ So I tell you: Live by following the Spirit. Then you will not do what your sinful selves want. ¹⁷ Our sinful selves want what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is against our sinful selves. The two are against each other, so you cannot do just what you please. ¹⁸ But if the Spirit is leading you, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The wrong things the sinful self does are clear: being sexually unfaithful, not being pure, taking part in sexual sins, ²⁰ worshipping gods, doing witchcraft, hating, making trouble, being jealous, being angry, being selfish, making people angry with each other, causing divisions among people, ²¹ feeling envy, being drunk, having wild and wasteful parties, and doing other things like these. I warn you now as I warned you before: Those who do these things will not inherit God's kingdom. ²² But the Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. There is no law that says these things are wrong. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have

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crucified their own sinful selves. They have given up their old selfish feelings and the evil things they wanted to do. ²⁵ We get our new life from the Spirit, so we should follow the Spirit. ²⁶ We must not be proud or make trouble with each other or be jealous of each other.

Activity: Print a body outline (attached) for each member of the group. Cut out this body outline and using Galatians 5 to help, draw on and annotate one side with some of what we were like before we met Jesus. Now turn the outline over and draw on this side what we are like if we allow God to save us and his Spirit to work in us.

Say: If we look at verses 16-17, it tells us that we can't live both lives – they are incompatible with each other.

The Message paraphrase translates Galatians 5:16-17 like this:

“ **Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical [mutually incompatible], so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day.**

Discuss:

- 🗨️ What does 'mutually incompatible' mean? (You are either doing what your sinful self wants or you have 'turned around' to live life 'animated and motivated by God's Spirit').
- 🗨️ Does this mean we are meant to live boring, uneventful lives, restricted by a long list of do's and don'ts? (Hint: verse 16 – 'Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit.')

WORSHIP

Say: We are going to listen to 'This is amazing grace' by Phil Wickham. (A video version with lyrics can be found here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPQKj2Zptr0) As you listen, look at both sides of your body outlines. Thank God for his work and grace in your life. Ask God if there are any areas of your life you need his Spirit to transform. Ask his Holy Spirit to fill you afresh today.

Pray together.

WITNESS

Say: This week we have explored what it means to turn from a selfish life to a selfless life full of the fruit of the Spirit.

Discuss some practical ways that as individuals and/or as a group you can practise selfless love this week.

Some ideas:

- * Explore how can you live in a way that looks after God's creation rather than harming it.
 - ▶ Buying Fairtrade?
 - ▶ Eating less meat?
 - ▶ Using less plastic?
 - ▶ Recycling more?
 - ▶ Walking or cycling rather than driving?
- * Become a creator rather than a consumer.
 - ▶ Make cakes or cook meals for someone rather than just eating what others create.
 - ▶ Get creative to make some art, music, videos or share something on social media that brings joy rather than just consuming the creativity and ideas of others.
- * Spend some quality time with someone.

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- ▶ Visit some older relatives, neighbours or someone else you know is lonely. (Make sure you keep yourself safe by discussing your plans with an adult first!)
- ▶ Meet up with a friend. Encourage them about how awesome you think they are and/or practise 'joy' by simply having some fun.

DOCTRINE 7

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.

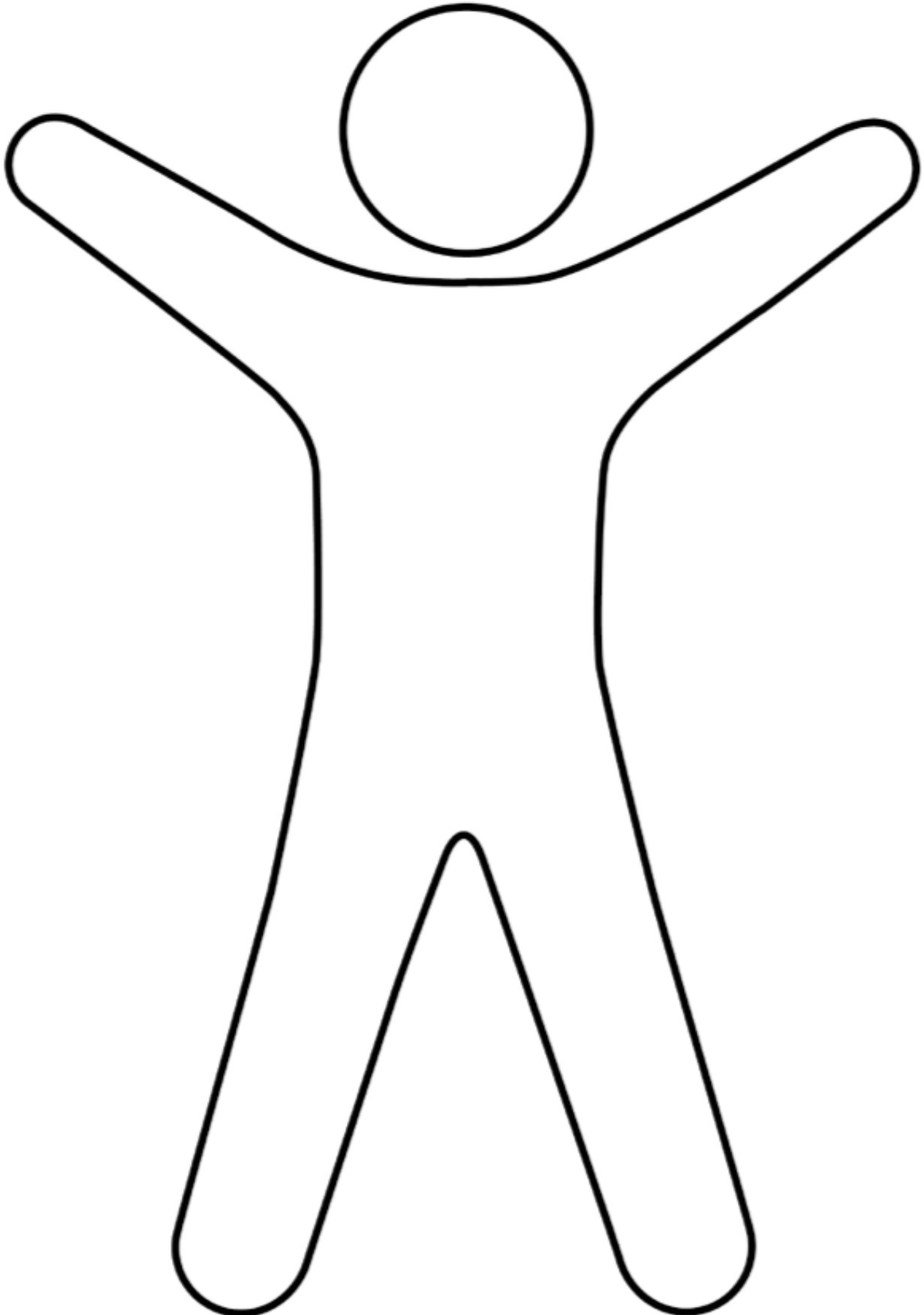
DOCTRINE 8

We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth has the witness in himself.

In other words: To be saved we must be truly sorry for doing wrong and trust in Jesus then the Holy Spirit will make us new people. Salvation is a free gift from God. It is received when we believe in Jesus and when we are saved we know it and show it!

“ The wrong things the sinful self does are clear: being sexually unfaithful, not being pure, taking part in sexual sins, worshipping gods, doing witchcraft, hating, making trouble, being jealous, being angry, being selfish, making people angry with each other, causing divisions among people, feeling envy, being drunk, having wild and wasteful parties, and doing other things like these. I warn you now as I warned you before: Those who do these things will not inherit God’s kingdom. But the Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Galatians 5:19-23 (NCV)



HOPE (IN HOPELESS WORLD)

WELCOME

Activity: What is going on in our world? Spend some time looking at newspapers (local and national) and/or some news websites (eg bbc.co.uk/news). Split the stories into two groups: those that give you hope and those that give you a sense of hopelessness for the world we are living in.

Discuss: What do you hope for?

WORD

Say: Today we are going to look at one verse from the book of Romans which speaks of the hope that God gives. Romans was written by Paul (who we learnt about a few sessions ago) to the people of Rome (the Romans!) before he planned to visit. In this letter, Paul emphasises that the Christian faith was for everyone – both Jews (people who followed the religious laws) and Gentiles (people who did not follow these religious customs). Jesus' message was offering hope and salvation to all of creation and everyone in it. You didn't have to 'do' anything – only put your trust and faith in Jesus.

Read together Romans 15:13

“ ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ (NIV)

Discuss:

- What situations in the world do you feel hopeless about?
- Today's verse talks of 'the God of hope'. Do you believe God can heal and bring hope to some of the situations you have discussed?
- Is your life filled with God's joy and peace? Why or why not?
- How does it feel to trust God about situations we might think are hopeless?
- If you are filled with joy and peace and are overflowing with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, what difference does that make to the people you come into contact with?
- If everyone in your church or cell group were filled with joy and peace, and overflowing with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, what difference would that make to your community?

Say: This is a great verse to learn and try to remember when you are feeling hopeless about a situation. God is at work in the world and is bigger than we could ever imagine.

Activity: Learning the verse.

Sitting in a circle, speak one word of the verse, then the person on your left says the next word etc. To start with you can have a large printed copy of the verse in the middle of the group to help them. Then take the words away and see if they can still do it. You can then mix things up by starting with a different person so that everyone has different words to say. You can also challenge the group to see how fast they can say it (under 10 seconds? under 7 seconds?).

WORSHIP

Activity: Praying for our world. (There is the option to use the song 'Whole world in his hands' by Tim Hughes during this worship period.)

Give out some play dough to everyone.

Say: Think about and mould the play dough you have to represent a situation in the world you feel hopeless about. As you do, invite the Holy Spirit to come and transform this situation. (Pause)

Say: Now reshape what you have made into the shape of a heart to signify God's love for you and the situations you have been praying about. (Pause)

Pray:

Heavenly Father,

Today we come to you to pray for hope. In a world full of senselessness, hope often seems elusive. But your word reminds us of the hope we have in you. Help us to remember that you have already overcome all evil.

May we keep our eyes fixed on the hope we have in you.

May we keep our ears open to hear your voice in the chaos that surrounds us.

May we keep our hands available to bring your love to those around us.

Amen.

WITNESS

Activity: Take the newspapers that you were looking at in the Welcome section.

Cut out 15cm squares of newspaper (or have some pre-cut to save time). Follow the video or written instructions to make origami hearts out of these newspaper squares.

www.origami-instructions.com/easy-origami-heart.html

Take these hearts home and put them somewhere as a reminder to continue to pray for God's hope and love to reign in the world.