

cell outlines
DECEMBER 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



KEEP FOLLOWING

Introduction

It's December... we made it to the end of the year! Happy Christmas and best wishes for a blessed New Year!

This final month's Cell group theme of 2018 is Keep Following. Let's take some time at the end of the year to encourage our young people to keep going, to keep following Jesus on into 2019 and beyond.

In this month we will draw on inspiration from the first disciples and how they continued following after Jesus had left earth; from Joshua and how he kept following into the Promised Land; and, as it's Christmas, from Mary and Joseph and how they willingly laid down everything to follow God's plan for their lives.

There isn't anything specifically Christmassy included in the first three sessions this month, so do feel free to include any of the following tried and tested Christmas icebreaker games, or use your own, to add a bit of festive fun!

Wrap Superstars

For this game you will need

- * Two rolls of wrapping paper
- * Two spools of present wrapping ribbon
- * Two rolls of Sellotape
- * Two identical sets of three different-sized boxes
- * Two sets of scissors

Divide the group into two teams who must race against each other to be the first team to wrap three presents. Give each team their supplies as above and give one minute for strategising before letting the teams begin their mad wrapping. The first team to wrap all three of their boxes completely with wrapping paper and ribbon are the winners.

What's in the sock?

Fill one thick sock with ten to fifteen objects that you use or see in the time around Christmas. Then tie a ribbon around the opening so nobody peeks. Give everyone a piece of paper and pen. Pass the socks around and ask them to write as many objects as they can recognise in the socks. The winner is the person who guesses the most things.

Christmas Carol Pictionary Relay

The aim of this game is for one team member to get their team to recognise and then sing a Christmas carol/song. The first team to have all team members complete the task wins.

Divide group into teams. Each team sends one person up to you to get the name of a Christmas carol. Then the person returns to their group and in the manner of Pictionary tries to get the group to guess the name of the carol by drawing only. As soon as the group knows the song, they must sing it as a group until you give the thumbs-up sign (10-20 seconds). Once they get the thumbs-up, the team sends a new person for another song. Play continues until one group completes all their songs.

Candy Cane Pass (relay race)

You will need four candy canes per team (have a few extras to allow for breakage). The first player holds four candy canes between the fingers of one hand, and then passes them down the line, teammate to teammate, without dropping them!

Christmas Quiz

Read this quiz aloud and ask people to jot down the points they are getting as you go along. Should prompt some fun and laughter! Have a prize ready for the person with the most points (and the least?!)

OVERVIEW

	Points
If you have a real Christmas tree	5
If you helped to decorate it	10
If you are wearing something red or something Christmassy	5
If you are a secret Santa this year	5
If you sat on Santa's knee this year	5
...and had your picture taken with him	5
...and you felt jolly at the time	5
If you have Christmas decorations outside your home	10
If you've started listening to Christmas music at home or in the car (at the shops doesn't count!)	5
If you have ever been in a Christmas Nativity	5
...and were actually one of the holy family, not just an angel or a shepherd	5
...or if you were a wise man	5
...or if you were a donkey, camel or sheep	10
If you have ever worn a Father Christmas costume	5
If you have finished your Christmas shopping	10
If you have already opened a gift	minus 5
If you bought something for yourself while Christmas shopping.....	minus 10
If you have written all your Christmas cards	5
If your birthday is in December	10
If you have ever roasted a turkey	5
...and stuffed it yourself	5
...and have worn it on your head like Mr Bean or Joey from Friends.....	25
If you have ever watched The Sound of Music or The Grinch Who Stole Christmas on Christmas Day	5
If you watched the Queen's Christmas Speech last year	5
If you are in a choir that sings Christmas songs	5
...and if they have any songs in a language other than English.....	5
...and if you will sing one of them for us now	10
If you wrap your own gifts	5
If you have ever eaten fruitcake	5
...a roasted chestnut.....	5
...Christmas pudding	5
...a Christmas goose	5
If you have kissed under the mistletoe this year	5
If you have kissed Santa Claus	5
If you have a Christmas secret that no one else in this room knows	5
If you wish it was January!.....	-5

Adapted from Jane Logan, 2003 www.loganstrategy.ca



OVERVIEW

The Blind Snowman

Give everyone a piece of paper and pencil and ask them to close their eyes. Tell them you want them to draw exactly what you ask them to, but with their eyes closed. Instruct them to draw the following on their paper:

- * Draw two circles, one large and a smaller one on top.
* Draw three buttons going vertically down the centre of the lower circle.
* Draw two eyes, a carrot nose, and a mouth in the top circle.
* Draw a hat on top of the top circle.
* Draw stick arms on both sides of the lower circle.
* Draw a broom in one stick hand.

Have them open their eyes and see what they just drew. You can award them points for things like the circles touching one another, the buttons and face being in the correct circles, etc.

For loads more games see www.worldofchristmas.net/christmas-party-games/index.html (from which a few of these games have been adapted).

Or for some printable Christmas icebreakers go here:

www.blessedbeyondadoubt.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Christmas-Party-Games-for-Teens1.pdf

KEEP FOLLOWING

“ Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world.’

Matthew 28:18 NCV

Jesus is leaving his disciples after three years of being together. And he asks them to get on and do his work. He asks them to keep following him. Jesus had a plan for them, a future prepared for them, and he left them with everything they would need to accomplish all that he asked of them. The same is true for us.

WELCOME

Print out the Who Are They? quiz sheet attached at the end of Session One. This quiz shows photos of six adults who were ‘child stars’. Ask the group if they can guess who each person is, and what they might be doing now. The answer sheet is also attached.

WORD

Read Matthew 28:16–20 and Acts 1: 1–11

“ The eleven followers went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. On the mountain they saw Jesus and worshipped him, but some of them did not believe it was really Jesus. Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age’

Matthew 28:16–20 NCV

“ Dear friend who loves God:

In my first letter I told you about Jesus’ life and teachings and how he returned to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions from the Holy Spirit. During the forty days after his crucifixion he appeared to the apostles from time to time, actually alive, and proved to them in many ways that it was really he himself they were seeing. And on these occasions, he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

In one of these meetings he told them not to leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them in fulfilment of the Father’s promise, a matter he had previously discussed with them. ‘John baptised you with water,’ he reminded them, ‘but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit in just a few days.’ And another time when he appeared to them, they asked him, ‘Lord, are you going to free Israel from Rome now and restore us as an independent nation?’ ‘The Father sets those dates,’ he replied, ‘and they are not for you to know. But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power to testify about me with great effect, to the people in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, about my death and resurrection.’

It was not long afterwards that he rose into the sky and disappeared into a cloud, leaving them staring after him. As they were straining their eyes for another glimpse, suddenly two white-robed men were standing there among them, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has gone away to heaven, and some day, just as he went, he will return!’

Acts 1: 1–11 TLB

SESSION
ONE

2. Goodbyes are never easy.

Just watch this!

▶ *Toy Story 3 - So Long Partner* www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq4zWbtgbN8

In Acts 1 Jesus is saying goodbye to his disciples. For three and a half years they've been together, through good times and bad. Jesus had changed their lives. They'd never be the same because of the time that they had spent with him. And now Jesus is leaving them. And he asks them to get on and do his work. Jesus had a plan for them, a future prepared for them, and he left them with everything they would need to accomplish all that he asked of them.

Discuss:

- ▶ How do you think the disciples felt, saying goodbye to Jesus?
- ▶ What were Jesus' last words to them?
- ▶ What do you think it was like for them needing to carry on after Jesus had left them on earth?

This short video clip may help the group members think through some of the disciples' reactions:

▶ *Risen - Ascension Scene (2mins 20)* www.youtube.com/watch?v=cF2IK-MAicY

Notes for your discussion:

from www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/may-web-only/carrying-on-after-jesus-is-gone-ascension.html

The first chapter of Acts records the last face-to-face conversation the disciples had with Jesus. Before the crucifixion, these same disciples had not understood Jesus' coming death and resurrection. Along the Emmaus road after his resurrection, he connected for them the dots between the Old Testament and his death (Luke 24:13-27). It makes sense then that these same disciples wanted a little more clarity about the next steps after his resurrection. It makes sense that at times we still do as well.

But Jesus didn't explain the details to them in Acts 1. Instead, in the next verses, he promised once again the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would equip them to be his witnesses to 'Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'. Instead of explaining the details of what happened next, Jesus used language that reminded them (and us) of his instructions a few days before on a mountain in Galilee, recorded in Matthew 28.

How long did the disciples stand staring after Jesus into the sky? I'm sure they wondered what they were to do next, confused by Jesus' cryptic response in Acts 1:7 to their question about when the Kingdom would come: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.'

These disciples had been utterly spiritually dependent on Jesus during his earthly life, and yet he expected them to take the gospel to the rest of the world. It makes sense that they stared up after him, I suspect with confusion and concern on their faces, needing angels to finally tell them to stop straining their necks to see him. How could they possibly do this monumental task to which he had commissioned them on their own? Surely, he was coming right back.

However, following the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, his disciples did go out and have a tremendous impact on the world! They took the gospel of Jesus to far-off places and also left us the legacy of the New Testament. They used the training Jesus gave them to impact and encourage us in our faith.

Joy, hope and mission are three consistent responses of the disciples to Christ's resurrection and ascension. In light of these two great events, we see the disciples transformed and mobilised to follow Jesus on his mission.

3. Read Acts 2.

¹⁴ When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force – no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

⁵⁻¹³ There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after

another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, 'Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?... They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!' Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: 'What's going on here?' Others joked, 'They're drunk on cheap wine.'

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: 'Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk – it's only nine o'clock in the morning...'

³⁸⁻³⁹ Peter said, 'Change your life. Turn to God and be baptised, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so your sins are forgiven. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is targeted to you and your children, but also to all who are far away – whomever, in fact, our Master God invites.'

⁴¹⁻⁴² That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptised and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

⁴³⁻⁴⁵ Everyone around was in awe – all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

(The Message)

After Jesus' crucifixion the disciples were left rudderless and disorientated, but his appearance to them and the intensely motivating events of Pentecost rallied their spirits. From this point they found the strength to push forward with keeping Jesus' message alive, carrying Christianity through the Near East and beyond. They may have started out as a modest group of everyday fisherman, local officials and artisans, but they went on to become the driving force, keeping alive a small religious movement which flowered into a world religion. (www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/disciples_1.shtml)

What do we know about what the disciples went on to do?

Split into small groups or pairs. Give each pair one or two of the disciples' names and ask them to research – in Scripture and online if possible – what the disciples went on to do. How did they live after Jesus had left them? How did they fulfil the Great Commission? Did they achieve all that Jesus had set out for them to do? Did they keep following?

Feed back together and create a large poster together of all the information that you have found out.

See any of the following web articles / YouTube video clips for more info.

▶ How Did The Apostles Die? (Watch the first two minutes only) www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltNLSiilq0c

* www.jesuscentral.com/ja/what-happened-to-jesus-disciples-faq.html

* billygraham.org/answer/what-happened-to-jesus-disciples-after-he-descended-into-heaven/

* raychoi.org/2012/06/01/what-happened-to-the-12-disciples-after-the-resurrection-and-ascension/

ACTION

Ask each person to name one way that they feel inspired by the disciples / Early Church to keep following Jesus!

PRAYER

This month's Cell notes are all about each one of us making a commitment to keep following, to keep running the race of Christian discipleship. Listen to these wise words from the writer of Hebrews:

“ We are surrounded by a great cloud of people whose lives tell us what faith means. So let us run the race that is before us and never give up. We should remove from our lives anything that would get in the way and the sin that so easily holds us back. Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect.

Hebrews 12:1-2 NCV

Watch a YouTube clip of the London Marathon finish line.

▶ Try this: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQhUvLmbHGU

▶ Or this: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQahzCG1Fuc

What was the one thing that kept those runners running for five or six hours?

It was the thought of crossing the finish line, of receiving the medal. It wasn't about getting there first, before everyone else. It was about keeping on going – walking or running – crossing that line. The exhilaration of the achievement. The success of not giving up.

Watch the clip again and ask the group to imagine they are running, as a disciple of Jesus, with many people cheering them on. Ask each person to say a silent prayer committing themselves to keep running, to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus and to keep following him.

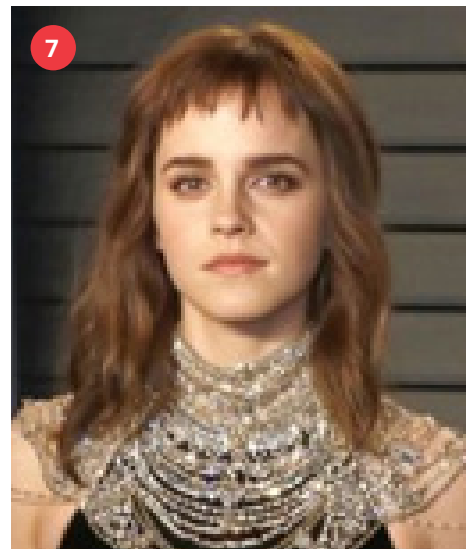
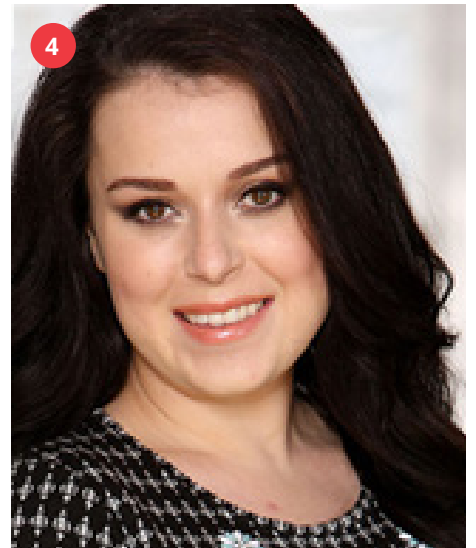
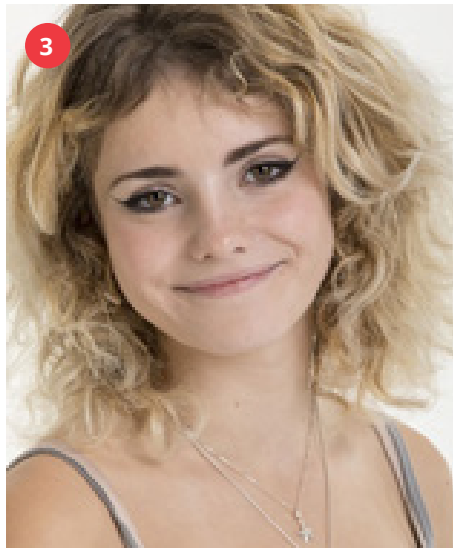
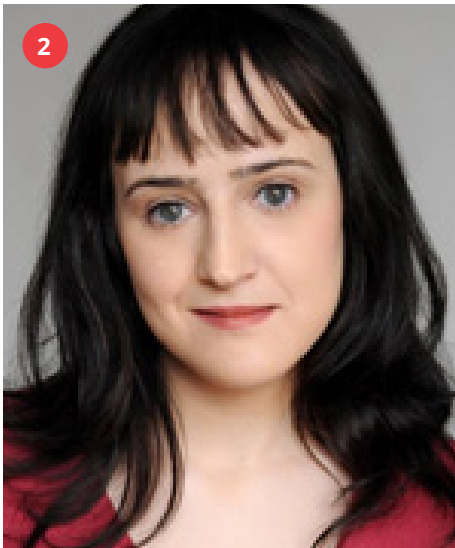
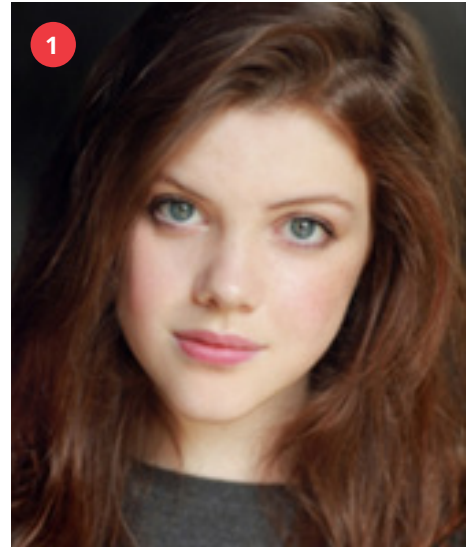
Give each other some loud cheers and words of encouragement to each other to finish the session!

WHO ARE THEY?

These people were all 'child stars'.

Can you guess who they are and why they were famous?

What do you think they are doing now?



WHO ARE THEY?

(Answer Sheet)



1) Georgie Henley

Rose to fame playing Lucy in *The Chronicles of Narnia* film trilogy. She received 8 A*s and 2 As at GCSE and A* and A grades in her A-levels. She was accepted into Cambridge University to study English in 2013. This February she will star in the world premiere of Philip Ridley's new monologues, *Angry*, at Southwark Playhouse.



2) Mara Wilson

Best-known roles include Natalie Hillard in *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993), Susan Walker in *Miracle on 34th Street* (1994), Matilda Wormwood in *Matilda* (1996). Mara retired from film acting in 2012 and has focused on writing scripts and plays, as well as publishing a memoir, *Where Am I Now?: True Stories of Girlhood and Accidental Fame* (2016).



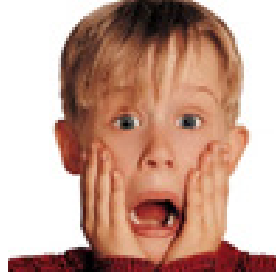
3) Ramona Marquez

Best known for playing Karen in the comedy series *Outnumbered*. She hasn't done much acting recently. The most recent acting credit was for the revival of *Outnumbered* in 2016.



4) Dani Harmer

Played Tracy Beaker in the hit TV show *The Story of Tracy Beaker* which ended in 2006. In 2010 she reprised the role of Tracy Beaker in *Tracy Beaker Returns*. She was on *Strictly Come Dancing*. She is now raising her daughter and often appears in pantomimes around Christmas.



5) Macaulay Culkin

Most famous for playing Kevin McAllister in *Home Alone*. At the age of 14 he retired from show business. He tours with his comedy rock band sometimes.



6) George Sampson

Won *Britain's Got Talent* in 2008 for his breakdancing. After his win he did some acting in shows such as *Emmerdale* and *Waterloo Road*. He seems to be living a quieter life at the moment but does still dance.



7) Emma Watson

Best known for her role as Hermione Granger in the *Harry Potter* film series. She has continued acting recently starring as Belle in the live-action *Beauty and the Beast*. She has also become an advocate for women's rights. In July 2014 she was appointed as a UN Women Goodwill ambassador. The day after she turned 25, Watson was ranked number 26 on the *TIME* 100 list of the world's most influential people. Recently she brought Marai Larasi, an activist on the issue of violence against women, as a guest to the 75th Golden Globe Awards in 2018.

JOSHUA – STRONG AND BRAVE

“ Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave.
Don't be afraid, because the LORD your God will be with you everywhere you go.

Joshua 1:9 *NCV*

Joshua was called to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. He had to keep following and trusting God to lead the people into the future that God had planned for them. How do we keep following Jesus, even when the future is unknown and uncertain? How do we remain strong and brave following Jesus in the 21st century?

WELCOME

Play a crazy game of 'Follow My Leader'!

WORD

1. Print out and cut up the attached two sheets of Disney characters. Ask the group to arrange them in order of strength. Then in order of braveness. What do you notice? Is being strong and being brave the same thing?

2. Read Joshua 1: 1–11 and Joshua 3 and use the following thoughts to expand on the Scripture with your group.

Moses had died and God had chosen Joshua to take over as leader of the Israelites. Joshua realised that an entire nation's fate was upon his shoulders. They were entering a land that had a strong military presence. If he messed up, thousands could lose their lives. So Joshua was worried. He was anxious. He was afraid of what might happen in the future.

And God knew it. So he said to Joshua, 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them.... Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' (Joshua 1:5,6,9 *NRSV*)

So Joshua put his faith in God's promises and was indeed strong and brave. Yes, the land was still full of giants. The land was still shrouded by the unknown. The land still contained impenetrable enemy walls. But the promise of God remained true. With God's help Joshua successfully led the Israelites into the Promised Land, and within six years he had conquered the entire land and divided it by lot among the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joshua understood what the children of Israel would eventually realise: that the God who promised the land would be faithful to fulfil that promise. It's the same today – no matter what happens in our lives tomorrow or the next day or next month, God promises that he will be with us. He will never leave us. As God was faithful then, he is faithful now.

In the last session we read Jesus' last words to his disciples – 'I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:20 *NRSV*). That means that we will never, ever be alone, no matter what happens. Therefore we can, with great confidence, trust our future to a God who has good plans for our lives.

(Adapted from: gracepresbyteriansermontextpcusa.blogspot.com/2014/02/trusting-unknown-future-to-known-god.html and www.christianitytoday.com/women-leaders/2016/september/trusting-god-when-future-is-unknown.html?start=2)

3. Discuss:

- 🗨 Describe someone you consider to be 'strong and brave' in following Jesus.
- 🗨 What does it mean to be 'strong' as we keep following Jesus in 21st-century culture?
- 🗨 What does it mean to be 'brave' as we keep following Jesus in 21st-century culture?
- 🗨 What battles might we have to face and win in our own lives in order to keep following?

- ☞ Moses had died, but Joshua was called to continue following. He had to continue on without Moses into a new future. What disappointments/hurts/failures may you need to leave behind as you seek to continue to follow Jesus forward into the future?
- ☞ How do we fully enter into the opportunities that are looming on the horizon?

ACTION

Memorise Joshua 1:9.

If you do an internet image search on this verse you will find a selection of different images that you could print off for your group.

Alternatively, you could use a graffiti design website or app, so that group members can design their own image and print or save on their phones or tablets.

Try www.streetartcreator.com for a simple graffiti design website.

Or Graffiti Me – an app which lets you graffiti over your own image!

PRAYER

1. Watch/sing the worship song 'Only The Brave' by Tim Hughes.

📺 Lyric video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uq8SBBxt3jo

The following YouTube video is of Tim Hughes talking about why he wrote the song and what it means to be brave: 'Only The Brave' by Tim Hughes – Pocketful of Faith (OFFICIAL ALBUM WALK THROUGH)

📺 www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kYwfn7RI44

Say the following Scripture out loud together as commitment to keep following:

I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect.

But Christ has taken hold of me.

So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize.

My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived.

But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead.

I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven.

This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done.

Philippians 3:12-14 CEV



GOOD PLANS

“ ‘I say this because I know what I am planning for you,’ says the Lord.
 ‘I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you.
 I will give you hope and a good future.’

Jeremiah 29:11 NCV

The future can be something that we worry about, but time and again we read in Scripture that God has got good plans for us and has everything under control! More often than not, God’s future plans can feature our dreams and desires, our passion and abilities. In the Bible it says that if we trust God, keep following him and put him first in everything we do, he will give us the desires of our heart. There is a reason for you being alive and it’s all to do with what God has got lined up for your life!

WELCOME

1. Watch/sing along – ‘A Million Dreams’ from *The Greatest Showman*

▶ Movie clip here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDjTQNOvyTg (Watch from 3m mins 15)

▶ Lyric video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rxgAh1bnHU

▶ Karaoke version here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRgjl8tnGu8

WORD

1. Ask everyone to describe themselves in their biggest dream, eg walking out on to the football pitch at Old Trafford to play for Man Utd! No restrictions – dream big!

2. Split the room into four ‘stations’. Move to each station in the room to read the following four Scriptures. At each station have the Scripture written out on a large piece of paper for everyone to see. You could also jot down notes from your discussion on this piece of paper if applicable. You only need to spend five minutes at each station. After your discussion at each station give each group member a wooden clothes peg and ask them to write the Scripture reference on it with a Sharpie or other felt-tip pen, then take it with them to the next station. (If you have two group leaders you could split into two smaller groups for this rotation.)

Station one: Read Isaiah 58:11

“ The Lord will always guide you and provide good things...
 He will make you healthy.
 You will be like a garden that has plenty of water
 or like a stream that never runs dry.

Isaiah 58:11 (CEV)

Discuss: What does this verse make you think your future will be like if you keep following Jesus – especially the line ‘You will be like a garden that has plenty of water or like a stream that never runs dry’?

Station two: Read Jeremiah 29:11

“ ‘I say this because I know what I am planning for you,’ says the Lord.
 ‘I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you.
 I will give you hope and a good future.’

Jeremiah 29:11 (NCV)

▶ Watch the following short video clip on YouTube: Search ‘Plans’ (Jeremiah 29:11) or use this link www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lb7X_H86AA

Discuss: God spoke these words through the prophet Jeremiah to the Jews after they had been captured and taken as slaves to Babylon. What do you think these words would have meant to people in this situation?

God has a plan for your life! He knew you and loved you even before you were born! Amazing! Before you took even one breath, every day, every step and every circumstance in your plan was recorded. There is a reason for you being alive and it's all to do with what God has got lined up for your life.

Station three: Read Psalm 37:3-5

“ Trust in the Lord and do good; live in the land and be safe.
 Seek your happiness in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desire.
 Give yourself to the Lord; trust in him, and he will help you;

Psalm 37:3-5 (GNT)

In *The Message* it says: 'Open up before God, keep nothing back.'

Discuss: What's your heart's desire? You probably have dreams and desires, things you really enjoy doing, stuff you feel passionate about. You may already know exactly where you want to be in ten years' time and already have a good idea of how to get there. Has it occurred to you that it's possible that God was the one who put those dreams and desires in your heart in the first place? In the Bible verses above it says that if we trust God, keep following him and put him first in everything we do, he will give us the desires of our heart! This doesn't mean that we will all become millionaires, pop stars, famous actors, or professional sports players (who hasn't had a dream like this at least once in their life?!). But it does mean that God's plan for you includes stuff you enjoy, are good at and feel fulfilled getting involved in.

Station four: Read 1 Peter 4:10 (CEV)

“ Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well.

1 Peter 4:10 CEV

Discuss: We are all different, and, in line with God's plan for our lives, he has given each of us different talents and abilities. You may know already the main thing that you excel at and enjoy doing. (Ask group members to share if appropriate.) But if you don't, that's OK. Now is the time to experience lots of different things, to see which ones excite you and make you happy. Discover what you feel passionate about or where you can make a difference. You see, God has given us gifts and abilities so we can serve others, as well as give ourselves back to him. When we are talking about discovering God's plan for our life and following him into the future, the unique gifts and abilities he has given us form an essential part of the plan.

ACTION

1. Give each group member a print-out of the attached sheets with six pieces of 'bunting' and some string (you could use coloured paper). Ask each person to cut out their bunting, then to reflect on the statement/question and to note down their thoughts.

After they have done this they can use their wooden clothes pegs to attach their bunting triangles to the string (you may need to give them a couple more pegs each). Encourage them to hang their bunting somewhere at home to remind them about their future dreams, their commitment to God and all the good plans that God has got for them!

2. Encourage your group members to meet up with an older Christian they trust to discuss what you have written on their bunting. Tell them to share their passions, dreams for the future, as well as any worries they may have. Encourage group members to listen carefully to any advice they are given.

SESSION
THREE**PRAYER**

1. If group members are happy to display their bunting, you could lay them out on the floor, or hang them, and encourage all group members to walk around, read the bunting and pray quietly for the person.

2. Pray together:

'God, please fill my heart with the same dreams and desires for my life as you have for me and continue to guide me so that they come true in just the way that you have planned! Amen.'

3. Use either or both of the following two songs in your time of prayer together.

▶ 'My Future Decided' – Hillsong United www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha_NBKvsgI8

**'You hold the future in your hands
You know my dreams and you have a plan
And as you light my way, I'll follow you.'**

▶ 'Every Little Thing' – Hillsong Young & Free www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9LSain-Bk0

**'Your favour waits within the future
My dreams are small compared to yours
Why should I worry about
Tomorrow when I know
That all I gotta do is trust you, Lord.'**

My abilities and talents:

The things I feel passionate about:

What God has already said to me about my future:

How I see the gifts and abilities that God has given me being used in his plan for my life:

How does what I would like to do in the future impact what I do today?

Do I need to make any changes in my life to ensure that I stay on track with God and keep following?

INTO THE FUTURE

“ ‘Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.’

Corrie Ten Boom

What God asked Mary and Joseph to do changed their lives for ever. They kept following God into an unknown future and submitted to his plan for their lives. Their trust in God and unwavering steps on their journey with him can inspire us as we commit to keep following Jesus into 2019.

WELCOME

Choose a Christmassy game to begin your time together!

WORD

Prepare each of your group members a personally written Christmas card with a picture of Mary and Joseph on the front. Along with a Christmas greeting, write the words of Corrie Ten Boom: ‘Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.’ Give out the cards and ask group members to open them.

Direct them to look at the picture on the front of the card. Explain to the group that rather than give them a Christmas card with snowmen or robins or Santa Claus etc, you have specifically chosen a picture of Mary and Joseph. Not only is this because, of course, we believe that this is real meaning of Christmas, but also because Mary and Joseph have got something to offer to our Cell group theme this month.

Ask the group to discuss what they think this could be.

Use the following thoughts in your discussion:

What God asked Mary and Joseph to do changed their lives for ever. Their trust in God and unwavering steps on their journey with him can inspire us. They kept following God into an unknown future and submitted to his plan for their lives, even though they didn’t really have a clue what was going on!

One day the angel Gabriel shows up and says in effect, ‘Mary, God has this fantastic plan. He’s going to come to Earth so people will know what God’s like. He’s going to use your body to enter the human family. You are going to be the mother of God’s Son.’ Many girls would have answered, ‘Can’t you get somebody else? I’ve already got my plans and this whole thing really doesn’t fit in. I’ve really got to think of what’s best for me.’ In that brief moment in the angel’s presence, perhaps all of Mary’s dreams for the future flashed before her mind, and she could see every one of them shattered. But instead, Mary answered, ‘I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!’

“ **What is it that God wants from us? Total comprehension about the future before we will trust him? No. That’s impossible. And besides, it’s better that we don’t know what the future holds. Does he want us to have perfect knowledge of the Bible? No. If that were the case, then no one would ever trust him. Do we have to be spiritually advanced to the point of sainthood? Thank God, the answer is no. Very few of us would meet that qualification. What does God want from us? The same thing he wanted from Mary. Simple faith that he will keep his word in unlikely and unexpected ways.**

www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/mary-believing-the-impossible

Play some Christmassy music and provide lots of Christmas cards or pictures of the Christmas story.

Ask group members to cut out or draw pictures and create one large collage. As you do so discuss how Mary and Joseph inspire you to keep following. Write down your thoughts and prayers on your collage.

Write the words of Corrie Ten Boom on your collage: *‘Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.’*

PRAYER

Ask the group to reflect on the following question:

Have you at some point in your life given your future and all its dreams to God to handle as he pleases? Do you need to reconfirm that decision?

Read the following lyrics of this traditional Christmas hymn:

**What can I give him,
 Poor as I am?
 If I were a shepherd,
 I would bring a lamb;
 If I were a wise man,
 I would do my part;
 Yet what I can I give him —
 Give my heart.**

(NB Make sure you get the penultimate line right; it's a statement, not a question!)

Play some reflective music and ask people to prayerfully consider what they can offer of themselves back to Jesus this Christmas. (Try Matt Redman's 'How Far', a Christmassy song that includes the lyrics 'Our hearts will always follow you...')

Ask them to write down their 'offering' on a Christmas gift tag and fold it. Have an offering receptacle ready, eg a box or a basket, and ask people to place their gift tag in it as a symbol of their giving to God. (Assure your group members that no one else will read their notes).

Spend some time talking to God (privately, in pairs, or as a whole group) and recommitting your life to him. Offer him all your dreams, desires and abilities, and agree to follow wherever he leads. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with strength, courage and passion to keep following and to fulfil the great things that God has in store for you. Tell him how much you want to make a difference for him in this world. Thank him for his good plans for your life.

Two upbeat praise songs you could use to finish your time of prayer together:

🎵 Hillsong Young & Free – 'This Is Living Now'

Begins with the lyrics...

**'Waking up knowing there's a reason
 All my dreams come alive
 Life is for living with you
 I've made my decision'**

🎵 Hillsong – 'He's Real'

Includes the lyrics...

**'I got dreams turn them into plans
 Too big for human hands
 Trust him and see
 He's got all the pow'r you need'**