



cell outlines
OCTOBER 2020

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](https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources)

INTRODUCTION

On 18 October, people across The Salvation Army will be coming together to mark Anti-Human Trafficking Day. These Cell notes should enable young people to add their own voice and take action on this issue. But they'll also help us consider the wider theme of justice.

Across the month, we'll be thinking about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in terms of social change and justice – historical elements of The Salvation Army's tradition we are part of. We'll consider our part not just as individuals but as members of communities, neighbourhoods, cities and the wider world. We'll aim to move beyond isolated actions of justice to an integrated, 'whole-life' approach that is central to our faith.

We'll be using fictional superheroes as a hook into the concepts of fighting against evil and bringing about social justice. While superheroes have fantastical special powers, what they have in common is the ability to see an injustice and use their powers to correct it.

Your cell might not be so much into superhero stories. So feel free to adapt the material to include whichever contemporary people or characters will help them engage with the topic.

JUSTICE IS IN OUR DNA

WELCOME

Design a Superhero

Randomly assign each person another member of the group. Explain that they'll have five minutes to create a superhero persona for the person they've been allocated, including a superhero name, powers and costume. This website may help in picking random superpowers and costume:

https://www.springhole.net/writing_roleplaying_randomators/superpowers.htm

https://www.springhole.net/writing_roleplaying_randomators/superherocostume.htm

After five minutes, give everyone 30 seconds to introduce their peer and reveal their superhero name, power(s) and costume.

Discuss which of the superheroes they created were the best and then ask: what would you say every superhero has in common?

Explain that superheroes ultimately fight evil and bring about justice. There are no superheroes who simply go around encouraging people, or who sing songs, or who lead small groups to teach citizens how to interpret the law. They just see an injustice and use their powers to correct it. They usually have special abilities and/or tools – and they also have flaws and weaknesses. Put simply, they're a bit like us.

The 2018 movie *Black Panther* tells the story of the fictional African nation Wakanda, which has for many years hidden itself – along with its vast knowledge and resources – from the outside world. Near the close of the movie, King T'Challa, the leader of the nation, says: 'Wakanda will no longer watch from the shadows. We cannot. We must not. We will work to be an example of how we as brothers and sisters of this Earth should treat each other.'

As Christians we can be tempted to think the things God wants us to do most are to worship, read our Bibles and tell others about him. But the truth is, our faith should also call us to a radical pursuit of justice.

William Booth understood this, and it's what called him to birth The Salvation Army. Like the fictional King T'Challa, he decided to be an example of how brothers and sisters of the Earth should treat each other.

WORD

Invite members of your group to read Micah 6:1-8 aloud.

Say: Micah was an Old Testament prophet. In this passage the Lord complains that the Israelites – his people – have rejected and rebelled against him. Verses 1-2 paint a picture of a court of law, with Israel on trial before God, in the presence of some rock-solid witnesses (the mountains, hills and strong foundations of the Earth).

God asks them what wrong he has done, before reminding them of three specific examples as evidence that he has only ever shown them goodness and loyalty:

1. He saved them from slavery in Egypt and gave them godly leaders (v4).
2. He refused to let Balaam curse them as Balak wanted, and instead blessed them (v5a).
3. He brought them into the land he'd promised: the journey from Shittim to Gilgal refers to the Israelites crossing the River Jordan (v5b).

Discuss the following questions:

- 💬 Why do you think the Israelites had rejected and rebelled against God?
- 💬 How do you think God might have felt by Israel's treatment of him, when he had only been good and loyal to them?
- 💬 What ways can you think of that God has been good or loyal to you, your family or your church?

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Say: In verses 6 and 7, Micah asks Israel rhetorical questions about what he should bring with him when he goes before the Lord, using exaggeration to make the point that worship and sacrifices, no matter how huge, will not please God.

Discuss the following question:

- Do you think the passage is saying that worship and sacrifice are no longer important; or is it something else?

Say: Micah concludes:

**‘He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.’ (v8)**

Discuss the following questions:

- Are you surprised that what God wants is not for Israel to be more passionate, intimate worshippers, but to be more active pursuers of justice? What does it tell you about the things God most values?
- Think about the place where you spend most of your time outside of home – your school, college, workplace, neighbourhood – and discuss which ways you might ‘act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God’ in that place.
- Thinking about fictional superheroes, what’s different about the way they fight injustices compared to how you might do it?
- If you were a superhero, what challenges might your special powers bring?

WORSHIP

The superhero personas we created in our opening game were fictional and possibly comical. But now you’re going to create more realistic superhero personas for each other. If we follow Christ, God lives in us through his Holy Spirit, and he equips us with gifts and abilities – including supernatural ones – that can help build his Kingdom.

Forget the names and costumes this time. We’re going to spend some time thinking of what gifts, strengths and abilities we can see in each other.

One way to do this is to use the Zoom white board function to write encouragements for one person at a time. Name one person and then over the next minute everyone else should write what gifts they see in that person. People might feel more relaxed if you play some music in the background as you do this. Remember to save each page of encouragements before you move on to the next person.

Alternatively, play an instrumental track and give everyone time to note down something positive about each person. Then name one person at a time and everyone shares their encouragement for that person out loud. It would be good to record what you are saying, though, so people can remember afterwards and continue to be encouraged.

Ask everyone to think of some difficulty that they or someone they know is going through right now, something that feels beyond their control. Then play some calm music while you read Psalm 140 slowly, asking everyone to picture that difficulty as they hear the words.

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Return to Micah 6:8. Discuss how you think the three things Micah lists are related. Are they three separate requirements? Or do they share something in common?

One way of interpreting the three things that God requires of us is that they are all related to justice:

- * Act justly – we are required to take action in the name of justice.
- * Love mercy – we must not pursue justice at all costs, but must always have an underlying mindset of empathy and compassion as we act.

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- * Walk humbly with your God – we must guard ourselves from becoming self-righteous, remembering that while we are called to use spiritual discernment, we are not the judge; that’s Jesus’ role.

It may be that you find one of these things most difficult:

- * Taking action: you find it so uncomfortable to challenge unjust behaviour – someone always being the butt of everyone’s jokes, sexist or racist behaviours, someone dropping litter – that you fail to act.
- * Loving mercy: you pursue truth, fairness and justice so passionately that you fail to treat people with kindness.
- * Walking humbly: you become so good at spotting others’ failings and prejudices that you stop seeing your own.

Discuss which of the three you find most difficult, and decide on one small thing you can commit to doing differently this week to fulfil God’s requirement of you.

(If your group is struggling, you may suggest:

Taking action: commit to stand up for that friend who’s always the butt of everyone’s jokes, to challenge those who drop litter, or to fill in one online petition every day.

Loving mercy: commit to challenge friends’ behaviour privately instead of publicly, or to treat with dignity and kindness those you disagree with on social media.

Walking humbly: commit to memorising Philipppians 2:5-8, or identify one thing you have in common with someone you find yourself being judgmental about.)

Reminder: *TrueStory*

If you forgot to order copies of *TrueStory* as suggested in last month’s material, there’s still time to do so. Having this resource is not essential for these cell outlines, but will help you take action and discover additional useful resources.

Copies can still be ordered by emailing youthchildren@salvationarmy.org.uk

GOOD LIVING

WELCOME

Explain to the group that you'll read out a series of two choices. In each case each person must pick which they would rather have.

Would you rather...

1. ...have infinite fizzy drinks but never be able to eat chocolate again, or infinite chocolate but never have fizzy drinks again?
2. ...be stuck on a desert island for a year with someone who talked non-stop, or be stuck there completely by yourself?
3. ...always be an hour early, or 20 minutes late?
4. ...have to use a physical map when you needed to get anywhere, or have GPS that's extremely weak and slow?
5. ...look normal but have no special abilities, or be able to shapeshift to look like anyone else – BUT your 'true' self has blue skin and bright yellow eyes?

Explain that the last scenario is one that the mutant Mystique actually faces in the movies and comics of the X-Men. In this fictional world, individuals with genetic mutations have special abilities. Mystique can shapeshift (take on the form of another person) and does this often because her true form with blue skin and yellow eyes causes humans to treat her with suspicion, fear or even disgust.

(At this point, you may choose to show a short clip of Mystique's abilities in action. There are a few available on YouTube, eg <https://youtu.be/NpWtlxzLfJA> (5mins 55sec), or you can type 'Mystique X-men' into a search engine and show a picture.)

Partly as a result of this, Mystique continually battles with her own identity, and her loyalty can change in a heartbeat. She has the potential to do the right thing and use her powers to help many, but more often than not she chooses to act in a way that benefits her own interests.

Some Christians only seem to get fired up about issues that serve their own interests. 'Justice' may be about getting their own way or defending their own views. But Jesus modelled a kind of justice that sought to engage with, defend and support others.

One group of people whom Jesus would have got involved in seeking justice for is those who are experiencing the evils of human trafficking and modern slavery. In this session we consider what we can do to align ourselves with the issue. We encourage you to get involved in our challenge, which will help you get ready for Anti-Human Trafficking Day on 18 October.

WORD

As a group, read Luke 7:36-39 (NLT)

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. ³⁷ When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. ³⁸ Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ Can you think of a time when you were afraid to be around someone with a reputation for being bad, immoral or sinful? Was that fear justified?
- 🗨️ If you are honest, has your desire to be holy, sinless or a 'good Christian' led you to label or exclude others? What message do you think that has sent about who you are, and about who Jesus is?
- 🗨️ We're not told why the woman had been labelled as 'immoral'. Do you think it was fair to label her? Do you think it's ever fair to label people?

Say:

We may find ourselves labelling people who have been trafficked, perhaps like this:

- * She must have been stupid to believe she would have earned that much working in another country.
- * Would he really have left his family behind if he had nothing to hide?
- * Surely no self-respecting woman would let herself be forced into sex work.

But in reality, people who find themselves trafficked are real people, just like you and me, who simply have fallen on tough times and are desperate for a better life for themselves and their families. Traffickers use this knowledge against them by offering them hopes of a better life, only to trick them when it's too late and use threats of violence to keep them enslaved.

As a group, continue reading the rest of the story: Luke 7:40-47 (NLT)

⁴⁰ Then Jesus answered his thoughts. "Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you."

"Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied.

⁴¹ Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people – 500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. ⁴² But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, cancelling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?"

⁴³ Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the larger debt."

"That's right," Jesus said. ⁴⁴ Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

⁴⁷ "I tell you, her sins – and they are many – have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love."

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹ The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?"

⁵⁰ And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Say:

- * First off, there's evidence that Jesus might have had a superpower of his own: verse 40 says that 'Jesus answered his (as in, Simon's) thoughts'.
- * The Pharisees saw their rejection of sin and sinful people as a sign of how much they loved God. But Jesus saw it as a sign of how little they loved God. The flip side to religious people's insistence that they must stay pure by excluding others is that they close themselves off from the people and places that Jesus loves to be around.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ What do you think about the story Jesus told? Was it effective?
- 🗨️ How do you think Simon and the woman felt hearing Jesus' words?
- 🗨️ Although the story is not primarily about justice, how might Jesus have brought about justice for the woman in the story? It might be helpful to consider these biblical descriptions of justice:

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

Isaiah 1:17

'This is what the Lord Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another."'

Zechariah 7:9

'God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed.'

Ecclesiastes 3:17

WORSHIP

1. Use the whiteboard function of Zoom to list as many different emotions that the woman in the story might have felt during her encounter with the Pharisees and with Jesus.

Here are a few suggestions:

- * Bold (for gatecrashing a meal she wasn't invited to)
- * Fearful (of what might happen to her)
- * Desperate (because she had few or no friends)
- * Sorrowful (for her sins)
- * Accepted (because of Jesus' response to her)
- * Humble (from washing Jesus' feet, a servant's job)

An emotion she undoubtedly would have felt was vulnerable – she was revealing her most authentic self in public.

One of the most vulnerable things we can do is to confess our sins to other people. This might sound extremely scary but the Bible encourages us to do it (eg James 5:16). You might not wish to hold a time of group confession, but you could play some music and ask people to go to the website <http://confesstojesus.com> and share something there. The website doesn't store your details, but the act of confessing and being vulnerable might be helpful to your group.

2. People who have been trafficked and then rescued from a life of modern slavery often will be experiencing multiple mixed emotions, much like the woman in the story.

If your group has copies of the True Story resource, turn to the card labelled 'HOPELESS - #02 STORY – Lydia, part 1' and ask someone to read it out:

'Things have been tough for ages. Dad died when I was really young. Me, my mum and my sisters never had enough money. I had to work in the market instead of going to school but that wasn't enough. When Mum got ill and had to stay in hospital I felt hopeless.

A man said he could get me well-paid work in Dubai looking after two children. It meant leaving my sisters behind in Uganda, but I was excited that I'd finally be able to provide for them.

When I arrived, it was not what I expected at all. I'd been tricked.

I had five children to look after and was expected to do all the housework, even though I was still a child myself. Hungry and exhausted after my 12-hour days, I'd eat the family's leftovers and fall asleep on the floor of the playroom.

#truestory #trapped #sotired #afraid'

Discuss how you would feel if you found yourself in Lydia's (true) situation.

Spend some time looking through the different action cards in the resource and deciding if there is one you can start together, right now.

WITNESS

Explain that next week the session will be based around Anti-Trafficking Day. But rather than just wait till then, this week's challenge is a build up to that event. We want to challenge you to get involved now, as it will help prepare you for next week as well as create more of an impact against trafficking.

Say: one of the spaces that we use to share who we are is social media. Ask yourself this question: what do my social media accounts communicate to the world about who I am and what I value?

We want to challenge you to use your social media accounts every day this week to show that you are committed to social justice, by raising awareness around the issue of human trafficking and modern slavery instead of posting what you would normally post this week.

There are images, gifs and relevant statistics available at salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery and salvationarmy.org.uk/truestory, as well as information contained within the True Story pack.

The Youth and Children's Ministries team would love to share the most creative posts across our channels too. So make sure you tag us in your posts (@youthchildrensa).

GOOD WORKS

WELCOME

Share the following link with everyone and ask them to complete the quiz: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50487054>

- * What were your results? How do you compare with the rest of the UK? Who were the most and least moral?
- * Were there any particular questions in the quiz that made you wonder why they were moral issues?

Explain that in the Marvel cinematic universe, the leader of the Avengers is Captain America. Other members of the team are stronger, better fighters, better at coming up with ideas, but his honesty, loyalty and dependability make him the only one who can lead this team of complex personalities.

Dr Erskine, the scientist who created the serum that transforms the weak, sickly Steve Rogers into Captain America, tells him: 'This is why you were chosen: because the strong man who has known power all his life may lose respect for that power, but a weak man knows the value of strength, and knows... compassion.'

Captain America is the team's moral compass, and it is no irony that as someone who stands for freedom and justice, his primary weapon is actually not a weapon at all, but a shield.

Likewise, as pursuers of God's justice, we protect, defend and stand up for the vulnerable, oppressed, lost and lonely.

WORD

Say: The Bible tells us that God the Father has 'entrusted all judgment to the Son' (John 5:22), and that when the time comes to judge the world, he will do so on the basis of people's compassion for others (Matthew 25:31-46).

The following Bible story gives us an insight into the kind of judge that Jesus Christ will be. You can almost imagine it set in a courtroom, with the Prosecution bringing the Accused before the Judge for sentencing. Read it with this image of Christ as Judge in mind.

As a group, read John 8:1-11 (NLT)

¹ Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ² but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³ As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

⁴ "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"

⁶ They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷ They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" ⁸ Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹ When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"

¹¹ "No, Lord," she said.

And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Explain that while at first glance Jesus seems pretty passive in this story, if we look deeper, we find examples of Jesus taking purposeful action throughout the story.

* Using the whiteboard function of Zoom, create a list of as many things as you can that Jesus does purposefully in the story. You could make it more interesting by insisting that everyone draws their idea instead of using words. The following is one list of suggestions, but you may come up with other ideas:

- ▶ He returned to the Mount of Olives.
- ▶ He went back to the Temple early in the morning.
- ▶ He taught the crowds.
- ▶ He stooped down and wrote in the dust.
- ▶ He ignored the Pharisees' requests.
- ▶ He stood up.
- ▶ He gave a simple instruction that was impossible to follow.
- ▶ He stayed with the woman.
- ▶ He spoke to the woman and reassured her.
- ▶ He challenged the woman.

Say: Let's look at four kinds of actions that Jesus (the Judge of the universe) takes in the passage, and consider how we can apply them to our actions as Christians who want justice in the area of human trafficking.

1. He knew his Father's purposes:

Jesus understood that his ministry had a physical, emotional and spiritual cost. So it's important that we notice that this story starts with him going to the Mount of Olives. The garden of Gethsemane, in which Jesus would pray before being arrested and crucified, was there. It was a special place for him to connect with his Father to reflect and recharge – and it refreshed him so clearly that he was back in the Temple early the next morning.

When we are tired, hungry, lonely, overwhelmed, stressed or ill, we tend to find it much harder to make good decisions. What do you already have in your life that will give you space to reflect and recharge? What opportunities for this could you grasp?

If as Christians we are to model Christ, how can we model this rhythm of reflecting and recharging so we have God's purposes at the forefront of our minds as we fight for justice in the area of human trafficking?

2. He calls out the powerful:

John tells us that when the Pharisees ask Jesus for his opinion, he doesn't respond directly but instead stoops down and starts writing with his finger in the dust. Why?

One theory suggests that Jesus had a particular verse from the book of Jeremiah in mind:

**Lord, you are the hope of Israel;
all who forsake you will be put to shame.
Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust
because they have forsaken the Lord,
the spring of living water.**

Jeremiah 17:13

If the theory is right, then the men who accused the woman would have seen Jesus writing their own names in the dust and, familiar with the Scripture that Jesus was embodying, would have understood Jesus' implication that they had abandoned God.

* What do you think of this theory? How does it change your interpretation of what's going on in the story? Does it change your perception of Jesus?

In our fight against human trafficking, there are people whose actions we must call out: traffickers themselves; governments, who have the power to enforce laws to prevent and deter traffickers; businesses, who are legally

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obligated to tell people what they are doing to make sure they and their suppliers don't use slave labour; and ourselves, who can choose which businesses we give our money to.

* Which of those groups – traffickers, governments, businesses and ourselves – do you think it's most important we call out when it comes to their actions on trafficking? Which group do you think it's easiest to influence?

3. He protects the vulnerable:

It's easy to read this passage as a battle of intelligence or wills between the religious men and Jesus, and forget entirely that for those few tense minutes the woman would literally have been fearing for her life, expecting to be stoned to death at any moment. And yet Jesus is there throughout, defending her and showing compassion.

* Can you suggest different ways that Jesus protected the woman in the story? Which do you think was most effective?

* Superhero stories tell us that the only effective way to protect the vulnerable is to use force. However, Jesus protected the woman by showing her compassion. First, he made her accusers realise they had no right to condemn her. Then he stated that he didn't condemn her either. Finally he loved her enough to challenge her to make a break from her past.

* Can you think of any historical or recent examples of how the Church has chosen to condemn, like the Pharisees, rather than protect the vulnerable, as Jesus does? How might we be proactive in protecting the vulnerable?

WORSHIP

Read Psalm 18:1-6 and 18:16-19, twice. Invite one person to read it, or alternate who reads each verse.

* The first time you read it through, try to apply the words to your life right now. Think of actual things you are going through that match the imagery in the psalm.

* The second time you read it, imagine a survivor of trafficking speaking out the psalm in gratitude for the people who got involved in fighting for justice. Imagine yourself being described as a rock, shield, place of safety, etc.

When we fight for justice as Christians we are representing Christ, the perfect, compassionate judge and defender of the vulnerable. We aspire to be like him. How did it feel to hear those words the second time and associate words describing God with yourself? Did any stand out for you in particular as things you want to aspire to be like?

* If you have more time, play the song 'Made me glad' by Hillsong and ask your group to reflect on the words of the Psalm.

WITNESS

Hopefully you'll have already ordered and received enough copies of the free True Story resource. If you haven't got hold of them yet, you can still order them by emailing youthchildren@salvationarmy.org.uk; but for your convenience here is a summary of the six actions in the pack:

1. CONNECT – pray daily for those who have been or are being trafficked.
2. CREATE – design your own social post to influence others to get involved.
3. COMMENT – challenge businesses to be slave-free in their practices.
4. SHARE – give your time and skills to fundraise for survivor support.
5. CHANGE – pick one product you'll commit to buying ethically from now on.
6. RESEARCH – find other survivors' stories and tell your friends and teachers.

* Invite each person to pick at least one action that they will commit to doing this week. Keep each other accountable on this! Don't just say you'll do it – follow through with it. Why not message each other to check how you're getting on, or have a box of chocolates as a reward and vote next week for who you feel most deserves them.

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- * The Youth and Children's Ministry team would also love to hear what actions you are committing to. We'd love to see public pledges on social media using the hashtags #truestory and don't forget to tag us in the post (@youthchildrensa) so we can celebrate and share.
- * You could choose to join The Salvation Army's campaign and spread the word by purchasing a 'we are not for sale' face mask here <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery/anti-slavery-day>. Please wear your mask, take a selfie and share it online with #WeAreNotForSale on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook and tag The Salvation Army UK.
- * Challenge your group to take the stories you've read, and some of the links below, and use them to put together a short talk that you could share in your school, with your youth group or at church. Ask the people you know to join your fight for freedom. We'd love to help you do this well. Email us at youthchildren@salvationarmy.org.uk and we'll send you more True Story packs to give away.
 - ▶ <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery>
 - ▶ <https://www.ecpat.org.uk/pages/category/child-trafficking-and-modern-slavery-research>
 - ▶ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>

GOOD NEWS

WELCOME

Explain to your group that everyone must individually design their ultimate month-long holiday. There are no restrictions! Choose a holiday-themed song to play and give the group until the end of the song to decide:

- * where they'd go
- * what time of year they'd visit
- * what they'd eat
- * what they'd do
- * who they'd go with (ie family/friends/alone)

Then tell them that the holidays they've designed are actually for someone else. Put everyone's names into a pot and get each person to take turns picking a name. This is the person they have designed the holiday for. Once this is done, read them out: 'James will be going on the ultimate pony trekking adventure...'

Ask the group: Does anyone prefer the holiday they've been given to the one they designed for themselves?

Explain that this month we have been exploring the idea of justice, using superheroes as a hook. Until now the focus has been on the voice and action of the individual – but now we want to think about how we pursue justice together, as part of a faith community.

When it comes to the biggest, most evil threats to justice, superheroes have to work as a team. Justice League. The Avengers. The X-Men. Teen Titans. With so many skills, ideas and big personalities in the mix, there are always a few disagreements over what justice looks like and how to achieve it. But victory ultimately only comes when individuals are able to set aside their differences and pool their strengths.

Likewise, when it comes to huge injustices like human trafficking, we're far more likely to see change if we know God's vision and work together to achieve it.

WORD

 **Read Revelation 21:1-7 (NLT)**

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.'

⁵ And the one sitting on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new!' And then he said to me, 'Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.' ⁶ And he also said, 'It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega – the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. ⁷ All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.'

Explain that English readers of this passage can easily assume it is saying that God is going to destroy the original Heaven and Earth and then build a new one from scratch (v1). But the Greek language has two words for 'new' – *neos* and *kainos*.

Neos, meaning 'brand new' or 'recently created', is not the word that's used here. Instead, *kainos* is used, which means 'fresh', 'restored', or 'new in quality or condition'. God's plan in the final judgment has never been to destroy the original and start from scratch; it's always been to renew all things. God's original creation was 'very good' (Genesis 1:31), but it has been broken by the consequences of sin, and one day he is going to strip the universe of everything evil and renew it to a state that's even better than the original.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ Which prospect sounds better to you: a brand new model of Earth, or an Earth that is so beautifully renewed that we get to experience life on it on a whole new level? In which ways might a renewed Earth be better than a brand new one?
- 🗨️ In which ways will a renewed Earth be better than the Earth we live on at the moment?
- 🗨️ How can we live lives that model God's commitment to the renewal of all things?
- 🗨️ Think about survivors of trafficking. In what ways might they be in need of God's renewal in their life?

Say: If you love the beach, don't worry that the passage says that paradise won't have one because there's no sea (v1)! In ancient times the sea was literally something to be feared – people died in it and were never seen again! – and so it represented death, chaos, fear and anxiety. When the passage says the sea 'was gone', the original Greek word used has more of a sense of 'quickly fading or disappearing from memory'. It's saying that God's renewal of all things will be so amazing that we will quickly forget our past fears and anxieties.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ What do you think it would be like to live in a world where death, chaos, fear and anxiety were no more? What do you think the impact would be on people's thoughts and feelings?
- 🗨️ Although God's vision is for no more death, sorrow, crying or pain, we know that human traffickers are at this very moment perpetuating all those things. What do you think our response should be to this? To simply pray for God to renew all things soon, to do everything in our power to defeat trafficking, or something else? Does God need us to intervene? Why or why not?

Say: Look at the things that God says there will be no more of: death, sorrow, crying and pain. These are all things that relate to feeling separated or disconnected from others. In contrast, God tells us that his home will now be among his people. There is no more separation but a closeness and togetherness. We will be his children. The phrase 'he will wipe every tear from their eye' demonstrates the kind of personal attentiveness and intimate affection we will experience.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ Have you ever experienced grief, sorrow, pain in a big way? What did it feel like? How did it change the way you think and feel?
- 🗨️ How do you think victims of trafficking are impacted by the sorrow, shame, pain and fear of being enslaved?
- 🗨️ What do you think God living among his people will be like?

WORSHIP

Ask everyone to wash their hands and fetch a glass of freshly drawn cold water. Explain you'll read out four short meditations that involve them doing a simple action, listening and then saying 'Amen' in response to a prayer.

Look. Look at your glass of water and see how clear it is compared to other drinks. Notice how light can travel through it because the water is transparent.

Lord, let us be as transparent as fresh water, so that when we meet others our ego does not obscure the light of Christ that shines out of us. Help others to see you. Amen.

Feel. Feel the glass – how cool it feels. Dip a finger into the water. Notice what the sensation of ‘wetness’ feels like on your fingertip.

Lord, let us be like cool water, so that when we meet others we can make an impact on them, however small, because you live in us. Amen.

Smell. Smell the water. Notice how fresh water doesn’t have a fragrance, whereas we can tell when water is unclean, even if it looks clean, by its odour.

Lord, let us be as pure as clean water, so that when we meet others they can be healed and made whole by your presence in us. Amen.

Taste. Taste the water. Notice how, despite its lack of flavour, it refreshes you.

Lord, let us be as refreshing as your living water, so that when we meet others they feel renewed and reinvigorated, because they get a flavour of the true, abundant life that only you can give. Amen.

Say: We know that God’s vision is to renew all of creation, and that in fighting injustice we need to work together. But working together can be difficult!

- * Read Colossians 3:1-17 together, asking God to make one verse stand out that you need to work on – something that you’re maybe not that good at right now!
- * Create a superhero alter ego based on that verse or characteristic. For example, if you felt God highlighted the bit about getting rid of dirty language, your superhero alter ego might be called ‘Dr Blessing’, or if you felt convicted about being kinder, your alter ego might be ‘ManKind’.
- * Share what you’ve created, then pray for God to give you opportunities to develop those characteristics so that you as a team can better fight for justice together.

WITNESS

Below are several actions you could take to fight for justice together in your neighbourhood. By doing these, we are encouraging you not only to come together as a youth group, but as members of your church setting or faith community too – although we recognise that some corps may be very involved in the issue of human trafficking already while others may have barely engaged so far.

- **Identify local links**

What historic connections does your community have to the issue of anti-slavery? Do you have any statues in your town centre commemorating anti-slavery work? Did any famous abolitionists live nearby? Establishing an existing past link makes it easier to call people to present action.

- **Influence your corps**

Could your youth group create a presentation together that you could deliver to the people of your corps? (Depending on current lockdown restrictions this could be in person or on a video played as part of an online service.) Share the stories from True Story and others you find online, and encourage the adult members of your corps to become first responders or volunteer drivers who help people who want to escape from trafficking to get away to safety.

- **Complete True Story actions together**

Some of the actions that are suggested in the True Story resource would work as a joint effort. For example, for the CHANGE action, you could identify one product that your corps uses that might not be sourced ethically. As a group you could speak to your corps officer or leadership team to request that they start using a Fairtrade alternative instead. Or you could combine two actions, eg COMMENT and CREATE, by writing a video script aimed at businesses who aren't doing enough to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free, and then post it on social media.

- **Meet your MP**

A lot of MPs run local surgeries. You could together (or a representative number of you that meets social distancing guidelines) discuss what is being done locally and nationally to reduce human trafficking and to support victims of trafficking.

- **Join an existing group**

Some locations already have existing church networks that work together to fight trafficking locally. Find out if there is one and ask how you can join it.

- **Fundraise creatively!**

Normally you could plan something like a corps quiz night or auction of talents to fundraise for an issue, but living amid a pandemic makes that more difficult. But could you create a virtual, digital event that achieves the same purpose?