



cell outlines
KHESED

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

WELCOME

Before the meeting, go to Google Translate and copy in the words of a well-known song to be translated into Latin, then translate it back into English. For example:

Are you insecure, because I do not know why
 You're turning heads when they get
 We need to make-up to cover up
 It is enough that you are
 Everybody can see that the other chamber,
 And everyone else, but, ooh

The child is the light of the world like no other
 Your head gets you to flip me breathless
 When a smiling country, it is not difficult to say which
 I do not know, oh, oh!
 You do beautiful!

Share your screen with these lyrics up and have your group guess the song. The song in the example is 'What makes you beautiful' by One Direction – original lyrics below:

You're insecure, don't know what for
 You're turning heads when you walk through the door
 Don't need make-up to cover up
 Being the way that you are is enough
 Everyone else in the room can see it
 Everyone else, but you, ooh

Baby, you light up my world like nobody else
 The way that you flip your hair gets me overwhelmed
 But when you smile at the ground, it ain't hard to tell
 You don't know, oh oh
 You don't know you're beautiful

You can do this with a few different songs. Once you've had fun working out the songs, discuss the idea of translation, the limitations of language and how we can overcome those limitations.

Additional: Ask the group members to think about someone they love. It could be a family member, a friend, or even a fictional character. Without necessarily sharing who it is they are thinking of, ask each person to share one thing they think is good about that individual's character. For example, if choosing Joey from *Friends*, you could say: 'He makes people laugh and is protective of his friends.'

Then, ask the group to consider something that they consider to be not so good about the same individual. Continuing the example of Joey, you could say, 'He doesn't always treat women well' or 'He can be immature.' This doesn't have to be shared with the group but allow people to think critically for a moment.

State that all people are complex characters. There is no such thing as an absolutely perfect human – no matter how much we love them – but keep in mind that people can have 'bad' or undesirable traits and still be good at their core.

WORD

Find the following passage of Scripture and read it together. To set the scene, God told Moses to cut two tablets of stone to take up to Mount Sinai, where God would meet with Moses in person. In this passage God has now met with Moses and is about to renew his covenant with his people.

'And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving

wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

— Exodus 34:6-7

These verses in Exodus are really important. Not only is it one of the most quoted passages in the Bible, it also reveals the character of God to us. The first sentence in this passage says that God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness. This is no ordinary love, either. The second sentence, however, focuses on God’s anger and judgement. It can feel challenging to reconcile these extremes of his character with one another.

Take another look at the order of the description. These are the attributes of God that are listed first: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving... *Then* comes the anger and judgement. This order is no coincidence! The literary design tells us that God’s true character, at its very core, first and foremost, is to love. In this passage, love has an even deeper, richer meaning in its original Hebrew language, *‘khesed’* (sometimes written as *‘hesed’*, *‘hesedh’* or *‘chesed’*). This word is difficult to translate into any other language, but in basic terms it means love, generosity and loyalty all combined into one. Some Bible versions speak of ‘loving-kindness’ or ‘loyal-love’; others use the phrase ‘steadfast love’.

Everything that God does flows from this *khesed* love he has for us. His anger and judgement are part of who God is, and even these parts of God ultimately come from his care for us and commitment to us.

Additional: For more on Exodus 34:6-7, take a look at the [Bible Project’s resource](#) (6mins 6secs). This goes into great detail and will bring about points of discussion for your group. You can facilitate the discussion by asking the group to tell you one thing they found interesting about the video.

WORSHIP

Play a worship song that reflects God’s character in its lyrics, e.g. ‘Goodness of God’ by Bethel Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f4MUUMWMV4>

Encourage the group to use this time to reflect on who Exodus 34:6-7 says God is by writing down all of the qualities and traits. Once they have written out these traits – compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, loving – they should consider who they know God to be from their experience. They can do this either by highlighting or annotating words that are already written down from the Exodus verses, or by adding their own descriptive words to the list.

If you are sharing in a digital Bible study, you can make this a shared experience by using an interactive [Menti](#) presentation. You share the auto-generated code with the group, share your screen and the group’s text submissions of who they think God is will appear in real time on the screen, creating a beautiful collage of words.

WITNESS

Challenge each other to continue your reflections on God’s character throughout the next week. To keep track of thoughts, keep writing down the words as they come to you and be ready to share any of your findings the next time you meet.

Additional: As you are considering God’s character, start to think about how and where you see these qualities reflected in your life. Where can you see God’s *khesed* love? Do you see God’s character reflected in the people you encounter week by week? Be open to seeing God’s character appear in unexpected places and unexpected people.

WELCOME

Invite the group to share any reflections they had written down on God's character from last week. Then ask the group if anyone can remember what *khosed* means, before explaining that it is a Hebrew word which combines the ideas of love, loyalty and generosity into one rich expression of God's character. While it is special that God uses the word when he makes covenant with Moses and his people, the word *khosed* appears many times in the Bible other than with Moses, and it never loses its meaning!

God's *khosed* can be shown through generosity – the quality of being kind and liberally generous. Christian writer and creative, Jon Collins, says that generosity alone is not *khosed*, and in order to have *khosed* we must have love, loyalty and generosity. Any combination that isn't all three of these qualities does not qualify as *khosed*.

You may find it helpful to draw a Venn diagram to illustrate this more clearly.

Additional: Go around the group and ask them to tell you about a time when someone was generous to them. **Ask:**

- * What was their motive?
- * What did you experience?
- * How did you feel?

WORD

Using the sharescreen function, display the following Scripture and ask for a volunteer to read aloud.

'Jacob [Israel] lived in Egypt for seventeen years. In all, he lived 147 years.

When the time came for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said, "Do me this favour. Put your hand under my thigh, a sign that you're loyal and true to me to the end. Don't bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me alongside them."

"I will," he said. "I'll do what you've asked."

Israel said, "Promise me." Joseph promised.

Israel bowed his head in submission and gratitude from his bed.'

— **Genesis 47:28-31 (MSG)**

Let's get some context on Jacob: he was not always considered 'worthy' of such honour and privilege. As a younger man, Jacob deceived and betrayed his family for his own gain and wrestled with God. However, God showed Jacob an enduring *khosed* because of the promises he had made to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham: 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you' (Genesis 12:2).

In Genesis 32:28, Jacob is restored with God. Separating him from his former behaviours, God blesses Jacob with a new name – Israel – and he is filled with the purpose to establish a God-blessed nation. This is radical generosity from God. It is such a loyal generosity that it will last for generations! The *khosed* Jacob was shown throughout his life was never dependent on his worth or deservedness, it was all about God's generous loyalty to his promise.

Discuss the following questions with the group:

- 💬 In our passage of focus, what can we tell about Jacob's death?
- 💬 What examples do we get of generosity in this passage? (For example: generosity from God, Jacob was blessed with a long life, the reuniting of father and son, Joseph's obedience and *khosed* commitment towards his father, generosity from son, the promise of a proper burial)

WORSHIP

Play some music that describes God's generosity and care for us, for example Chris Tomlin's 'Good, Good Father': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ak0OoFBw3c>

In Genesis 47:31, we see that receiving generously goes hand in hand with gratitude.

As you reflect on examples of God's generosity in your own life, look around you and take a moment to thank God for what he has provided you with. If you are meeting in person, you might start out by thanking God for the people you are gathered with, your leaders and the space you are sharing together. If you are sharing food together, you can thank God for the food and for the people who prepared it. If you are meeting digitally, you can take time to be grateful for the things in your home space. This can continue for as long as you wish – once you start noticing what you have been generously provided with, it can be tricky to stop!

WITNESS OR ACTION

Thinking again about the loyal generosity that God showed Jacob because of the decisions and commitments made by his ancestors, challenge each other to find a way to 'pay it forward' this week.

'Paying it forward' is when you do something kind and generous for someone else, with the instruction that they should then continue the chain by 'paying it forward' to someone else. You could literally pay for the meal ordered by the car behind you in the drive-through, or you could pay it forward practically by doing someone else's chores. You could even get creative and leave inspirational messages and pictures around your neighbourhood. Similar to how God's generosity is passed on through the generations of Israel, we can start our own series of generous acts – and who knows when they will end!

Watch this video from Buzzfeed, explaining why we should pay it forward generously: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWCaMswtgsk>

Additional: Have each member of the group summarise what they got from the session, then facilitate a discussion on how they can put their learning into action. Guide them to come up with their own witness for this week.

WELCOME

This week's opening activity introduces themes of judgement and mercy. You should prepare a list of 'crimes' ranging from innocent or silly mistakes to incidents that are serious and harmful. Appoint a 'judge' for each crime and allow the rest of the group to discuss and debate what they think the consequence or punishment should be for 30 seconds. Once the group have finished their discussion, the judge must share the decision they have made. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to use some breakout rooms and then have groups feed back their responses.

For example:

'A customer goes to a restaurant and asks the waiter for the mushrooms to be removed from their meal – but only because they don't really like them. When the meal arrives, there are still mushrooms! What should the consequence be?' Some will say that there should be no consequence, but some might argue that the restaurant should offer a discounted price.

Additional: Open up a whiteboard and write down a word in the centre of the board. Appoint a judge and give everyone else a few minutes to come up with a definition of the word and have them write it down. As everyone is contributing to the board, you will also need to write the correct definition in, or you can send a message to one member of the group and have them write it in.

Once all the responses are in, have the judge guess which definition is the correct one. If the definition of your word fools the judge, then your team gets a point. If the judge chooses the correct answer, they will get a point. You can find a list of strange words [here](#).

Since learning about *khesed* in Week 1, we have looked at generosity. This week, we are exploring what mercy is and why it matters.

WORD

Display the Scripture and ask a volunteer to read it aloud.

**'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.'**

— Micah 6:8

What does it mean to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God? *The Message* paraphrase puts it like this: 'Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously – take God seriously.'

In *The Message* paraphrase of 'to love mercy' we see *khesed*: 'be compassionate and loyal in your love'. This verse in Micah is a direct challenge – it tells us how to live the way God intended us to live! God requires us to show *khesed* to others. Taking this a step further, think about the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of mercy: 'Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.'

When we love mercy, we look beyond what someone deserves – just like how God treated Israel (Week 2) and many others as recorded in Scripture. We all require mercy from God, and we will at times require mercy from those around us, therefore we should extend the same mercy to others. Michael Card, writer of *Inexpressible: Heseed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness*, has a working definition that *khesed* happens 'when the person from whom I have a right to expect nothing gives me everything'.

Watch the following video; it's set to start at 4mins 13sec which is where our focus Scripture is found, but feel free to go back and watch all the video for more context.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ What does it mean to be merciful?

SESSION THREE

- 🗨️ In Micah's time, the leaders of Israel were corrupt. Their injustice and lack of mercy towards society's vulnerable was a direct contrast to God's generous goodness and mercy. Can you think of any areas or contexts today where leaders or figures of authority could show more mercy?
- 🗨️ Can you think of a time when you have been on the receiving end of mercy? How did it make you feel?
- 🗨️ Likewise, can you think of a time when you have been able to extend mercy to somebody? Why did you do so? What was the result?

WORSHIP

In your journey to live a Micah 6:8 life, remember that you are not God. Your job as a human is very different from God's. There will be battles to fight and judgements to make, but there will also be many moments when you can shower love on others, be generous for no reason and choose to show kindness to those whom others may think are undeserving.

In Kent Anan's book, *Slow Kingdom Coming*, he expresses that embarking on Micah 6:8 Kingdom work should not be thought of as a short-term project. It involves a lot of personal work, and there are no promised easy solutions or short-cuts! Reflect on what God is requiring of you, as written in Micah 6:8, and remember that you are not being asked to do it on your own. You have God on your side as your strength, and you can also identify some special people to journey with – perhaps they are within your small group!

Share in a time of worship as you listen to and read the lyrics of Pat Barrett's song 'Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly' together: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk7llf2LkKc>

WITNESS

One example of incredible mercy between two people is found at the beginning of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. It is a moving encounter between a desperate, thieving criminal and a bishop who chooses mercy and loving kindness over punishment. You can watch this scene from the film here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF3FX43F-7Y>

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ Imagine yourself in the bishop's position. How do you think you would have reacted? Would you have been so generous with your mercy?
- 🗨️ Imagine yourself in the thief's position. How do you think he felt when he realised that the bishop was showing him mercy?
- 🗨️ This encounter is fictional; but think of someone who has wronged or hurt you personally. Do you think God wants you to show them mercy? How could you do this? Is it possible to start this process over the next week?

WELCOME

Watch the 'Don't Eat it' TikTok challenge here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WSib22zybK>

This is a cute and funny (and understandable!) example of how easy it can be to break loyalties, especially when faced with an alternative that seems easier or more enjoyable than what we have committed to.

Additional: Tell your group they will play a game called 'Split or Steal'. Pair everyone up; if you have an odd number you could either play yourself or have a winner play again. Tell the group you have a prize to give them, and if both participants pick 'split' they get to split the prize; if one chooses 'split' while the other chooses 'steal', the one who chose 'steal' gets everything; and if both choose 'steal' they both lose.

Show them the prize and give them a few moments to think about what they'd like to do. Then once you say 'Split or steal', they must make their choice. In order to avoid 'cheating' you might suggest everyone gets props to indicate their choice, eg a tableknife for split, and a fork for steal etc. Be sure to count down before they reveal their choice.

Together we have unpacked *khesed* and what that means about who God is. We have recognised God's generosity, reflected in his merciful love, and this week we will look at loyalty as an attribute that is central to God's character.

WORD

Display the following Bible passage and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud. Note that the below passage is from *The Voice* translation, so the reader is speaking as Ruth.

Ruth: 'Stop pushing me away,
insisting that I stop following you!
Wherever you go, I will go.
Wherever you live, I will live.
Your people will be my people.
Your God will be my God.
Wherever you die, I will also die
and be buried there near you.
May the Eternal One punish me –
and even more so –
if anything besides death comes between us.'

— Ruth 1:16-17 (VOICE)

To get some further context on the book of Ruth, you can watch Bible Project's overview. This verse is covered at 1:19: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h1eoBeR4jk>

As a grieving widow, Naomi is vulnerable and experiencing extreme emotional pain. After suffering the loss of her family and becoming financially destitute, Naomi had lost almost everything and was left with her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. As Naomi prepares to journey back home to Israel, she tells her daughters-in-law to stay behind in Moab for their own good. Orpah remains where she is, but Ruth does not. This is when Ruth practises *khesed* and makes a commitment to Naomi that she will not leave her – even in death. She is simultaneously binding herself in covenant to God and to her mother-in-law, Naomi.

When Ruth makes this commitment, she is not choosing the easy option. Ruth – a Moabite woman – is leaving the life and culture that she knows. In addition, Naomi is so depressed and desperate that she gives herself the name Mara, which means 'bitter'. Ruth endures the pain and hardship because of the loyal commitment she has made out of a knowledge that God is still loyal and he has not forsaken them. Ruth's commitment to Naomi displays *khesed* beautifully: it is a generous, merciful, loving offer of unending loyalty.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ In what areas of your life is loyalty important? Who do you expect loyalty from? (families, friendships, relationships)

💬 Think about the three women in this story. Can you identify a time when you have met a Mara (Naomi), Orpah or Ruth in your life?

WORSHIP

Listen to 'Loyal' by Lauren Daigle together: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXKG-ooExGs>

Share the below prayer (based on 'Loyal' by Lauren Daigle) and pray it aloud over the group or ask for a volunteer to pray it on behalf of the group.

Father,

Thank you that you are always there for us, and you listen to us every time we speak. Even when we want to hide secrets and sin from you, you look into our eyes and see us as more than our failures. You remind us how loved we are by you and by others. Thank you for loving us with a love so loyal that you will never leave.

We cannot break your promises, and you will never change. We are so grateful for these truths. You are more faithful than the sun that rises every morning, and we couldn't outrun your grace for us if we tried, because your love is fiercely loyal.

Amen

Additional: On a whiteboard share the following six icons:



Invite your group to reflect on:

- * Something these verses tell us about Jesus/God
- * Something these verses tell us about human nature
- * A new discovery they have made
- * The most exciting part of the verse and why
- * Anything you don't understand or want to ask about
- * Something these verses say we should do

Share responses as you see fit.

WITNESS

Loyalty can be seen on many levels, and Ruth's loyalty to Naomi is extreme in its extent, impact and example. While Ruth's commitment is to family and to God, you can also commit to practices and forming healthy habits.

In an attempt to focus on the practice of loyalty in your life, commit to strengthening one of these three areas over the next week:

- * Be loyal in your relationships. This does not have to be a challenge exclusive to those in romantic relationships – it can be a relative, like Ruth, or a friend. Find ways to strengthen your commitment to that person this week. For example, send them a text checking in on them more regularly than you usually do; or if it is possible, spend some quality time with them. Be intentional and honest as you pray for this individual, and don't be afraid to ask them how you can pray for them specifically.

SESSION FOUR

- * Be loyal to yourself. Some of us are naturally inclined to commit to supporting others, but struggle to show the same commitment of care to ourselves. This week find ways that you can renew yourself spiritually, emotionally and/or physically. This could be through self-affirmation (some great affirmations can be found in the Bible!), preparing nourishing and tasty meals for yourself, exercising outdoors, or anything else that restores your soul.
- * Be loyal to God. Your commitment to God may be strengthened as you carry out either of the above challenges, but don't hold back from choosing to commit entirely to God this next week. Commit to prayer, Bible study or a new devotional series. Be precise with your planning and make choices about how long you intend to spend partaking in them each day. This will help you form spiritual disciplines.

Additional: Allow your group to discuss how important loyalty is in society. You can prompt them to think about shops' loyalty schemes, Tesco Clubcard points, Nando's free chicken after spending a certain amount, etc. Challenge them to come up with their own actions based on today's session.