




## A FRIEND LOVES AT ALL TIMES

SPECIAL DAYS

### PREPARATION

- + Find out about The Salvation Army's prison ministry in your area, and if possible, get in contact with a local Salvation Army prison chaplain and invite to speak to the group
- + Go on the [Prisons Week website](#) and print out prayer leaflets for the group members to take home
- + Create an atmosphere for prayer, eg removing distractions, having Bibles nearby, comfy place to sit, candles ...
- + Prepare to show a Prisons Week promo video
- + Choose some prayers from the [Prisons Week website](#) to print out and use in the session
- + Prepare a quiz on prisons, use one from [online](#) or the one provided

 *Email the web-link to the poster/leaflet from the [Prisons Week website](#)*

### Additional resource

- ❖ Prison prayers

Be sensitive in case this is a difficult subject for some members.

### INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

During October is Prisons Week, an ecumenical week that encourages Christians to focus their prayers on prisoners and their families, victims of crime, prison staff and all those working in the criminal justice system.

'Prisons Week wants to see an end to the human suffering caused by crime and imprisonment - for all those affected. We believe that faith moves mountains, and that prayer moves God. We also believe that when we pray with faith God often moves us to be the answer to those prayers.'

[Prisonsweek.org](http://Prisonsweek.org)



## ACTIVITIES

### DISCUSS

Watch the promo video for Prisons Week. Discuss together any questions, thoughts or themes presented in the video. There are videos from previous years if the current video theme is unsuitable for your group.

 *Screenshare the video.*

### QUIZ

Share a quiz on prisons, use one from [online](#) or the one below.

#### Bible prisoners

1. Who was put in prison because they were accused (falsely) of sleeping with another man's wife? (**Joseph**)
2. Which two men were put into jail for commanding an evil spirit to leave a girl? (**Paul and Silas**)
3. Which prisoner was released by Pontius Pilate? (**Barabbas**)
4. Who in the Gospels was trialled by the Jewish and Roman authorities in Jerusalem, imprisoned, and then executed? (**Jesus**)
5. Who fled Egypt so they would not be arrested for killing a guard? (**Moses**)
6. Which preacher was imprisoned after condemning the king for divorcing his wife to marry his half-brother's ex-wife? (**John the Baptist**)
7. Who was imprisoned by the Philistines, had his eyes gouged out, his hair cut, was bound with bronze shackles, and tasked with grinding corn? (**Samson**)
8. Who was rescued from prison by an angel? (**Peter**)
9. Which prophet was imprisoned after being accused (falsely) of deserting to the Babylonians (who had been attacking Jerusalem)? (**Jeremiah**)
10. Who was imprisoned with lions? (**Daniel**)




## PRAYER

Select a *prison prayer*. Ask members to close their eyes while you read it out, and think about a scenario that is familiar in prison. Take a couple of minutes for the group to think of a prayer response and then to share together. Repeat with more prayers. Or you may prefer to split members into smaller prayer groups and to share and swap the prayers among them.

## BIBLE READING / THOUGHT

### Proverbs 17:17

 **‘A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.’**

When we look at Jesus, we see love as we’ve never known it before - perfect, unconditional and sacrificing. Experiencing God’s love fills us with deep gratitude and humility. We know that we do not deserve a love like this, yet it finds us, surrounds us and fills us. God always loves us, even when we are at our worst.

We also know that this love does not discriminate or ‘pick and choose’. Jesus’ instructions are clear: it’s not enough to love those who love us. That would be way too easy! We are called to love everyone, even our enemies, as Matthew 5:44 confirms.

There are over 80,000 prisoners in the United Kingdom. It could be tempting to look at these people as our enemies. After all, they are in prison for breaking the law; they have often led dysfunctional, violent lifestyles, hurting the lives of others.

Christ, however, did not give up on us, despite all our sin, so that is not an option for us either. In our walk with Jesus, we want to be more like him every day, letting his love pour out of our hearts to those we encounter - especially people who need it the most. In the words of General John Gowans:

‘I believe in transformation, God can change the hearts of men,  
And refine the evil nature till it glows with grace again.  
Others may reject the weakling, I believe he can be strong,  
To the family of Jesus all God’s children may belong.’

SASB 34

The Salvation Army was called to prison ministry by William Booth. ‘While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I’ll fight!’ he is reported to have said. The Salvation Army’s prison chaplains work in over 20 prisons across England and Wales. Our chaplains are a ‘friend at a time of adversity’. They can tell you





that there is much more to a person than their crime: a person with a complex story, often one with brokenness. Prisons are filled with people with serious mental health issues, addictions and tragic levels of self-harm. Prisoners desperately need God's love and healing.

Chaplains are able promote the true meaning of love and fellowship - bringing men and women into a living relationship with the God who loves them despite their sin, faults and failings, and who can change them from the inside out.

To illustrate this, here are some quotes from our chaplains.


'One resident who recently experienced a spell of serious ill health came to ask how he might put himself right with God and his family, as his close brush with death had given him cause to reflect on his eternal destination. He made a decision to accept Jesus as his Saviour and took a Bible away with him to read more about nurturing his newfound relationship with God.'

'A man came over to spend some time in chapel as it was the one year anniversary of his 18-month-old daughter's death. We were able to talk around issues of forgiveness, anger and his grieving. He took away daily reading books and a leaflet about living with loss.'

'I had a long conversation with a man who is serving a life sentence for murder. He shared his testimony how he had been invited to attend a prison chapel service but tried to decline on the basis that "there's no hope for me, I'm beyond redemption". He was encouraged to try anyway, and he finally found salvation. As he was telling me his story he was glowing with hope, which had a profound impact on me, given that he is unlikely to ever get released.'

## PRAYER LEAFLET

Give each member a print-out of the Prisons Week leaflet to take home.

 *Email the web-link to the leaflet.*

## SONGS

- ♪ SASB 906 'What a fellowship, what a joy divine' with vocals or without
- ♪ SASB 690 'When we walk with the Lord'
- ♪ SASB 25 'God's love to me is wonderful' (John Larsson setting)
- ♪ SASB 902 "'Tis wonderful to know the joy ...'





## WEBSITE AND CONTACT DETAILS

- Connect website: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect)
- Family Ministries website: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/families](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/families)
- Email: [familyministries@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:familyministries@salvationarmy.org.uk)
- Facebook: @sarmyfm
- Twitter: @ukifamily
- Instagram: safamily\_ministries



## Family Ministries

Having faith in the family

Providing intergenerational support, training and resources for

Children | Adults | Everyone





## PRAYERS

### Prison Prayers

There are around 312,000 children in England and Wales with a parent in prison.

*Pray for a child whose life has been disrupted by a parent's imprisonment and who is feeling an overwhelming sense of loneliness, fear and sadness.*

Self-inflicted deaths are over six times more likely in prison than in the general population.

*Pray for someone in prison who is currently struggling with destructive thoughts and struggles to see hope.*

Prison staff work under tremendous pressure, and the work is both physically and mentally consuming.

*Pray for staff's safety and wellbeing.*

64 per cent of prisoners report having used class A drugs at some point in their lives.

*Pray for a prisoner who wants to break free from addiction and live a life with a greater purpose.*

65 per cent of young people released from custody re-offend within a year.

*Pray for a young person who needs wholeness, guidance, and love in their life.*

Salvation Army prison chaplains bring a message of hope and salvation to people who are aching for it.

*Pray for their crucial yet challenging ministry.*