

A large heart shape is drawn on a window pane covered in condensation. The background behind the window shows a bright sunset or sunrise with a gradient from blue at the top to orange and yellow at the bottom.

CELL

PSALMS

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our website.

For more information and other Cell resources, visit salvationist.org.uk/resources/youth-ministry-resources

This month

SESSION ONE: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

PSALM 49

Streaming platforms are full of shows about the lives of the rich and famous. As you watch their lavish lifestyles and extravagant holidays, do you ever experience a twinge of envy? Psalm 49 is like a blunt friend who turns around and tells you, with brutal honesty, what is important in life. It points out that all the riches of the world mean nothing as we all end up in the grave! This may not be an uplifting psalm, but it does remind us of what matters in life.

SESSION TWO: REMEMBER

PSALM 91

Linked to Remembrance Sunday (13 November)

In many countries, Psalm 91 is known as the 'Soldier's Prayer'. These words of comfort have been taken into combat by soldiers across the globe. As we remember those who have given their lives to protect our safety and security, we'll reflect on the poetic words of Psalm 91. This session focuses on the power of prayer and reminds us that God is our refuge and fortress.

SESSION THREE: SAFE HANDS

PSALM 121

Psalm 121 is thought to have been sung on the way to Jerusalem as the pilgrims prepared to celebrate one of the Jewish festivals. It is a song for those who are on a journey toward God. This psalm reassures us that, as we move through our journey of faith, we are kept safe in the hands of a God who deeply loves us.

SESSION FOUR: O COME, O COME, IMMANUEL

SELECTION OF PSALMS

As we move into the season of Advent, we will explore psalms that tell of the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In preparation for the Advent season there will also be an opportunity to bring hope to members of your church.

Any text in italics represents notes for the leader. It gives more context around the Scripture/activity. You may choose to share verbatim, summarise, or not share at all.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

PSALM 49

Streaming platforms are full of shows about the lives of the rich and famous. As you watch their lavish lifestyles and extravagant holidays, do you ever experience a twinge of envy? Psalm 49 is like a blunt friend who turns around and tells you, with brutal honesty, what is important in life. It points out that all the riches of the world mean nothing as we all end up in the grave! This may not be an uplifting psalm, but it does remind us of what matters in life.








WELCOME

For our starter today we're going to delve into the lives of the rich and famous.

Show the group the 'Luxury Lifestyle' presentation and use the discussion prompts below to start conversation about money, money, money!

The presentation is available in both PowerPoint and PDF format please see additional files.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

-  What kind of lifestyle do these pictures remind you of? Do any celebrities or famous people come to mind?
-  How do these pictures make you feel?
-  Is this a lifestyle you aspire to?
-  Where do you see these kinds of images? How do you think they influence the way you view money?
-  Which image stands out for you the most? Why is that?
-  Do you ever dream about being rich and famous? If so, what does that dream look like?
-  Do you think money brings happiness? Explain your answer.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY




The title of today's session originates from the Abba classic 'Money, Money, Money'.

Watch part of the music video together.

 **Abba – 'Money, Money, Money' (Official Music Video) (3:06)**

<https://youtu.be/ETxmCCsMoD0>

This song was originally released on 1 November 1976.

-  How many years ago was that?
-  In what ways do you think the song is still relevant today?
-  What would the video look like in 2022, and who do you think would remake the song?

WORD

Do you have a friend who is a 'straight-talker'? They're usually the one who refuses to sugar-coat the situation and 'just tells it like it is'.

You don't have to name them, but describe what it is like to be in situations with them.


Do you find their approach useful? If so, why/why not?

Our psalm for today feels like it is written by that kind of friend. You don't leave Psalm 49 feeling uplifted, but its honesty is refreshing.

Before we look at the psalm in more detail, listen to it from beginning to end.

 **David Suchet NIV Bible Psalm 49 (2:28 min)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zFSrjH1Dg>


 If you could sum up the message of this psalm in one short phrase, what would it be?

Let's switch to *The Message* paraphrase to dig into this psalm in more depth.

If the group doesn't have a copy of *The Message* translation, then give each member of them a copy of the Psalm 49 handout.

 **Read verses 1-4.**


 Who is this message for?

 In verse 4 the psalmist writes: 'I solve life's riddles with the help of the harp'. Can you think of any songs you listen to that try to do a similar thing?

The psalm is for everyone and set to music so that the listeners can engage with what is being said.

 **Read verses 5-9.**


 How are these verses relevant to our situation today?


 What is the psalmist trying to say in verses 7-9?

Money cannot buy you immortality. It might make life more comfortable for you, but we all end up in the same place. Celebrities like Walt Disney have had their bodies cryogenically frozen so they hope that one day they will be able to 'live again'. Psalm 49 makes it clear that that isn't the deal. Money can't bypass God's promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ.


 **Read verses 10-15.**

In verses 10-11 the psalmist mentions people who name 'counties after themselves'.

 What is the psalmist referring to, and can you think of any modern-day examples of people naming things after themselves?


 What brutal message does the psalmist deliver in verse 12?


The psalmist paints a depressing picture for those who 'live for the moment' and pursue riches.

 What hope does the psalmist give in verse 15?


 **Read verses 16-20.**

Psalm 49 is known as a 'wisdom psalm'.

 What words of wisdom are contained in verses 16-19?

 How would you apply them to your own life and way of thinking?

 Now that you have listened to the words of your friend, the straight-talking psalmist, what is your response?

 Which parts do you agree/disagree with?

 Has it made you stop and think about your attitude to the rich and famous? If so, in what way?

It's important to notice that the psalm doesn't say that money is a bad thing. Many people use the wealth God has given them to benefit others; this psalm is not talking about wealth in general.


What do you think it's trying to say instead?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Now that you have reflected on the content of Psalm 49, listen to the thoughts in this clip.


 **In the Lord I Take Refuge: Psalm 49 – Why Should I Fear in Times of Trouble? (4:06)**


<https://youtu.be/4b46BkXLcg4>

 What word of wisdom will you take away from Psalm 49 today?

WITNESS

Many of you are just starting out on the journey of having or earning your own money. This may be pocket money from a parent/guardian or money from a Saturday job. Either way, you are starting to have to think about how you will manage your money and the role that God plays in your finances.

 How would you describe your relationship with money? Do you think you have a good understanding of its value?

 How would you describe the overriding message about money in our society today?

In the clip you're about to watch, filmmaker Lauren Greenfield talks about her study of toxic wealth. Watch the clip and think about whether you agree or disagree with the points she makes.

 **I've Studied Toxic Wealth For 25 Years. Here's What I Learned. | Better | NBC News - YouTube (3:47)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LECsHEkvwUY>

What points particularly stood out for you?

Here are some quotes from the clip to prompt discussion:

'I think our desire to consume has consumed us.'

'We've gone from values of hard work, frugality and discretion ... to a culture that just prizes bling and celebrity and narcissism.'

'When you ask kids today what they want to be when they grow up, the most common answer is "rich and famous".'

'The antidote is getting back to what matters.'

So, let's get back to what matters.

The clip was obviously from a secular viewpoint, but what does 'getting back to what matters' look like in a Christian context?

At the start of the session, you looked at a presentation filled with a luxury lifestyle. As a group you are going to create your own presentation filled with images and verses to remind you what really matters in life.

For this activity you will need to set up a PowerPoint presentation ready to insert the group's images into. The images could be of family and friends, taken from copyright-free sites like [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com) (unsplash.com) or contain Bible verses or quotes that link to living life in all its fullness. The aim is to cast a Christ-filled vision for what matters in life to combat the overwhelming exposure to money, money, money! Once the presentation is completed, the group could add music and turn it into a film clip using the facility on PowerPoint.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

What is your response to Billy Graham's quote about money?

“If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life.”

— BILLY GRAHAM

WORSHIP

Listen to a sung version of Psalm 49.

How does it impact your understanding or response to the psalm?

 **Poor Bishop Hooper – Psalm 49 (EveryPsalm) (4:37)**
<https://youtu.be/Tlj4mHZAm3I>

PSALM 49 LYRICS:

**High, low, rich and poor,
Listen, listen for these words are wise,
these thoughts are filled with insight.
Listen, all who have an ear
listen close and you will hear a proverb and its wisdom,
a riddle and its question here answered.
Listen, those who trust their wealth,
those who boast by riches led,
still they can't redeem themselves from death.
What ransom can you pay then unto God?
See even wise men die,
fools and senseless then alike leaving all their wealth behind in death.
What ransom can you pay then unto God?
As sheep appointed for Sheol with death as their shepherd,
the upright will rule over them.
Don't be afraid when men grow rich,
their homes in glory stand splendid.
They take nothing along with them in death.
What ransom can you pay then unto God?
As sheep appointed for Sheol with death as their shepherd,
the upright will rule over them.**

Poor Bishop Hooper is Jesse and Leah Roberts. All songs written, recorded, and mixed by Poor Bishop Hooper. Mastered by Jim Barnes. Art by Lauren Stevens.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Psalm 49 takes a challenging topic and sets it to poetry and music.

If you were to write your own poetry or song, what challenging topic would you choose?

PSALM 49

THE MESSAGE PARAPHRASE

¹⁻² Listen, everyone, listen –
earth-dwellers, don't miss this.

All you haves
and have-nots,

All together now: listen.

³⁻⁴ I set plainspoken wisdom before you,
my heart-seasoned understandings of
life.

I fine-tuned my ear to the sayings of the
wise,

I solve life's riddle with the help of a
harp.

⁵⁻⁶ So why should I fear in bad times,
hemmed in by enemy malice,
Shoved around by bullies,
demeaned by the arrogant rich?

⁷⁻⁹ Really! There's no such thing as self-
rescue,
pulling yourself up by your
bootstraps.

The cost of rescue is beyond our means,
and even then it doesn't guarantee
Life forever, or insurance
against the Black Hole.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ Anyone can see that the brightest
and best die,
wiped out right along with fools and
idiots.

They leave all their prowess behind,
move into their new home, The
Coffin,
The cemetery their permanent address.

And to think they named counties
after themselves!

¹² We aren't immortal. We don't last
long.

Like our dogs, we age and weaken.
And die.

¹³⁻¹⁵ This is what happens to those who
live for the moment,
who only look out for themselves:
Death herds them like sheep straight to
hell;

they disappear down the gullet of the
grave;

They waste away to nothing –
nothing left but a marker in a
cemetery.

But me? God snatches me from the
clutch of death,

he reaches down and grabs me.

¹⁶⁻¹⁹ So don't be impressed with those
who get rich

and pile up fame and fortune.

They can't take it with them;
fame and fortune all get left behind.

Just when they think they've arrived
and folks praise them because they've
made good,

They enter the family burial plot
where they'll never see sunshine
again.

²⁰ We aren't immortal. We don't last
long.

Like our dogs, we age and weaken.
And die.

PSALM 49 LYRICS:

**High, low, rich and poor,
Listen, listen for these words are wise,
these thoughts are filled with insight.
Listen, all who have an ear
listen close and you will hear a proverb and its wisdom,
a riddle and its question here answered.
Listen, those who trust their wealth,
those who boast by riches led,
still they can't redeem themselves from death.
What ransom can you pay then unto God?
See even wise men die,
fools and senseless then alike leaving all their wealth behind in death.
What ransom can you pay then unto God?
As sheep appointed for Sheol with death as their shepherd,
the upright will rule over them.
Don't be afraid when men grow rich,
their homes in glory stand splendid.
They take nothing along with them in death.
What ransom can you pay then unto God?
As sheep appointed for Sheol with death as their shepherd,
the upright will rule over them.**

*Poor Bishop Hooper is Jesse and Leah Roberts. All songs written, recorded, and mixed by Poor Bishop Hooper.
Mastered by Jim Barnes. Art by Lauren Stevens.*

REMEMBER

PSALM 91

Linked to Remembrance Sunday (13 November)

In many countries, Psalm 91 is known as the 'Soldier's Prayer'. These words of comfort have been taken into combat by soldiers across the globe. As we remember those who have given their lives to protect our safety and security, we'll reflect on the poetic words of Psalm 91. This session focuses on the power of prayer and reminds us that God is our refuge and fortress.

If possible, bring doughnuts for the group to eat as part of the starter activity.

WELCOME

The Salvation Army has always had a strong connection with supporting the military on the battlefield. This week we are reflecting on Psalm 91 in the light of Remembrance Sunday. Although Remembrance Sunday is mainly acknowledged in the UK, there's a fascinating story about The Salvation Army's doughnut girls in World War I.


Give each member of the group a doughnut to enjoy as they discover more about the doughnut girls.

 **The Salvation Army Doughnut Girls – YouTube (5:14)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZ8dig33lw4>

Through this simple idea, and others like it, Salvationists were able to bring comfort to those in the middle of conflict.


 What impact do you think this ministry had on the soldiers at the front line?

 Do you think you would have been brave enough to volunteer to be part of the team? If so, why?

Each time you eat a doughnut, remember the brave work of the doughnut girls as they supported soldiers in World War 1.

WORD

In many countries across the globe, soldiers take a copy of Psalm 91 into battle. It is known as the 'Soldier's Prayer'. Today we are going to spend time reflecting on its message of comfort and explore its themes.

 **Read Psalm 91.**

PSALM 91

- ¹ **Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.**
- ² **I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'**
- ³ **Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.**
- ⁴ **He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.**
- ⁵ **You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,**
- ⁶ **nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.**
- ⁷ **A thousand may fall at your side,**

ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

⁸ You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,

¹⁰ no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;

¹² they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

¹⁴ 'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.





¹⁵ He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.

¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.'







The following section uses teaching from Tim Keller. The timings for stopping the clip are provided below, along with discussion questions.

 **Trusting God in Difficult Times – Psalm 91 Meditation by Tim Keller (0:00-8:28)**
https://youtu.be/_pXWZNtxS0Q

Watch 0:00-2:52.



-  What is the promise of this psalm?
-  What false belief do people often have about the promise in this psalm?
-  Look at Luke 4:9-11. How is the devil misusing the promise of Psalm 91?
-  What is the danger in falling for this false promise?

Watch 2:52-7:04

-  Why is it important to compare verses in Scripture to see if they are in line with one another?
-  What is the message behind Joseph's words in Genesis 50:20?
-  How does Romans 8:28 help us to understand God's idea of safety?
-  What does Luke 21:16-18 teach us about safety? What is challenging about these words?
-  What do you think about Tim's comment that safety is found when we live our lives purely for the glory of God?
-  What things in your life are in danger of becoming more important than God?

Tim makes the point that we don't have to love these things less, we just need to make sure that our safety and security is placed firmly in God's hands.


Watch 7:04-8:28

-  What is the message of safety in this psalm?
-  What image is used in the psalm to remind us that we are sheltered and kept safe by God?


Whether you are a Salvation Army soldier or not, Psalm 91 is a prayer that we can all take into the challenges we face.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Watch the 'Question and Answer' section of the clip with Tim and Kathy Keller

 **Trusting God in Difficult Times – Psalm 91 Meditation by Tim Keller (8:28-11:30)**
https://youtu.be/_pXWZNtxS0Q

Tim and Kathy shared their sweet story about having a Bible verse engraved in their wedding band. At a later point they discovered that they had taken the verse totally out of context.

 Can you think of any verses that are often used as 'promise box' verses that mean something else in their context?

WITNESS

As we remember those who have lost loved ones in conflicts across the world, we need to remember the places that are in turmoil now. For example, The Salvation Army is involved in supporting people involved in the conflict in Ukraine.

There are two options available for today's witness activity.

Option One: *If any corps or churches are involved in support projects linked to the war in Ukraine, then find a way to get involved as a group. Use this time to explore how the group could provide practical support for those who are facing or fleeing from conflict in their country.*

Option Two: *Print out an enlarged copy of a map of Europe and stick it in the centre of a flip chart sheet. Discuss with the group how countries surrounding Ukraine are also impacted by the war and highlight The Salvation Army's involvement.*


Watch the clip together and note down the countries mentioned.

 **The Salvation Army in Ukraine – Ian Haylett (4:25)**
<https://youtu.be/TdWumpp24yc>

When the clip has finished, allocate countries to different group members and ask them to identify the key leaders and support workers for The Salvation Army in their location. Ask the group to write down prayer points linked to the country they have researched and the involvement of The Salvation Army in that area. When the sheet is completed, take a photograph and share it with the group as a prayer focus for the following week.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Focus your prayer specifically on Christians living in war-torn countries.

 What message of hope is found for them in Psalm 91?

WORSHIP

Our worship time together is going to be spent in prayer using an unlikely source as our inspiration. Every year the *Strictly Come Dancing* team create a special dance for Remembrance Sunday. As you watch the clip, jot down prompts for prayer for those impacted by war and conflict.

 **A Remembrance Day – inspired Strictly Pros routine – BBC Strictly 2019 (3:29)**
<https://youtu.be/qOEGNkOlv-4>

Once the clip is finished, discuss the responses from the group. Suggestions are listed below:

- * Separated families
- * Long-term trauma – PTSD
- * Those who have lost loved ones
- * Those involved in current conflicts
- * Elderly veterans

Use the ideas from the group to either spend time in prayer together or create a prayer of remembrance. If your session is before Remembrance Sunday, then this prayer could be shared on the corps website/ social media pages.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If you feel that it is appropriate for your group, you could share a minute's silence together for those who have lost their lives fighting to protect ours. After the minute's silence, play the sung version of Psalm 91 and finish the session with a prayer of remembrance.

▶ Psalm 91 – Jonathan Ogden (3:24)

<https://youtu.be/EbFBhGQdorY>

**Father of all, remember your holy promise,
and look with love on all your people, living and departed.
On this day we especially ask that you would hold for ever
all who have suffered during war, those who returned scarred by warfare,
those who waited anxiously at home,
and those who returned wounded and disillusioned;
those who mourned, and those communities that were diminished and suffered loss.
Remember too those who acted with kindly compassion,
those who bravely risked their own lives for their comrades,
and those who, in the aftermath of war, worked tirelessly for a more peaceful world.
And as you remember them, remember us, O Lord;
grant us peace in our time and a longing for the day when people of every language, race and
nation will be brought into the unity of Christ's Kingdom.
This we ask in the name of the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Taken from the Church of England Website.

[Prayers for Remembrance | The Church of England](#)

SAFE HANDS

PSALM 121

Psalm 121 is thought to have been sung on the way to Jerusalem as the pilgrims prepared to celebrate one of the Jewish festivals. It is a song for those who are on a journey toward God. This psalm reassures us that, as we move through our journey of faith, we are kept safe in the hands of a God who deeply loves us.

WELCOME

In the world of football, the goalkeeper is meant to be the safest pair of hands on the team, but this is not always the case! Watch the following goalkeeping bloopers and see if you can guess what happened next.




 **The WORST goalkeeper bloopers in Premier League history! Part 1**

<https://youtu.be/ofevr9XrYOo>

Each blooper from the clip is listed below with the stop/start timings. Although all 13 bloopers are listed, you can stop the quiz whenever you prefer.

1. Allisson Becker	0:00-0:11	What happened next?	0:11-0:33
2. Massimo Taibi	0:33-0:39	What happened next?	0:39-0:58
3. Jordan Pickford	0:58-1:09	What happened next?	1:09- 1:24
4. Fabian Barthez	1:24-1:30	What happened next?	1:30- 1:49
5. Joe Hart	1:49-1:55	What happened next?	1:55- 2:10
6. Kasper Schmeichel	2:10-2:17	What happened next?	2:17- 2:33
7. Dave Beasant	2:33-2:41	What happened next?	2:41-2:50
8. Heurlho Gomes	2:50-2:57	What happened next?	2:57-3:07
9. Thibaut Courtois	3:07-3:15	What happened next?	3:07-3:30
10. David James	3:30-3:36	What happened next?	3:36-3:47
11. Hugo Lloris	3:47-3:50	What happened next?	3:50-4:07
12. Gary Walsh	4:07-4:12	What happened next?	4:12-4:29
13. Peter Enckelman	4:29-4:34	What happened next?	4:34-4:52




ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  Who in your life would you describe as a 'safe pair of hands'?
-  Who can be trusted to keep your confidence and look out for you?
-  What are some of the friendship equivalents of the goalkeeper bloopers we saw earlier?

WORD

Discuss with the group a time when they have been on a long or challenging journey. Discussion prompts are listed below, but the conversation will depend on the experience of the young people. They may have completed a Duke of Edinburgh expedition, climbed a mountain or experienced a long-haul flight. The point of the discussion is to evoke the feelings connected to a long journey.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

-  What's the longest or hardest journey you've ever been on?
-  How long did it take to get there?
-  Did you travel by foot? Did it involve trekking somewhere?

The psalm we are looking at today is part of a series of poetry known as the 'Psalms of Ascent'. These psalms would often be sung on the long journey of pilgrimage taken by Jewish believers on their way to a festival. Watch the clip to discover more and see the kind of terrain they had to navigate while singing these psalms.

 **The Psalms of Ascent (3:17)**
<https://youtu.be/bi33PtWVcfQ>

Give each member of the group a copy of Psalm 121.

As the pilgrims travelled on their journey, they would sing these psalms together. Rather than singing it, we're going to read the psalm together.

PSALM 121 (NRSVA)

A song of ascents.

Leader: ¹I lift up my eyes to the hills –
 from where will my help come?

²My help comes from the Lord,
 who made heaven and earth.

All: ³He will not let your foot be moved;
 he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴He who keeps Israel
 will neither slumber nor sleep.









Leader: ⁵The Lord is your keeper;
 the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

⁶The sun shall not strike you by day,
 nor the moon by night.

All: ⁷The Lord will keep you from all evil;
 he will keep your life.



⁸The Lord will keep
 your going out and your coming in
 from this time on and for evermore.

DISCUSSION

-  What is the key message of this psalm?
-  How would you sum it up in a short phrase?
-  What line or phrase particularly stands out for you or brings you comfort?
-  As you look through the psalm, what word, or derivative of a word, do you notice is repeated?
-  The word 'keeps' is used six times in various forms throughout the psalm. On a long journey pilgrims needed reassurance that they were kept safe by God as they travelled.
-  How is this message relevant to us as we journey through everyday life?
-  Is God the pair of safe hands in your life, or do you look elsewhere for things that make you feel safe?
-  What does it mean to you that you are kept safe by God?

Spend time reading through this psalm each day until we meet again and see if it changes your perspective as you journey through the week.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  Read Psalm 121 in a few different translations using [Bible Gateway](#).
-  What additional insight do the different translations give you into the words of Psalm 121?

WORSHIP

In the next part of the session we will be creating an artistic representation of Psalm 121. As the music plays, reflect on the words and jot down any thoughts and feelings that come to mind as you listen to the song. These may give you ideas for the next part of the session.

 **'Psalm 121' – Acoustic Performance (3:39)**
<https://youtu.be/N2--JcvoGhI>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

What is your response to the following quote, and how does it link to the theme of Psalm 121?

**“ ‘He calls us to trust him so completely that we are unafraid to put ourselves in situations where we will be in trouble if he doesn’t come through.’
— FRANCIS CHAN**

WITNESS

People share their faith in different ways. Often people wear jewellery, display artwork or wear hoodies that reflect their beliefs. Using Psalm 121 as your inspiration, create an item to appear on the Christian website 'Cheerfully Given'.

Give the group an opportunity to look at the website and see the different types of items available.

 **Christian Gifts, Stationery, & Homeware from 240+... | Cheerfully Given**
<https://cheerfullygiven.com/>

Provide the group with paper, felt-tips and other art material to create their design. When they have had sufficient time, ask them to share their ideas with each other. If you're feeling particularly competitive, then you could get them to pitch their idea and choose a winner.

There are lots of different ways to show people that God is the pair of safe hands we trust in.

How do people know that your help comes from God?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Depending on the design ideas, you may want to take one of the products forward and use it as a fundraising idea for a church project.

PSALM 121 (NRSVA)

A song of ascents.

Leader: ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills –
from where will my help come?

² My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

All: ³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

Leader: ⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

All: ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and for evermore.

O COME, O COME, IMMANUEL

SELECTION OF PSALMS

As we move into the season of Advent, we will explore psalms that tell of the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In preparation for the Advent season there will also be an opportunity to bring hope to members of your church.


For the next four sessions, throughout Advent, the Worship section has moved position. This is to enable the group to listen to the song linked to each session and reflect on the words.

There is an Advent calendar-making activity in this session that may need some thought in advance.

WELCOME

Sunday 27 November this year is/was the first Sunday of Advent.

 How do you usually get into the Christmas spirit?

 Does your family have any Christmas rituals that you always take part in?

Many families have started watching a Christmas film for every day in the run-up to Christmas.

Give each member of the group a 'Christmas Films Countdown to Christmas' Handout.

Share ideas for Christmas films, and if you like the sound of the film then add it to your list.

A list of Christmas films are suggested below in case the group runs out of options.

Elf

Arthur Christmas

Home Alone

The Polar Express

The Grinch

Miracle on 34th Street

Olaf's Frozen Adventure

Father Christmas

Mickey's Once Upon a Christmas

The Muppet Christmas Carol

The Gruffalo's Child

Jingle All the Way

The Snowman

Love Actually

The Nightmare Before Christmas

Santa Clause: The Movie

Nativity

The Santa Clause

Rise of the Guardians

A Christmas Carol

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Have a go at the 'Guess the Christmas movie' Quiz.

 **Guess the Christmas Movie By Emojis (4:20)**

https://youtu.be/NqL25Tsm_dk

WORSHIP

Throughout Advent, each session will start with a song that will form the basis for our thoughts and reflections. Today we will listen to the haunting words and melody of 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'. As you listen to the music and reflect on the words, think about the message the song is trying to convey.

▶ 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel' – Austin Stone (4:13)

<https://youtu.be/NVZmFAimeWc>

Read through the lyrics.

'O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL' (SASB 117)

Latin 13th Century, translated by John Mason Neale

Verse 1

O come, O come, Immanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice, Rejoice!

*Immanuel shall come to thee, O
Israel.*

Verse 2

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe:

Verse 3

O come, thou rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of Hell thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave:

Verse 4

O come, thou dayspring, come and
cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to
flight:

Verse 5

O come, thou key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly Home;
Make safe the way that leads on high
And close the path to misery.

DISCUSS

- ▶ What emotions is the song trying to convey?
- ▶ Why do you think these words were set to a tune in the minor key?
- ▶ What are the people waiting for?
- ▶ Do you think it is a song of hope? If so, why?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

To discover more about 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel' watch the clip that shares the story behind the song.

▶ 'O Come, Come, Emmanuel': Story Behind the Song (4:08)

https://youtu.be/j_k4rl2TOh4

Now that you know more about the song and its story, what will it bring to mind when you hear it over the Advent season?

WORD

The words of 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel' point to the hope and longing of the people of Israel as they waited for their Messiah. As we move into the season of Advent, it is important for us to grasp who the Messiah is. In this clip the Old Testament stories and psalms of David are linked with the coming of the Messiah. Watch how the story interconnects and leads to the coming of Emmanuel.

▶ Messiah - YouTube (5:47)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>

Throughout the past few months we have delved into the psalms and discovered more about God's nature. Today we are going to explore how the psalms point to the birth, life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah.

Give each member of the group a copy of the handout 'Jesus in the Psalms'. Give them time to explore each Bible verse and theme and then share together as a group what has been found.

How do the psalms point to the life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 Do you think people in society today want, or need, a Messiah?

WITNESS

The overriding message of 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel' is the hope found in Jesus the Messiah. The aim of this activity is to create an Advent calendar filled with verses of hope. Depending on budget you may divide the group up to create their Advent calendar. This will then be gifted to a member of your church so that they can look up the Bible references of hope each day of Advent.

Discuss with the group who they intend to give their Advent calendar to.

Who do they think needs to hear a message of hope this Christmas?

A variety of options are provided in the links below. The video clips are not intended to watch with the group; they are more as a guide for the different options available for this activity.

If you are using the Baker Ross Advent calendar, then there should be space for you to write the Bible reference alongside the picture. Choose an appropriate activity based on budget and resources available. A list of hope-filled Bible references is also provided, but encourage the group to find their own.

ADVENT CALENDAR OPTIONS:

 **Baker Ross Advent Calendars**
<https://www.bakerross.co.uk/catalogsearch/result/?q=advent+calendar>

 **How To Make Your Own Advent Calendar! (3:30)**
<https://youtu.be/kBc3YE6sJvI>

Make a simple promise box with 24 verses of hope.

There are also numerous ideas listed on Pinterest.

BIBLE VERSES OF HOPE

1 Peter 1:13	1 Peter 5:10	1 Thessalonians 1:3
Colossians 1:27	Ephesians 1:18	Hebrews 10:23
Isaiah 40:31	Mark 9:23	Jeremiah 29:11
Philippians 1:6	Psalms 9:18	Psalms 33:22
Psalms 71:14	Psalms 130:5	Romans 5:5
Romans 8:24	Romans 8:28	Romans 15:13
Philippians 3:13-14	Colossians 3:1-2	2 Corinthians 4:17-18

CHRISTMAS FILMS



JESUS AND THE PSALMS

Explore each theme and Bible verse and note down what you discover about Jesus the Messiah.
How do the Psalms link to the New Testament references in this list?

