



PREPARATION

- Plan a range of activities inspired by the Riverbank Women's Conference
- Share information about the [Riverbank Women's Conference](#) and maybe play the highlights video
- Plan a route for a walk or run, or visit the [NHS Live Well](#) website for some armchair exercises
- Plan an art and craft activity:
 - check out the [Drawing Closer](#) introductory video and accompanying resources
 - provide a range of art resources or ask members to bring their own
- Create a wellness activity:
 - invite a beautician or beauty therapist to give treatments collect skincare/beauty samples to share
 - find a relaxing music soundtrack, maybe with running water sounds
- Invite someone who has attended the Riverbank Conference to talk about their experience
- Check out the music of Lou Fellingham, the Riverbank worship leader, and plan to share some of her songs from her [website](#) or [YouTube channel](#). Consider sharing one of her 'Worship Wednesday' videos

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

📖 'On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there.'
(Acts 16:13 NLT)

When Paul and Timothy landed in the city of Philippi, instead of finding a group of men with whom they could share the good news of Jesus, they encountered the first women's fellowship recorded in the New Testament. They met Lydia, a businesswoman dealing in luxurious purple cloth, together with a group of women. As a result of this encounter with Paul and Timothy, Lydia and her household were converted!

Connect



The Riverbank Women's Conference is held annually in May/June at The Slate Conference Centre, The University of Warwick. It is an opportunity to meet with other women and:

- * encounter God in worship
- * engage in Christian teaching
- * explore our God-given potential

ACTIVITIES

RIVERBANK

Create your group's own version of Riverbank.

A Riverbank walk

Plan your route and distance, make it a relay - whatever works for your group.

A Riverbank run

Plan your route and distance. Or maybe sponsor a runner you know to complete a distance and fundraise through sponsorship for the [Helping-Hand Appeal](#).

Riverbank art and craft

Share the [Drawing Closer](#) art resources, and encourage members to explore the Bible through art.

Alternatively, members could create their own images of Lydia and friends at the riverbank in Philippi - modern or historical.

Riverbank wellbeing

Invite everyone to join in a wellbeing session. Create a calming space, perhaps by playing relaxing music that includes running water, for members to enjoy a few minutes of relaxation.

Perhaps a beautician or beauty therapist could give beauty treatments. Or share round some skincare/beauty samples.

Speaker

Invite someone who has attended the Riverbank Conference to share their testimony about their time there.

Connect



Riverbank worship

Create a time of worship with the music of Lou Fellingham, the Riverbank worship leader. If you have the time, consider sharing a 'Worship Wednesday' video with your group.

BIBLE READING/THOUGHT

The inspiration for the name of The Salvation Army's annual women's conference, Riverbank, comes from the powerful story of Lydia found in Acts 16:13-15. This woman of such great reputation, class and wealth had an amazing conversion story, and if she were to give her testimony today it would still inspire and encourage, especially women, in our faith.

Lydia was probably what we could call a polytheist, a Gentile from a faith tradition that worshipped more than one god. But she had come to know the beliefs and practices of the Jewish faith. She was from Thyatira in Asia, an area colonised by the Romans, and was a successful dealer in purple cloth. She was basically in the fashion industry and the CEO of her own successful business!

Purple dye was considered luxurious because it was rare and would not wash out when it was used. Of all the dyes, it had the most value and, in those days, it could cost more than gold! The dye was extracted from the root of the madder plant or from the glands of a shellfish. Lydia traded in purple fabric which was in high demand because it would have been used to make Roman toga.

It is possible that Lydia travelled to Philippi on business and on the Sabbath found herself on the banks of the river with a group of women who gathered there to pray. When Paul and Timothy arrived in Philippi, they went looking for the men who would be gathered at the synagogue. Jewish rules stated that if ten Jewish men lived in a locality, then they would build a synagogue. But Paul and Timothy couldn't find the men. Instead, they found Lydia, which gave her the opportunity to hear for the first time about Jesus and the opportunity he brought for salvation.

Lydia's response was to allow God to open her heart, to publicly declare her faith by being baptised, and then to invite Paul and Timothy into her home so that her household and family could hear the good news and be baptised too. This decision to become a follower of Jesus was a bold one. Christians were laughed at, punished, and even persecuted at this time, and yet she was convinced to commit her life to Christ. Perhaps Lydia had already been searching for the truth. God orchestrated the events of her life and Paul's life so they could cross paths at the right time.

Connect



The account of Lydia brings inspiration and challenge. We might say, ‘What a woman!’ She wasn’t afraid to listen to something new, to respond to God, to share what she had learned and experienced and even face potential persecution. She may well have been the person that established the first Christian church in Europe. How amazing!

But this story of Lydia is not unique. God will orchestrate events so we can access what we need. He will present us with options, then he will step back and allow us to choose how to respond. God will part the Red Sea, but we must use our own feet to cross it. He will allow manna to fall, but we have to go out and pick it up. He will send the Holy Spirit, but we need to invite him into our lives.

God wants us to be in relationship with him, to meet with him, to put him first in our lives and not allow anything else to get in the way. The Bible tells us about so many people who encountered Jesus. Some, like Nicodemus and the rich young ruler in the Gospels, were unable to put aside their status or wealth to follow him. We pray that God will open our hearts to be more like Lydia, to believe in him and to follow his guiding throughout our lives. We pray we will find our own Riverbank, that space where we can encounter God and open our hearts to his leading.

SONGS

- ♪ ‘Everlasting Arms (Lean hard)’ by Lou Fellingham
Watch the [music video](#) (no lyrics).
- ♪ ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul (10,000 reasons)’ by Matt Redman
Watch the [lyric video](#).
- ♪ ‘Hear the call of the Kingdom’ by Keith and Kristyn Getty
Watch the [lyric video](#).
- ♪ SASB 30 ‘He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater’
Watch the [instrumental lyric video](#) including verses from John 11 by The Salvation Army International Headquarters.
- ♪ SASB 407 ‘Are you seeking joys that will not fade’
Watch the [music video](#) (no lyrics) by The Brisbane City Songsters.

Connect



WEBSITE AND CONTACT DETAILS

- Connect website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect
- Family Ministries website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/families
- Emails: 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