



Mission to Serve
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES **2018**



Mission to Serve

The shared theme of Women's Ministries throughout the world in 2018 is 'Mission to Serve'.

In Luke's Gospel (22:26b-27) Jesus says: '*... the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*'

And in John 15:15 Jesus says: '*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*'

This year's Bible studies will encourage you to reflect on what it means to serve the Lord in your daily life and to serve others in his name.

These studies are designed to be flexible and allow for the addition of material that is relevant to your culture and context.

Each study includes four sections which can be explored with your group, as follows:

1. What the Bible says – where you explore 'What does the text actually say?'

It is important that you read the Bible carefully and allow it to speak to you and guide the content of your study.

2. Our lives today – considers such questions as:

- What does the Bible reading tell you about your life?
- Does it highlight any problems in society?
- What challenges are there for the way you live your life?

3. Discussion questions – depending upon where you are using the studies, you may choose to select one or two that seem most suitable for you, or ask different groups to discuss other aspects and possibly, if you have time, share what they have been speaking about.

4. Ready to serve – this is designed to give you something to take away and do before you next meet.

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Mission – To serve with a Christlike compassion

Bible Reading – Matthew 25:31-46 and Matthew 9:35-38

*‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’
(Matthew 25:40)*

What the Bible says

‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another’ (Zechariah 7:9) was the cry of God to his people through the Old Testament prophets. And then Jesus stepped into history and brought us a wonderful example of compassion in action. The motivation for his earthly mission was a deep-seated compassion for mankind.

Jesus not only proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom and taught its values, but also served suffering humanity – he fed the hungry, cured the sick, cast out demons, cleansed the leper, restored speech to the dumb and sight to the blind, and raised the dead. We see him spending time with society’s outcasts, taking on menial tasks, such as washing the feet of his disciples. He was their Master, their Teacher but he humbled himself, took the task of a servant and then explained, *‘I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you’* (John 13:15). He constantly emphasised in word and deed that he *‘did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’* (Matthew 20:28).

We see in Jesus one who not only told people of the Kingdom of God, but also showed them the Kingdom by his lifestyle and his compassionate, merciful attitude to those in need. Service came naturally to him. It was ignited by a heart full of love, care, concern and kindness – a heart filled with compassion as seen in Matthew 9:36: *‘When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.’*

In Matthew chapter 25 Jesus spoke of the final judgement and explained that nations will be separated into two groups and the King will say to those who have shown compassion to their fellow man: *‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance’* (v 34), and to those who have exclusively looked to their own well-being, he will say: *‘Depart from me’* (v 41). To the surprise of both groups, he explained the importance of those acts of love and service to their neighbours in that *‘The King will reply... “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”’* (Matthew 25:40), and also that living compassionately would affect their eternal destiny.

Our lives today

As Jesus’ disciples we need to reflect the same compassion shown by Jesus. Our love for him must be directly linked with our love and service for others.

Lieut-Colonel Alida Bosshardt is a wonderful example of someone who compassionately served others. During the Second World War she fled from the occupying forces taking 70-plus Jewish children to safety, and following the war she worked tirelessly in the red-light district of Amsterdam. She dedicated the rest of her life to the women; lived among them and loved and served them. The result of her compassionate service was that she was known as ‘The Angel of Amsterdam’. I had the privilege of knowing her and she would say:

‘To serve God is to serve others. To serve others is to serve God. To love God is to love our neighbour. To love our neighbour is to love God.’



She was right! We cannot separate our service to God from our service to others! They are interconnected. Jesus demonstrated this truth throughout his earthly life.

Let our lives be filled with compassionate service as we follow the example of our Master and by so doing we will demonstrate our love for him! As disciples of Jesus our service to others is not an 'added extra' but an essential part of our daily living!

Discussion questions

1. Encourage each other to choose one occasion in the Gospels when Jesus was moved with compassion. What is its importance to you today.
2. Share your thoughts on Lieut-Colonel Bosshardt's motto: 'To serve God is to serve others. To serve others is to serve God.'
3. Discuss ways in which you could compassionately serve the community in which you find yourselves.

Ready to serve

Let us take to heart the instruction given in Philippians 2:3-5: *'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.'*

Commissioner Silvia Cox, IHQ, from the Switzerland, Austria and Hungary Territory (having served in Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Finland, Southern Africa and the United Kingdom with the Republic of Ireland).

As the World President of Women's Ministries my aim is to continue serving the Lord in London and during my travels.

Mission – To serve with urgency

Bible Reading – John 9:1-15 and Romans 10:13-15

*'As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me.
Night is coming, when no one can work.'*
(John 9:4)

What the Bible says

The remarkable healing of a man born blind is a clear sign of Jesus' mission and ministry. Jesus made use of every opportunity to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God in word and deed. He knew that his time on earth was limited. His arrest, trial and execution were at hand. His hour had almost come.

Jesus was fully aware of the urgency of his mission to finish the work that the Father had given him to do. He urged the disciples to follow in his steps by adhering unconditionally to God's purpose for their lives, take the opportunity to be his witnesses, spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, and love their neighbours as themselves and, in so doing, help them to be born into the Kingdom of God.

As Christians, we do not know how long we will live on this earth – if we will reach a good old age or if our lifetime will be shortened by sickness or accident. God knows! In Psalm 31:15 David acknowledged that his times were in God's hands. Our times, our years are also in his hands! We do not know if we will reach 70 or 80 years of age; according to Moses it is possible if our strength endures (Psalm 90:10). Still the years will quickly pass, so let us make wise use of our limited time and urgently proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to our family, friends and neighbours.

The Church of Christ, the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ, has also limited time on earth. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church of the Thessalonians that God will take the Christians to be with him in Heaven. *'For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever'* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). With this in mind the Church of Christ should passionately witness for Jesus, share the gospel, and love and serve people with urgency. Time is short, so they should really go for it!

Our lives today

Jesus encouraged his disciples to faithfully minister to people 'as long as it is day'. He warned them that *'Night is coming, when no one can work'* (John 9:4).

In many countries of the world, Christians are persecuted simply because they are followers of Jesus. The organisation Open Doors, founded in 1955 by Andrew van der Bijl, publishes every year a World Watch List of the top 50 countries where Christians face the most severe persecution (opendoors.org). Worldwide 215 million Christians suffer from hardship, death threats and persecution. Coming together for worship, evangelising and publicly witnessing for Jesus is prohibited in these countries. Christians do not have freedom to express and exercise their faith. Many Christians become refugees; they choose to flee their home country in order to save their lives. Others decide to stay and persevere. They witness in secret and God knows their deeds of love, their faith and service for him and their neighbours.

My husband and I are soldiers at a corps in London. Corps members listen, counsel and give practical



help to people in need living in the communities surrounding the corps. A woman was in urgent need of support because she had become homeless due to no longer being able to pay a high rent. A social worker connected to the corps counselled and guided her. He helped her to clear her debts and find an affordable rental house in another city. He also brought her into contact with the local Salvation Army corps in her new place of residence. Relationships developed between her and the corps people and now she is a born-again Christian and an adherent of the corps community.

Being sensitive to the spiritual and physical needs of people and acting without hesitation is fulfilling our mission to serve with urgency!

Discussion questions

1. Read again John 9:1-15 and discuss the fact that Jesus healed the man born blind with urgency. How does this Bible passage increase your sense of urgency in sharing the gospel?
2. What do you think about the return of the Lord Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and John 14:3-4) and how does his return influence your service for the Kingdom of God?
3. Comment on John 14:12 *'Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.'*

Ready to serve

Let us appreciate and be thankful for our spiritual freedom and make use of every opportunity to boldly witness for our Saviour and Lord as long as it is day!

Pray for opportunities in your daily routine to serve people with urgency.

Major Coby de Ligt-Oosterheerd, IHQ, from The Netherlands, Czech Republic and Slovakia Territory (having served in The Netherlands, East Africa, Kenya East, Kenya West and Bangladesh).

As Programme Officer in International Emergency Services, I want to be faithful in loving God and serving people in their spiritual and physical needs.

Mission – To serve as a witness

Bible Reading – Isaiah 6:1-9

*‘Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”’
(v 8)*

What the Bible says

Jesus came into the world to be an unblemished sacrifice and to reveal God to mankind. Part of his mission was to be an expert witness concerning God. We are told in the chapter 1 of the book of John, that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word became light to light the way for mankind.

Jesus came as an expert witness to give a first-hand account of the triune God. Who better than God himself to testify about his own character? Jesus came to give us direct access to the Holy One. In his daily life he showed us the character of God, a God who is loving, faithful, merciful, unchanging, just... the list goes on.

Knowing that his time on earth was limited he gathered disciples so that they, too, could become witnesses to who God is. Jesus did what God had been doing since the Fall of Man. He called people into relationship to experience his holiness. In our reading from the book of Isaiah we see such an encounter. Isaiah was given a vision and his response was to acknowledge that he was unworthy to stand in the presence of the Holy One. He professed to needing atonement to be in the presence of God. God provided that atonement and called him into mission. When the questions came: ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’, the immediate response was: ‘Here am I. Send me!’

Such was the case for the disciples as well. As soon as the call came to follow they left everything to follow Jesus. They spent three years experiencing his holy character and becoming eyewitnesses to all that he said and did. They were eyewitnesses to the healing miracles he performed as well as the way he interacted with people on a daily basis. Jesus visited people who had the reputation of being sinners: he talked with a Samaritan woman, he interacted with a woman caught in adultery, he conversed with a member of the Jewish ruling council.

Scripture tells us that all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus’ mission as an expert witness was to make sure that everyone experienced the love of God.

Our lives today

After his mission on earth was done Jesus met with his disciples to give them some final instructions. Acts 1:8 states: ‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

His disciples were given instructions about being witnesses. It was not a matter of if they wanted to or not, they were directed to be witnesses.

It can be hard being a witness in this day and age and many people shy away from doing it because of the response they think they will receive. The most important thing to remember about being a witness is that you are simply telling about your personal experience. Your job is not to convince anyone but to tell your story. The good thing for us as witnesses is that we have been given the gift of God the Holy Spirit. He does the hard part of convicting people and drawing them to himself.



Jesus came to fulfil a mission of reconciliation as an expert witness and he completed his mission by dying on the Cross and making a way back to God for mankind. His mission was accomplished. God would not give us a mission to fulfil if it was something that we could not do – if it was something that we did not have the tools to accomplish.

Jesus did not allow the scepticism of the day to deter him from fulfilling his mission. He understood that people who live in darkness do not understand the light until it shines on them. We are called into mission with God to be his witnesses in a world that is in darkness.

Discussion questions

1. What is the main thing that frightens you about sharing your testimony?
2. When was the last time you shared your testimony with someone? Have you written it down to become more familiar with it so that it becomes second nature to you?
3. Acts 22:15 states: 'You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.' How can you faithfully fulfil this Scripture in your daily life?

Ready to serve

Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and share your testimony with people he leads you to. Are there people you see every day that need you to be a witness? Shine your light!

Major Ana Frazer, IHQ, from USA Eastern Territory – serving at the International College for Officers/Centre for Spiritual Life Development.

As Assistant Secretary for Spiritual Life Development, my aim, my goal, my prayer is: 'Lord, use me; help me to serve you faithfully.'

Mission – To serve in my family

Bible Reading – Ruth chapter 1

‘But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”’
(vv 16-17)

What the Bible says

What made Ruth so determined to follow Naomi? In her declaration, Ruth not only shows her fidelity to Naomi, but also to the God whom Naomi worshipped. We should notice that when Naomi sent them back to their mothers’ homes, she did not ask them to keep the faith of the family. Ruth must have seen something special from her Ephrathite mother-in-law in the past 10 years.

We see in verses 8-9 that Naomi had a strong, unselfish love for her two daughters-in-law. She always thought of what was best for them, and in this situation, the best for Orpah and Ruth was to have a new family with another husband. Then, they would have refuge and provision for their future. She did not bother whether she would be left alone.

Naomi was also a woman of strong faith. Her faith in God did not diminish in times of famine or bereavement. In verse 6, Naomi was still watching what God was doing around her. She must have always mentioned the mercy and faithfulness of God in the family. In her blessing in verses 8-9, she asked for the ‘kindness’ of God to be shown to them. This ‘kindness’ originally meant committed love in a covenant relationship.¹ Naomi told Orpah and Ruth that the Almighty God is faithful to his people. His love is unfailing.

Ruth saw with her own eyes how Naomi went through all those difficult times. Her faith in God must have impressed her.

Ruth’s declaration resonates with Naomi’s blessing. Verse 14 states that ‘Ruth clung to her’. The word ‘clung’ is used to describe ‘a relationship that is binding, all-encompassing and exclusive’.² This word also appears in Genesis 2:24 (*International Standard Version*) when a man and a woman established a relationship after leaving their fathers and mothers. We may see this even more clearly if we read Deuteronomy 10:20, where God asked the Israelites to ‘hold fast’ to him.

Naomi witnessed to her faith in God through her reaction to difficult times. She reflected God’s steadfast love to her family members. Finally, Ruth was convinced and committed herself to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Naomi. Both Naomi and Ruth had the same committed love for each other.

Our lives today

Some Christians are so busily involved in church ministries that they forget their own families. They always think of people in the community, in the workplace or even in other countries. Our own families are so close that they stay in the blind spot of our sight. We need to know that we are ‘under observation’ by our family members – Christians or non-Christians. They would like to know the impact of our faith.

¹ Author Debra Reid wrote: *Discovering Ruth and Esther*, Crossway Bible Guides, p 37

² Ibid, p 36



We will be encouraged by the testimony of a Malaysian soldier from the Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar Territory, that has been shared by Lieut-Colonel Edward Hill.

A few years ago, a young man by the name of Ganesan – a Hindu living in Banting, Malaysia – was riding his motorcycle. Sadly, he was involved in a collision and was run over by a four-ton truck. There was little expectation that he would survive. A friend of the family asked the local corps officer, Major Kunam, to visit Ganesan in hospital.

Major Kunam went to the hospital and prayed over Ganesan's broken body. Over time, Ganesan not only made an amazing physical recovery but was also moved by the power of the gospel being shared with him, and became a follower of Jesus Christ. Major Kunam suggested to Ganesan that, as a Christian, it might be a good idea for him to change his name because Ganesan was named after a prominent Hindu deity. After some consideration, Ganesan chose the name Gideon because he was impressed by the story of that mighty Old Testament follower of God.

Immediately Gideon committed himself to speaking to his large and extended Hindu family about the transformation that had taken place in his life. Over the weeks, one by one, they accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Months later, Ganesan was enrolled as a soldier of The Salvation Army along with nine other members of his family. He has also responded to the call of God on his life to become an officer and plans to enter the officer training college in the next couple of years.

From Ganesan to Gideon – a wonderful example of how God can transform a life through miraculous circumstances and then use that life to accomplish incredible things for his glory!

Discussion questions

1. Why is it important to witness in your own family?
2. Why can it be difficult to witness to our faith with family members?
3. What is the best opportunity for you to witness to your faith? Share your experience.

Ready to serve

Each day, let us give at least 10 minutes to one family member by listening about their day and praying for their concerns.

Major Sara Tam, IHQ, from Hong Kong and Macau Command (having served in Taiwan).

As the Assistant Under Secretary for the South Pacific and East Asia Zone based in London, I serve in my family by praying for them every day.

Mission – To serve in my community/neighbourhood

Bible Reading – Luke 10:25-37

“‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”
(Mark 12:31)

What the Bible says

The parable of the Good Samaritan is all about love. Love matters regardless of religion, social status or anything that one may consider precious. This particular parable emerges from a conversation between Jesus and an expert of the law who believes his self-righteousness is built on keeping the laws of his religion. Jesus used parables to explain the question the expert raised: ‘Who is my neighbour?’ The word ‘neighbour’ in Greek means ‘someone who is near’, yet in Hebrew, ‘someone that you have an association with’. Anything done without true love might not necessarily please God and that is why everyone is expected to ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ (Luke 10:27).

The passage of Scripture explains how a traveller fell among robbers while journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho. This encounter put his life at risk. He is not the only one travelling on that route. Three other people are mentioned. One is a priest who is usually engaged in religious affairs and who gave no thought, showed no compassion and passed by, hurrying to do his duty in the temple. Then a Levite came that way. He, too, was possessed by religious rites and perhaps thought that touching a bloodstained body would defile him from performing his ceremonial duty; or perhaps he did not want to take the risk and fail to do his assignments waiting at the temple. Another man, a Samaritan, who unlike the priest and the Levite is not of Jewish origin, had pity on him. He went to the injured man, bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, before he took him on his donkey to an inn, to be cared for. Here is the manifestation of true love: love with heart, soul, strength and mind. To have pity, means to love with heart and soul. To pour oil and wine, to bandage wounds, shows love in action. The Samaritan used his physical strength, though he himself must have been tired from travelling. Finally, he chose to rescue the man from dying and this demonstrates how to love ‘with all your mind’. This is true love in action, as demonstrated by Christ on the Cross.

The word ‘love’ is common; but it is often abused. Jesus, who himself is love, talked about love – ‘agape’ – to the expert of the law. Had there not been the Samaritan, there would not have been a difference in the life of the victim. It is evident in the parable that the religious men did not care for another Jew when he was in desperate need; on the contrary, a stranger who had no association culturally with the wounded man helped to save his life. It is true, as the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.’ All that is said in these words can be found in the Samaritan’s attitude. He showed love in practical ways and continued caring by meeting the costs of the treatment.

Our lives today

As followers of Jesus we are expected to love in the same way he demonstrated love, by becoming a sacrifice so that all of us would find life in all its fullness. ‘Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (John 15:13). We can see around us that there are wounded people – perhaps not physically, but a number of them are emotionally wounded by what is happening around the world and in their families in particular. Broken families, economic disadvantage, physical complications, the list goes on and on... People are emotionally upset, given no option to recover. They cry day and night as they carry these heavy loads, but they may find comfort in the words of this verse of the great



healer, who invites everyone: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). There are many people who pass through difficult circumstances, and comforters are scarce. Empathy is important for those who are grieving. In my Asian culture it is mostly women who weep for any unmet needs.

May we find courage to approach others, removing cultural barriers within our minds so that we can be with them, to bring them back to being more emotionally balanced so that they are also considered to be created by God in his image. The expert of the law discovered that a neighbour is not necessarily someone who is a relative or a friend, but could be anyone, in any situation.

Discussion questions

1. Look for any passage of Scripture that tells of those who served a stranger, had compassion on him or her and which demonstrates how to love your neighbour.
2. What kind of love is common in the world and how can it be replaced, for example, where you live, with the love of God?
3. Discuss in groups why there is no true love, though people everywhere talk much about love, even within the Church.

Ready to serve

Jesus said to the expert in the law, 'Go and do likewise' (Luke 10:37). It is not hard to find the wounded or victims around us because they have become a common sight where we live. Let us go individually or in groups to comfort, to sympathise and to help people recover from circumstances that make them unhappy. Let us drive away cultural barriers and step out in faith. A good deed done for the Lord has its own blessings in return.

Lieut-Colonel Rajam Daniel, from India South Eastern Territory (having served in India in divisions and at THQ, the training college and India National Secretariat).

As Territorial Secretary for Women's Ministries in India Northern Territory, I desire with all my heart to love and serve those I meet every day.

Mission – To serve the stranger/refugees

Bible Reading – Exodus 23:9 and Hebrews 13:2

*'Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners,
because you were foreigners in Egypt.'*
(Exodus 23:9)

What the Bible says

God started by telling his children – the Israelites – to treat strangers well, because they knew what being a stranger in a foreign land meant. They were once strangers in Egypt. The Bible has many verses that talk about strangers and how we, as believers and followers of Jesus Christ, are supposed to stay with them and treat them. Doing good to strangers is to accept God's calling for us to give ourselves fully in love and action, not just in words in support of others. We represent God here on earth and God wants these people to have their joy and hope back. That is our duty and, as we do that, they will see the love of God and follow him, as we do. Jesus said: *'I was a stranger and you invited me in'* (Matthew 25:35).

The Bible describes different kinds of strangers. There are those who visit us in our homes. The Bible instructs us to welcome them happily and treat them well, making them feel valued and respected. There are those who have come into our countries to work. We are asked to maintain good relationships with them, be close to them and offer support. By doing this they will enjoy being with us and will contribute well to the work they have come to do. The Salvation Army is international and one day you may find yourself in a similar position. How would you like to be treated in a foreign land? Definitely, you would like to be treated well ... therefore do unto others as you would have done to you. Strangers could be immigrants or refugees who have left their countries for various reasons like war, hunger, earthquake, hurricane, drought or flood. Strangers might be people from other denominations and religions. Therefore, let us not look down on strangers, refugees or immigrants because of their challenges.

Hebrews 13:2 and Romans 12:13 tell us to show kindness to all strangers when they visit us, come to work with us or run to us for refuge. By doing this, we could be welcoming an angel without knowing it, and God will bless us. God himself loves strangers and cares for them. He gives them food and cares for their various needs. He protects them. God calls himself a refuge for strangers and those suffering (Psalm 46:1). Because God's heart is for strangers, immigrants and refugees, he directs our hearts towards the same people so that our ministry will touch his heart. We are to give strangers food and clothing because God does that and wants to continue doing that through us, his ambassadors (Deuteronomy 10:17-19). The Bible teaches us that God loves everyone – strangers, refugees and immigrants. The word of God says all are created in the image of God. It is important to respect everyone, wherever they come from. Before the Lord we are all equally valued.

Our lives today

Many have lost the blessing because they forgot to show kindness and love to others, but instead have loved themselves more than strangers and immigrants. Remember that God will bless us when he sees our dedication to supporting strangers, refugees and immigrants. When these people cry to God, he sees their tears and stands to punish those causing their suffering. God heard the cry of the Israelites in Egypt and came to their rescue punishing those that caused their pain.

Even today we have a large number of strangers, refugees and immigrants around us. They suffer and go through all kinds of difficulties. Some cry because they have been separated from their families and



loved ones and do not know if they will see them again. Some are bitter because their loved ones were killed, or they have lost everything they worked for because of war or other circumstances.

We can do all things through God who strengthens us to help those suffering around us. We are encouraged to give them clothes, food, shelter or anything else they need. Let us remember the work of our Founder, William Booth, who gave the needy soup then the word of God. There are many spiritual refugees and immigrants – they don't know Jesus Christ. They do not have a spiritual refuge. We must invite them in and share with them the good news so that they too can enter into the everlasting Kingdom of God as citizens of Heaven and children of God.

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think the heart of God is so much for strangers, refugees and immigrants to the extent that he instructs believers to treat them well?
2. When God says he gives strangers, refugees and immigrants food and clothing, how does he do that (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)?
3. Is there anyone amongst you who has ever been a stranger, a refugee or an immigrant in another country? How did you feel?

Ready to serve

During this period, put these words from Scripture into practice: look for refugees, immigrants or foreigners that are near you and be determined to be God's hand, voice and feet to give joy, encouragement, hope and strength to these people. Ask God to help you and he will definitely do that.

Commissioner Grace Mnyampi, IHQ, from Tanzania Territory (having served in East Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya West and Uganda).

As Zonal Secretary for Women's Ministries for the Africa Zone, I try my best, with the Lord's help, to be a good citizen in this foreign land and to do what he wants me to do. 'Mission to Serve' is my daily life.

Mission – To serve the sick

Bible Reading – Mark 2:1-12

*‘When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven” ...
“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”’
(vv 5, 11)*

What the Bible says

To understand our key verses more clearly we need to read the whole of Mark chapter 2. Jesus came back to Capernaum where people were waiting for him. In a short time, the house was full, clearly showing the faith and eagerness of the people to see Jesus. There was no space to get in so some men, carrying a paralysed man, uncovered the roof and lowered him down into Jesus’ presence. Here we can see the great faith of the sick man and his friends. They didn’t give up because it was overcrowded; they still did everything they could possibly do to see Jesus. Their action demonstrated the love of these friends towards the sick man as well as their belief that Jesus would cure him. Jesus recognised the faith of his friends. Faith impresses Jesus. On many occasions Jesus said: ‘Your faith has made you whole.’

In those days it was believed that sickness was due to sin, but Jesus made it clear that what happens to a person is not necessarily because of sin. In Luke 13:4-5, Jesus said to his disciples: *‘Those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.’*

In the Gospels we read that Jesus had compassion and healed many people, without discrimination. For example:

- The man with leprosy, an outcast. In Matthew 8:2-3 we read: *‘A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.’*
- In Mark 5:34 Jesus said to the woman: *‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’*
- In Matthew 8:13 we read about the servant of a Roman centurion: *‘Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.’*
- Matthew 15:28 mentions the daughter of a non-Jewish Canaanite woman: *‘Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.’*

Our lives today

Even in this busy life we are blessed by the fellowship of our church/corps. We should thank God that we have a place to worship. In Matthew 18:20 we read: *‘For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.’* When we are together, we are encouraged to pray for the sick and share each other’s burdens. In the days of the Gospels, Jesus healed many sick people who were brought to him.

Caring for the sick has always been considered an essential part of the mission of the Church. To care for and serve the sick is to serve Christ. We are called to bring the light of the Word of God and the power of grace to all those who suffer and to those who care for them. We should work together to help those who suffer illness. In Galatians 6:2 we read: *‘Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you*



will fulfil the law of Christ.’ The Lord said, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mark 12:31). When someone is sick they may be worried and depressed, perhaps feeling lost and alone, so we should show the love of God and a warm touch to make them feel better. They will regain self-confidence and, as we show compassion towards them, they will feel less alone and depressed. As Romans 12:10 urges: ‘Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.’

Like those who brought the sick man into the Lord’s presence, we should be concerned for the sick by including them in our prayers. Service to the sick will always be better when practised with kindness, dedication, compassion and love. Prayer brings victory.

Discussion questions

1. How do you feel or react when you are suffering with sickness?
2. Discuss ways in which we can help each other during our sicknesses.
3. How can we develop love, care and faith in ourselves?

Ready to serve

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective, so let us practise this in our community and be a witness to the world we live in because, even on the darkest night, no one doubts that the morning will come again.

Mrs Premalatha Balachandar, soldier and Pastoral Care Council member at Leytonstone Corps, North London Division, United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland (having served as a Nurse Clinician in Sharjah Ministry of Health (MOH), UAE; Nursing Officer in Quriyat MOH, Oman; Staff Nurse in Aramco, Saudi Arabia; Staff Nurse at Hawalli Handicapped Centre, Kuwait; Staff Nurse at The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Hospital, Nagercoil, India).

As a Staff Nurse for the National Health Service in the UK, I pray that the Lord will let his love shine through all that I do, so those in need may hear and feel him. I also pray that the Lord will guide my hands and my heart as I care for my patients each day: ‘Lord let me be your instrument in all that I do.’

Mission – To serve the marginalised

Bible Reading – John 8:1-11

*‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’
(Luke 4:18-19)*

What the Bible says

The words of Jesus in Luke chapter 4 are powerful, challenging and relevant for all of us who believe in him and desire to follow in his footsteps. These words were first recorded in Isaiah 61:1-2 and were later spoken by Jesus during his inauguration into his ministry. His message concerning his mission is clear as he proclaims that God’s promise of transformation is real and available to everyone. Jesus was so moved with compassion and grace for the marginalised that his first point of action was to reach out to them. They were the lost and the least – the lowest of society – often abandoned by family and shunned by their communities. It made no difference who they were or what brought them to this crisis point in their lives, Jesus did what only he can do – he poured out his love and mercy and set the prisoners free. The significant truth to our hearts is that the Holy Spirit that led him forward into service has been given to us. Jesus’ mission to serve those who are helpless and hopeless with the good news of the gospel of freedom and deliverance was – and continues to be – directed towards every area of need, poverty and problem of humanity.

Even though Jesus often faced opposition and criticism, we learn from his example that what matters most is being there, reaching out to serve and save those who need the Saviour.

An excellent example of this is found in John 8:1-11 and the story of the woman caught in adultery.

What did the people see? Her accusers and the people around her saw a sinful, guilty woman who had broken the law and deserved to die. So she was dragged through the city streets, humiliated by public accusation and disclosure of her sin. Her sin was evident. Her shame was visible. Her sentence was unquestionable. The woman stared at the ground. She saw no acceptance or kindness and she was aware of the stones in the hands of the accusers. **What did Jesus see?** He saw a woman who needed the Saviour. He saw a woman who was bound by sin, needing forgiveness and to be set free. What did Jesus do – his move was subtle and his message unmistakable. He stooped down and as he wrote in the dirt he said: *‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her’* (v 7).

Jesus stood, looked into the face of the woman and said: *‘Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin’* (v 11). Jesus saw a woman in a tangled, broken mess worthy of his love and, in healing her broken, wounded spirit he set her free.

Our lives today

The words of Jesus in Luke chapter 4 were significant for him and yet very applicable to those of us who are called to follow him in his mission as true servants of our Servant Lord.

Jesus calls us to follow him in his mission. He calls us to spend our lives serving in his name as we faithfully spread his Kingdom of love, grace and mercy, bringing blessings to the poor, liberty to the captives, healing to the broken-hearted, forgiveness for the guilty, freedom for those who feel controlled, and release for those who feel trapped, abused or forgotten.

People need the Lord. My prayer is that God will help us to serve faithfully so that we can make a



difference in the lives of the marginalised. We must impact and influence our world with the good news that Jesus came to give hope, peace and joy! When the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, we will find the courage to reach out to the poor, wounded, broken, desperate and needy of our world and passionately serve them in the powerful name of Jesus. These people are all around us, so we need to open our eyes in faith so we can see them the way Jesus sees them.

Discussion questions

1. What does the passage in John 8:1-11 (the woman caught in adultery) show us about Jesus' attitude towards the marginalised in our communities?
2. What message do you feel the Lord is speaking into your heart concerning your attitude as God calls you to serve the marginalised?
3. Since Jesus' mission is also our mission, what opportunities are available in your community to share the good news of transformation with your neediest neighbour?

Ready to serve

During this next month, get involved in activities in your corps/church/community that are specifically focused on serving the marginalised. It may take you out of your comfort zone, but have courage to do something new that will mobilise you to be fully engaged in God's mission in the world.

Commissioner Rosalie Peddle, IHQ, from Canada and Bermuda Territory (having served in Canada, New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga, and the United Kingdom with the Republic of Ireland).

As the World Secretary for Women's Ministries, I ask God every day to open my eyes so that I am alive, alert and aware of the needs of the marginalised people around me. His mission is my mission and I want to be a bright light of hope as I serve those who are in need of the love of Jesus with deep compassion and bold courage.

Mission – To serve in my corps/church

Bible Reading – 1 Peter 4:7-11 and Philippians 2:1-11

*'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others,
as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.'
(1 Peter 4:10)*

What the Bible says

The greatest example we have of servanthood is Jesus. In Philippians 2:7, Paul writes that he took *'the very nature of a servant'*. He became a human being in order to serve us here on earth, giving up heavenly privileges and humbling himself in the service of others. We see in the Bible many instances where Jesus was prompted to serve and help others, where he carried out the smallest of tasks for those deemed unworthy by society. He didn't see himself as higher, or more important than others, but saw and met the needs of the people he came in contact with. In John 13:15, after washing the disciples' feet, Jesus told them, *'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you'*. We must be ready to follow the example of Jesus and look for opportunities to be servants in the world today.

1 Peter 4:10 reminds us that the gifts we have come from God, and that we should be ready to use these in the service of others. These gifts are not to be kept to ourselves but are to be used in the best way we can to glorify God. We are mere stewards of these gifts and must use them as God intended. As he has showered us with particular blessings and gifts, then so we must be willing to share these for the benefit and encouragement of others. We must listen for the Spirit's prompting to act and offer our service in our daily lives, being willing and eager to serve wherever there are opportunities or need.

Returning to Philippians 2:3, Paul writes: *'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.'* God calls each one of us to have a servant nature, regardless of our status or authority, and to live as servants following the perfect example of Christ.

Our lives today

We want to focus particularly on our service within our own corps/church fellowship and what we can offer in the way of service as individuals. I'm sure we can all relate to turning up for the meeting on a Sunday morning to be greeted by a warm welcome and a smile, expecting the hall to be warm and clean, and in some places, the cup of tea and cakes to be ready for after the service for us all to enjoy ... these are only a few things, but I'm sure you know what I'm getting at.

Many of us have busy day-to-day lives and may find it hard to commit to something on a weekly basis, but once every few weeks on a rota may be an option we might be able to consider. Is there a rota for hall cleaning on a weekday, or a rota for washing the cups on a Sunday morning? It may be that you can get alongside someone in the corps/church who is struggling, offering practical help or sending a card of encouragement and prayerful support. It might be offering to transport someone when their usual driver isn't available.

We must be mindful of the effort and work involved in the life of our corps/church and be aware and open to the opportunities for us to contribute in service. It's not about giving a huge amount to gain applause and thanks, but giving a portion of our time in service to the life of the corps/church and for the benefit of the whole. And through it all, we give God the glory and the praise.



Discussion questions

1. It's often difficult to see what we have to offer when all around us people seem so much more skilled or gifted. Consider and discuss what particular gifts you see in those in your group.
2. What are the many tasks that are required to be done in order for our corps/church to function as it does? Discuss particular tasks where you feel you might be able to serve.
3. Discuss how your 'offering of service' might benefit you and the wider corps/church family.

Ready to serve

In these days, let us open our eyes to the opportunities for service in our corps/church and be ready to willingly offer ourselves for the benefit of others, praying that God will use us and bless us abundantly as we do so.

Mrs Pamela Hunter, IHQ, from the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland (having served in Sri Lanka Territory).

I thank God for the opportunity of service at IHQ as Mission Support Coordinator, helping territories around the world to realise their potential in ministry.

Mission – To serve during opposition and persecution

Bible Reading – John 15:18-25 and Romans 8:35-39

*'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'*
(John 16:33)

What the Bible says

It is not surprising to note that as soon as he entered the world Jesus faced persecution and opposition. The enemy attempted to cut short the mission of Jesus. When the Magi enquired of King Herod where they could find the King of the Jews, his life was endangered. So Joseph, being warned in a dream took his family and fled. They became refugees in Egypt. Realising that his plan wasn't going to work, Herod proceeded to rid Bethlehem and the neighbouring towns of its boys two years old and younger. If not for the intervention of God, Jesus' mission would have ended at his birth.

Resistance and persecution continued after he returned to the town where he grew up, a place where everyone knew him and his family. The people he went to were his neighbours, those who had watched him grow up. He went into the synagogue, full of the Holy Spirit, and declared that the Scriptures were being fulfilled in their hearing, but they could not accept that they were in need of repentance and turning to God. They challenged him to display his power and do what he had done in other places. Yet their hearts were not receptive to hearing the good news. They attempted to throw him over a cliff, but once again Jesus supernaturally avoided an early end to his mission.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were so caught up with their status and position that they could not allow anyone or anything to interfere with the status quo regarding the rule of the land. Jesus was gaining in popularity and was sure to come to the attention of the Roman government. So they challenged and attempted to bypass his growing popularity. They resisted his mission and once they realised that they could not stop him they plotted the ultimate betrayal. They planned his murder, not realising they were helping to fulfil his mission.

Jesus gave believers counsel regarding the opposition and persecution they would face once they took on his mission in the world. In John chapter 15 he made it clear that the world hated him and that therefore it will hate us since we are continuing his mission. For sure there will be opposition and persecution. However, Jesus has already defeated the power of sin and death. Verse 22 states: *'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.'* Jesus understood that darkness hates light but those who have become light don't need to fear, they just have to let their light shine in the face of whatever opposition or persecution comes their way.

Our lives today

We live in a time when being a Christian is not popular. In August 2016 *Christianity Today* reported that 75 percent of the world's population suffer from severe restrictions on religious freedom. Sharing your faith can result in incarceration, abuse, hostility, beatings, verbal assault and even death.

The world hates Christians because it hated Jesus. We do not belong to this world. Our lives highlight the vast difference between those who are 'on mission' with Christ and those who oppose him. According to the book of James there is value in opposition and persecution because they help to develop our endurance and maturity. 1 Peter 2:23 confirms for us that opposition and persecution make us more like Jesus.



We know that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were active in supporting Jesus' mission on earth and we are told that the Holy Spirit is with us in our mission. So, although we don't enjoy opposition and persecution, we know that they will strengthen our faith and relationship with God and win the lost. When Jesus returns, he will confirm that we have completed our mission faithfully even in the face of opposition.

Discussion questions

1. What are some of the ways in which Christians experience opposition and persecution?
2. What are some of the freedoms you enjoy in being able to share your faith? Give thanks to God for them and fellow believers who face persecution because of their faith.
3. As you reread the Scriptures, what verse is God revealing to you to give you courage for any opposition you may face as you share your faith with your neighbours?

Ready to serve

We take courage from the Scripture in Romans that gives us sweet assurance that we don't need to fear, because there is nothing that can separate us from God. Don't be afraid to share your faith, even if it is not the popular view. You are on a mission with God and he is faithful to his word. Try interacting with someone from a different culture or country this week.

Major Ana Frazer, IHQ, from USA Eastern Territory – serving at the International College for Officers/Centre for Spiritual Life Development.

As Assistant Secretary for Spiritual Life Development, my aim, my goal, my prayer is: 'Lord, use me; help me to serve you faithfully.'

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Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

