

# DISCOVERY

## Discipling Programme for Young People

### Course C



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**First edition 2006  
ISBN 0854 12728 3**

**This course covers biblical study of the Old Testament, studies in Christian doctrine and other faiths and the meaning of Salvation Army soldiership.  
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## INTRODUCTION TO COURSE C

This is the third and final year of the 'Discovery' Course. It completes a set of studies for young people, originally designed for corps cadets in The Salvation Army.

We have continued our pattern of providing lessons for Bible study, a course on Christian living and another on Salvation Army studies.

The first two weeks in each month study the Old Testament. You will be introduced to the great characters who became part of God's plan for saving the world.

The third week in each month deals with Christian beliefs and then looks at some of the other world religions from a Christian viewpoint. We are grateful to Dr. John Coutts for this latter group of studies.

The fourth week in each month discusses what it means to be a soldier in The Salvation Army.

Once a quarter provision is made for local practical work.

We hope that you will enjoy this programme of study, attempt the questions asked, join in the discussion subjects and pray for the topics suggested.



Each week's programme has a suggested subject for your prayers. This is indicated by this symbol.



There is also a subject for discussion provided each week. This will allow you to share your ideas with your leader and friends. This is indicated by this symbol.



The passages from the Bible or the textbooks are shown by this symbol. You should make sure you read the passages carefully, and that you understand them.



There are two suggested questions for each lesson. The Standard grade is indicated by this symbol.



For those who would like to try a more demanding question, you will find this marked by this symbol. You should seek the advice of your leader about which set of questions to answer.



Genesis 1–2



Make a prayer of thanksgiving for the world that God has made. You may be able to examine in detail the beauty of a leaf or a flower or seed and remember who made it.



How does God expect us to look after the world which he made for us?

**Month 1  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Creation'**

### **Beginning**

Our study of the Old Testament needs to begin at the beginning. There are many accounts of how the universe began. No human being was present so all the accounts rely on ideas that have come from some other source. Scientists have undertaken research and presented theories based on facts that they have discovered. Story-makers in many cultures have woven wonderful tales about how the world started. We believe that the Bible account of creation was inspired by God himself, the only one who was there when it happened.

The Bible account of creation is not a scientific theory. If it was, it could not have been understood until our century. It would also need to be continually altered as human knowledge increases. Nor is it a story made up by some ancient story-teller simply from his own imagination. There is nothing in the Bible account that is in conflict with the facts as we can observe them. The Bible simply tells us that the universe did not happen by accident but by God's design. It is not the result of chance. The Bible account tells us something about the nature of the God who made it all. It also shows us the special privilege and responsibility that we have as part of the divine plan.

### **'In the beginning God created..' (Genesis 1:1)**

The very first words of the Bible are important. They say that God was there before anything existed. They tell us God made the world from nothing. We know we can use existing matter to make something new or different, but God created the universe out of nothing. This is hard to understand because we always think

there must have been something 'before'. At the point of creation there was nothing 'before' except God himself.

### **The order of creation (Genesis 1:1–25)**

These verses show us how God went about creating the universe and our world. It shows how he brought order out of chaos (verse 2), how light and darkness became separated (verse 3–5), how the universe of sun, stars and moon came into being as seen from the earth's point of view. (verse 14–18).

Then come the accounts of the creation of plants (verses 11–13) and animals (verses 20–25).

### **The creation of human beings (Genesis 1:26–31)**

The special place given to human beings is emphasised in the Bible account of creation. When the Bible says we are made in the image or likeness of God it is saying that we are especially privileged. Our ability to think and imagine, to express emotions and to respond to God is unique to human beings. It is a gift which makes us like God. With this privilege comes responsibility for the world which God has put into our hands. Because we can choose, it is important that we choose wisely.

### **'God saw that it was good' (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)**

All the worlds, plants, animals and people that God created pleased him. He saw that they were good – very good. God wanted everything to be in harmony and to be beneficial. We do know that bad things and bad people did come into our world and we do not have an explanation of where they came from. But it was God's intention that everything should be good.

### **The 'days' of creation (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2–3)**

The Bible divides the process of creation into days. These may represent whole ages rather than a period of 24 hours, especially since the sun which controls the length of our days was not created until the fourth day. If this is so, there is no conflict between the Bible account and many scientific theories. Each 'day' may have lasted for millions of our years. The use of the 'days' points out to us that God also allowed a seventh day which was to be a day of rest – a Sabbath which was made separate and holy because no work was to be done. This also was a gift of God to his creation.

### **Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:4–25)**

The 'big picture' of creation recounted in the first chapter of Genesis is followed by a special account of God's dealings with the first human beings.

This shows how God prepared a beautiful and productive place in which the first people could live. 'Eden' means paradise and is seen as the perfect place. Both the man and the woman were created by God and it was his intention that they should enjoy each other's company.

### **Why did God make the world?**

As the Bible story continues we may well ask why God bothered to create the universe which was to produce such trouble. The perfect world that he intended would soon be spoiled. We can only guess why he did it but we can be sure that his whole nature is creative and that he longed to have a loving relationship with the people he made as the crown of this work. All around us there are continual reminders of the beautiful world that was made for our benefit. We have a responsibility to care for it and for the creatures and people that inhabit it. We can best do this out of a loving relationship with its creator.



Make a chart of the six 'days' of creation, marking on it what God created on each day. Remember to include the seventh day of rest.



Genesis 1:28 speaks of the human role of 'subduing' and 'ruling' over the rest of creation. How would you interpret these words in today's world?



Genesis 2–9



Ask God to help you make good choices in your life, choosing to do good even when it is easier to do bad things.



A Salvation Army song says: 'Jesus shall conquer, lift up the strain. Evil shall perish and righteousness shall reign'. What Bible passage gives you hope that this will happen?

**Month 1  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'The Fall of  
Man'**

### **What went wrong?**

Whatever happened to the perfect world that God had made? He said it was very good. He had made mankind in his image and placed him in a perfect garden. What went wrong?

The story of Adam and Eve and of their disobedience to God tells us about the problems of human nature. It is important because it helps us understand how our world is today. It has much to teach us. This lesson can only begin to discuss these questions. Further help is available in *This We Believe* and *Salvation Story*.

### **Limits (Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1–3))**

Every garden has a boundary and this applied to the perfect garden in which God placed Adam and Eve. In addition to the physical limitation of its borders God placed a simple limit on what could be used. One tree was forbidden to our first parents. This was to remind them that, although they had been given authority and freedom, God was still in control. They were responsible to him. They were not God. If they disobeyed there would be serious consequences. All people have to learn that there are limits to their powers and that they have a responsibility to others. They also have to learn that breaking the rules has consequences that may be serious.

### **Freedom to choose (Genesis 3:4–5)**

When they were told of God's rule about the forbidden tree Adam and Eve still had the choice to either do what God had said or to disobey. God could have made them obey his law automatically, like a machine that was set to perform a

task. Instead God gave them the opportunity to choose between right and wrong. The gift of this freedom of choice was intended to allow them to love and obey God willingly.

### **Temptation (Genesis 3:6)**

The story shows us that when people think there may be some advantage to them, they often disregard what they know to be good and choose what they know is wrong. Both Eve and Adam were misled to think that disobeying God would lead to something good for them. It was not the taste of the fruit but the idea that they could have all of God's powers that made them take this fatefully wrong decision.

### **Excuses (Genesis 3:12–13)**

One of the saddest parts of the story is the way both Adam and Eve tried to make excuses to God when their sin had been discovered. They each blamed someone or something else for their failure. They were not honest with God about their real reasons for disobeying him. In this way their excuses were just like those made by everyone when they have done wrong.

### **The consequences – separation from God (Genesis 3:8)**

The first thing that happened to Adam and Eve after they took the fruit of the forbidden tree was that they were ashamed and hid from God. What had been a warm and friendly relationship with their Creator became something of which they were afraid. Whenever God is disobeyed there is a break in the relationship with him. That brings him sadness and makes the sinner ashamed.

### **The consequences – hard work and trouble (Genesis 3:14–18)**

The punishment that God had announced in Genesis 2:17 did not happen immediately. Instead, the whole of life changed for human beings. Instead of living and working in co-operation with all of God's creation in the garden, men and women would find life a struggle. Pain, suffering and difficulty would be in every part of life. The selfishness which they had introduced into life would lead to fighting and wars. Even nature would not co-operate as they had expected and as God originally intended. Eventually the final consequence of death would come to all humanity.

### **The consequences – banishment from the garden (Genesis 3:22–24)**

Because they could no longer be trusted by God to keep his rules Adam and Eve were sent from the garden. They could not be trusted to keep God's rule about the fruit that would allow them to live forever. Their selfishness would make them want to take all the powers of God for themselves. So they found themselves excluded from the perfect environment which was to have been their home.

**Bad and good in the world (Genesis 4–7)**

These chapters show us how great goodness and terrible evil existed side by side in the early days of the world God had made. Because evil had come into the world and shown itself in the disobedience of Adam and Eve, it remained an active enemy to God's purposes. But not everything was lost. Enoch 'walked with God' (5:22). Men began to call on the name of the Lord (4:26). Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord and was a good man (6:8–9). Even when humanity had known sin there were those individuals who looked for a loving relationship with God. But Abel was murdered by his brother Cain (chapter 4) and the Lord saw how great man's wickedness had become (6:5). Sadly the majority of people lived selfishly and rejected God. This tendency to wickedness filled the heart of God with pain and grieved him (6:6). God decided to end the creation he had begun and sent a terrible flood to drown the whole earth.

**The promise (Genesis 8–9)**

It was the obedience of Noah that persuaded God to give mankind another chance. Noah's goodness and his willingness to do exactly as he was told are in contrast to the disobedience of Adam and Eve. It is this that gave God hope for mankind and God gave a promise of his continual care (8:22). A new covenant was made with Noah setting out how people must behave. This new agreement with mankind was sealed by the sign of the rainbow (9:12). This new plan of hope from God would eventually lead to the coming of Jesus. He would offer to men the way back to God.



Why did Eve listen to the snake's lies? Why did Adam copy her example?



Read Romans 5:12–21. Contrast the effects of Adam's disobedience with Jesus' obedience.



Pray that God will help you to remember Bible truths to help you with your life as a Christian.



Why do some Christians find it hard to regularly read the Bible for themselves?

**Month 1  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living**

**'Word of the  
Living God'**

### **Our doctrines**

For the next six months we are going to look at some of the basic beliefs of Christians in this series on 'Christian Living'. The series is based on the first six chapters of *Salvation Story*. This is The Salvation Army's book of doctrine (or teaching).

### **The Bible**

The name 'Bible' means 'book' or 'books'. What a book it is! It has sold more copies than any other book. Some ancient, handwritten copies are reckoned to be the most valuable books in the world. Some part of the Bible has been translated into 2,377 languages, according to the Bible Society. This is probably more than any other book. The Old Testament is considered to be a holy book by Jews, Muslims and Christians. The Bible is quoted, or misquoted, by many people every day, even if they do not realise they are doing so. Even though some parts of it are difficult to read we can confidently say it is still the most important book in the world.

### **Many authors but one theme**

Although we think of the Bible as one book it was written down by many people over many centuries. The 66 books that make up the Bible library include books of history, poetry, letters and sermons. It is the basis of the law in many countries of the world. It includes some of the finest stories ever written. All the Bible writers are telling us about God's dealings with humanity and about our response to God. The Old Testament shows us how God revealed more and more about

himself, and how men longed for God to help them become closer to him. The New Testament shows how God answered their longings by sending Jesus and how he started the revolution that changed the world.

### **Inspiration**

We do not believe that God himself wrote the books of the Bible, but we do believe that he inspired the people who did the writing. So their words, with the limitations of their knowledge and culture, contain divine truths that they could not have known without God's help. God 'breathed into them' and they conveyed the truths that he wanted us to know. That does not mean every word is necessarily perfect but we can find God's truth in what was written.

### **Revelation**

All the Bible writers were searching for God for themselves. God revealed himself to them sometimes in visions, sometimes as they prayed and sometimes as they coped with difficulties in their lives. It is as though God drew aside a veil or curtain so that they could catch a glimpse of him and then share it with others. We call this 'unveiling', God's revelation. In this way new truths about God become clear to us.

### **Authority**

The books which make up our Bible were very carefully chosen over many hundreds of years from a larger collection of books. They were recognised as very special. Their inspiration was seen to be without question. This gives the Bible an authority for all Christians. Different passages in the Bible comment on other sections. Taken together as a whole we can rely on the Bible to give us clear guidance for our beliefs and behaviour. For the Christian the Bible has an authority like no other book or any person or group. We can test any idea or viewpoint by setting it alongside the Bible, especially the truths revealed through the life and teaching of Jesus. If it agrees we can accept the new idea. If it does not then it must be rejected.

### **What the Bible is not**

- The Bible is not a scientific textbook. It was written before modern science was understood by the writers. It presents truths about the world and nature in a different way which is just as valid as theoretical science.
- The Bible is not just a collection of stories. Its history is accurate but often it presents spiritual truth by means of a story so that the readers can understand the truth more easily. (For example, the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son show us new truths about God's love and man's responsibility for others.) Each story presents spiritual truth which we recognise as valid.

- The Bible is not just a collection of texts. We always have to consider what the whole passage means when we look at a particular text. We need to compare it to other texts which may help us to understand it better. This means we should not simply pick out a text without thinking of its context.

**What we believe about the Bible**

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God and that they are the only divine rule of Christian faith and practice.



Which part of the Bible do you enjoy reading most of all? What inspires you in this part of the Bible?



What makes the Bible different from other books? How would you explain to a friend who does not believe why you regard the Bible as important for you?



As you pray think about the million or more people who are soldiers in The Salvation Army around the world. Pray that they may be encouraged in their Christian witness.



How important is it for you to have a group of friends where you feel you belong?

**Month 1  
Week 4**

## **Salvation Army Studies**

**'Why  
Soldiership?'**

### **Notes**

We begin a series on being a soldier in The Salvation Army. Some of you are already senior soldiers. Some are junior soldiers and some may be thinking about whether you should become a soldier. There are more than one million senior soldiers in The Salvation Army. They come from more than 100 countries, with many different languages and cultures. If the General took the salute as they all marched by him one by one, it would take nearly 12 nights and days without stopping for them to pass him. So we may ask what are the essential qualities that unite this million-strong Army. Why have all these people chosen to become soldiers?

### **Belonging**

The first reason for becoming a soldier is 'belonging'. Salvation Army soldiers belong to Jesus Christ. He has saved them. They know their sins are forgiven by him. They have a new life in Christ and he is the most important person in their lives. They also belong to a warm fellowship that is a Salvation Army corps. Here they worship God, they learn new truths about him and they learn to serve and care for other people. They are accepted and valued for what they are, young or old, rich or poor, clever or stupid. Whatever their race or position they belong in the same way.

Everyone has a need to 'belong' in this way. There are many groups, clubs, gangs or cliques which demand a sense of loyalty from their members. They have some idea or aim which all the members share. They can be an influence for good

or for evil. We have to make choices about the groups we will belong to. Salvation Army soldiers can be sure that they will not be exploited or harmed but will have the privilege of belonging to a movement that wants to bring the good news of Jesus to a world which can be transformed by his love.

### **Believing**

The next reason for becoming a soldier is that we have a faith. We believe. Salvationists accept the basic truths of Christianity as the foundation for their lives. Our doctrines are expressed simply in few words. While it is good for all soldiers to seek to understand all that is meant by these statements you can be a soldier with a straightforward acceptance of these articles of faith. Each statement begins 'We believe'. The new soldier is joining with his comrades in a faith which he shares with them.

Almost all people have something in which they believe. This may be a religion but it can be something much more trivial. Many young people worship 'pop' stars or sportsmen. Some believe in horoscopes or luck. Salvationists have a stronger basis for their belief based on what the Bible has taught us and what we have discovered about the nature of God. What you believe in will shape the whole of our life.

### **Behaving**

The third shared quality for the soldier of The Salvation Army is an agreed lifestyle. As a voluntary action the soldier accepts a disciplined way of life that will affect his or her relationships and habits. Some of these are based on clear guidance in the Bible. Other elements of a Salvationist lifestyle are based on the recognition of dangers that exist in society and which are best avoided by a committed Christian. Around the world there are a few differences in what these life-standards should be, but generally Salvationists accept a way of life that is 'clean in thought, word and deed', as the junior soldier's promise puts it.

How we behave is the way in which we work out our beliefs. It shows who we belong to. Good behaviour necessarily requires us to give up some of our freedom to do as we like. Instead of doing just what we like whenever we choose to do so, we learn to accept limitations on our freedom for the sake of others and for our own long-term benefit. Salvationists accept some limitations on their personal freedom voluntarily. As a result their health is better, their will power is stronger and their relationships are enhanced.



Why should young people think about becoming senior soldiers?



In what order should 'belong, believe, behave' be placed? What happens if the order is changed?



Passages from Genesis as indicated in the Notes.



As you pray, think of Abraham in Haran hearing God's voice telling him to go to a new place which God would show him. Ask God what he wants you to do with your life as you set out.



What do you think were the special qualities about Abraham that made God choose him for this special work?

**Month 2  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Abraham'**

### **Introducing Abraham**

The first 11 chapters of Genesis tell us about the ancient world. Some good men like Noah appear in the story but the picture of the world is sad and wicked. From the beginning of chapter 12 we are introduced to the man and his family who were to become God's chosen people. This was how God was going to be known in the world. It is a plan that eventually led to the coming of Jesus. It was God's promise to save the world. The man was Abraham and his people were the Hebrews. It is his story that we now consider.

### **God chooses and calls (Genesis 12:1–5)**

Abraham had originally lived in a city called Ur. This is in the country now called Iraq. Two great rivers made it a fertile land and there were cities in which many people lived a settled life. Abraham's parents moved away from the city of Ur intending to go to the land of Canaan but settled halfway there in the city of Haran. It was there that God spoke to Abraham. He was no longer to worship the many gods of the crowded cities. The true God, the only God, was calling him to leave a settled life, to become a wanderer, a pilgrim, and to go to a place he did not yet know. The promise was that God would give him a land, make of his people a great nation, and make him a blessing to the whole world. It meant leaving everything he knew and trusting God for everything. Abraham accepted God's promise and obeyed the command he had been given in this vision.

### **God blesses Abraham (Genesis 12:6–13:18)**

Abraham received great blessings in the early days of his obedience to God. He became a wealthy man. Sometimes he behaved in a cowardly manner – as he

did in Egypt – but God still showered him with good things. A quarrel between his servants and those of his nephew, Lot, meant that the two men parted company. Lot chose to live in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah but Abraham remained a wanderer. Lot's choice brought disaster on himself as the cities were destroyed. Abraham moved around the land of Canaan. In every place where he met with God he built an altar and worshipped the God in whom he trusted.

**God gives an heir for Abraham (Genesis 15:1–6; 17:15–19; 21:1–7)**

Abraham wanted to believe the promises that God had given him but he found it hard to believe that he would be the father of a great nation. Both he and his wife Sarah were very old and Sarah had no children. Who would inherit the promise? Would it be his servant Eliezer? Would it be the son that was born to Sarah's maid Hagar? God's answer seemed to be so impossible that both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the idea. But despite her age, Sarah had a son who was called Isaac. This was the heir that God promised. His name means 'laughter' and he was called that because Sarah had laughed at the idea of God's promise.

**God makes a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1–10)**

At the heart of the story of Abraham is the idea of God making a covenant, or an agreement, with him. Just like an earthly king, God promised to give something valuable to Abraham. In return Abraham promised his loyalty and love to God. God would bless Abraham and his family for ever. In return Abraham would make this God his own for ever and would worship no other. The sign of the covenant would be the circumcision of all Abraham's male descendants. This beginning of the idea of 'covenant' is one that grows through all the Hebrew Scriptures. Christians believe that it reaches its fulfilment in the New Testament – or New Covenant – and in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus.

**God tests Abraham (Genesis 22:1–19)**

When Isaac, Abraham's son, was born it was clear that God's promise of the family becoming a great nation was to be fulfilled through this child. It was therefore a terrible shock when Abraham heard God say he should take the child and kill him as a sacrifice. Despite his horror at the prospect Abraham obeyed the instruction to the very point where Isaac was about to die. Then God stopped Abraham and provided an alternative sacrifice and Isaac was spared. God was testing Abraham's willingness to trust him and to be obedient. Unlike many of the surrounding tribes, the Hebrews were never again to consider human sacrifice as necessary. In the end their God was a God of life and love and not one demanding human sacrifice.

**God and Abraham were friends (Genesis 18:20–33)**

The story of Abraham asking God not to destroy the wicked cities tells us about the relationship of God and man. It suggests that Abraham was not like a puppet being controlled by a dictator – God. God wanted him as a friend – even a friend who could plead and argue with him. While some pictures of God in the Old Testament show him as a terrifying being who might kill anyone who looked at his face, here we see a God who is compassionate, who listens to people who speak to him and responds to their prayers. Abraham was not perfect. The Bible tells us of some of his failures, but his faithfulness was counted as goodness – righteousness – and he was the friend of God.



Why did God test Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac?



Compare the covenant made between God and Abraham (Genesis 15 and 17) with the one made between God and Noah (Genesis 9:1–17).



Passages from Genesis as indicated in the Notes



Pray for people who, like Jacob, have to spend many years away from their homes and family. Pray especially for all refugees in the world today.



Why did God choose Jacob and not Esau to be the heir to his promises?

## Month 2 Week 2

### Bible Study The Old Testament

#### 'Jacob'

#### **The younger twin brother (Genesis 25:21–26)**

This is the story of twin brothers, grandchildren of Abraham. It is the story of the second-born twin, his relationship with his parents, his brother and his God. His name, Jacob, means that he caught his brother's heel as he was being born. It is also the name for a deceiver. In many ways this is not a happy story but it does show how a man with many faults and bad relationships can grow when God takes a hand in his development.

#### **Mother's boy (Genesis 25:27–34)**

The two boys were very different. Esau, the elder twin, grew up to be a hunter. He was a fit, healthy, outdoor man who seldom thought about the future. Jacob stayed at home with his mother and schemed with her to be the one to inherit the family fortune and tradition. At first it seemed that Esau did not care about these things. He was only interested in practical things like food to eat and animals to hunt.

#### **Father tricked (Genesis 27:1–40)**

Isaac, Abraham's son, was the father of the two boys. When Isaac was old and nearly blind Jacob pretended to be his brother Esau and persuaded Isaac to give him the formal blessing and the inheritance that rightly belonged to his brother. Despite Esau's complaint, once given this decision could not be changed. So Jacob, the deceiver, tricked both his father and his brother.

**Angry brother (Genesis 27:41–45)**

Whatever Jacob thought he had gained by his deception was outweighed by the anger and hatred of Esau. The elder boy vowed to kill his brother and so, once again advised by his mother, Jacob had to run away to a foreign land. He had a great deal to learn about relationships. Now he was lonely, separated from everyone who cared about him. He may have gained a blessing and an inheritance but now he was a fugitive, running from his friends and family.

**God takes a hand in Jacob's life (Genesis 28:10–22)**

If any good was to come from this selfish, greedy man then God would have to do something in him. At the point of Jacob's greatest loneliness God met him. Alone in the wilderness, with only a stone for a pillow, Jacob slept and God met him in a dream. It was to promise him that he would be part of God's plan. The promise to Abraham would be fulfilled through him. He would eventually return to his homeland. In return Jacob promised to serve God. Even this promise was somewhat selfish but it was enough. He had begun to have a relationship with God. Here Jacob marked the spot and called it Bethel, the house of God.

**The deceiver is deceived (Genesis 29:14–30)**

The next stage in Jacob's story saw him staying with a distant relative, Laban. Here he fell in love with Laban's daughter Rachel and agreed to work for her father for seven years in order to marry her. At the end of those years he found that he had married her very plain older sister, Leah. Jacob the deceiver had been tricked by his father-in-law. He had to work for Laban for another seven years to win the girl he wanted as his wife. The whole of the relationship between Jacob and Laban was full of tension. Jacob still had much to learn. He had become a wealthy man but he was still a man without friends. What would become of him?

**God and Jacob's fears (Genesis 32:9–12, 22–32)**

Making his escape from sly Laban, Jacob headed back towards his home. How could he face his brother Esau? He might try to buy friendship with elaborate gifts but would Esau forgive him? Once again the now prosperous Jacob had to ask God to help. Would God save him? Could he rely on the promises that God had given him? Everyone else had deceived him. Could he now trust God? The story of Jacob wrestling with an angel is about Jacob learning to trust God and to overcome his fears. Could Jacob the deceiver become Israel the one who struggles with God?

**Facing up to Esau (Genesis 33:1–11)**

The meeting between Jacob and Esau was one of high drama. Esau greeted his long-lost brother like the prodigal son being welcomed home by his father (Luke

15:11–32). It was not Jacob’s gifts that persuaded Esau but the genuine love that learns to forgive. Here is the lesson that Jacob needed to learn for himself.

**Return to Bethel (Genesis 35:1–7)**

The conclusion of the story of Jacob saw him return to the place where God met him. Here he renewed his vow to God, destroyed the false gods of his followers and committed himself to the worship of God Almighty. His story is of the bad man who was changed by God’s love. It shows that God still believed in him when everyone else had abandoned him.



Tell the story of Jacob’s escape from Esau and his meeting with God at Bethel as though you were Jacob the fugitive.



What do you understand to be the meaning of Jacob’s wrestling with God? Can you draw any parallels with your relationship with God?



Take time in the class to come to God in worship. Picture God in your mind and come to him with open hands, seeking his blessing on you.



How can we introduce our friends to God? What personal experience of God do you have that would help you to speak about him to others?

**Month 2  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living**

**'The God who  
is never alone'**

### **What is God like?**

It is difficult to describe God. He has revealed himself in his creation, in the inspired words of the Bible and in our human experience of him. But, because he is so much greater than our minds can grasp we often have to describe him by using pictures. We say he is like a shepherd looking after his sheep, or a great fortress or rock protecting vulnerable people. We say he is like a loving father, caring for his children, or a pillar of fire guiding his people through the desert.

All of these pictures are helpful but none is complete. We will only truly know the nature of God when we meet him face to face in Heaven. This lesson helps us to see what God has shown of himself to Christians through many centuries.

### **There is one God**

Unlike some other religions, Christians do not believe that there are many different gods who are separate, who sometimes quarrel and control different parts of the creation. We say one God made the universe and that he is still in charge of it all. He is interested and involved in the universe he made and in the lives of everyone in it. The creation includes not only the physical universe but also all the spiritual powers that exist. They all come from God. Some have become evil but, in the end, the goodness of God and the order he made out of chaos will be victorious.

### **God is like a family**

God has shown himself to us in three different ways. They are distinct so that we can call them three 'persons', just like a family. But unlike human families there

are never any disagreements in the 'God family'. They enjoy constant friendship – communion – with each other and work in their own ways always together for the benefit of all the world. We call this family 'The Trinity'. They are all equal in power and love. The members of the Trinity are:

God the Father, God the Son – Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit.

### **Father God**

God has shown himself to us not only as the creator of everything but also as the One who sustains everything.

- Because he is not confined to a particular human time he knows everything that has happened and that will happen in the future. This complete knowledge makes him supremely wise. We can always rely on his judgement and trust his wisdom.
- Because he is not confined to a particular place he is involved in the lives of all his people. So he can hear and respond to all our prayers and we are never separated from his loving care.
- Because he has made the rules by which the universe exists he has the power to do anything he chooses. However, he has limited his power by giving humans the opportunity to choose. Nevertheless he can and does plan through every human choice to bring good things to pass. We can be sure that, even when evil seems to be winning the battle, God's power will prevail.
- He is perfectly good – holy – and only wants the best for his people. His nature is one of genuine and unchanging love. When we approach God we quickly sense this beautiful and powerful goodness and find that we are far from holy in his sight.
- He does not remain distant from his world but longs to have a caring relationship with everyone on earth. Our proper relationship with him is one of worship. When we come to him in this way he comes to meet us.



Find Bible references that show God is like a shepherd, a father and a pillar of fire.



What do we mean when we say God is Almighty?



Pray for all young people who are considering becoming Salvation Army soldiers.



Soldiership is more than just membership. It means being ready for action.

**Month 2  
Week 4**

## **Salvation Army Studies**

**'What are the  
conditions of  
soldiership?'**

### **Notes**

Membership of any group means there are conditions that have to be fulfilled. This lesson looks at the conditions that relate to being a soldier in the Salvation Army.

#### **Can anyone become a soldier?**

There should be no discrimination about who can be a soldier. Whatever your gender or race or situation you can be a soldier. There is no fee for joining nor is there any educational test that must be passed. In that sense there are no limits to Salvation Army soldiership but there are conditions.

#### **What about your age?**

There is a minimum age for senior soldiership of 14 years. Of course, you can be a junior soldier from the age of seven. Some young people are ready and prepared to step up to senior soldiership soon after their 14th birthday and even find it hard to wait until this point in their lives. Others do not feel it is right for them for months or even years after that age. There is no 'right' age for everyone to become a soldier. What is needed is a mature sense of the love of God for you and a consciousness that God wants you to serve him as a soldier. If you are in doubt it may be better to wait until all the other conditions are fulfilled rather than rush into soldiership in a careless way.

#### **Are you saved?**

This is the most important condition. Many people can remember clearly the exact time and place where they prayed to God, asked him for the forgiveness of

their sins and experienced the joy and peace that came when they accepted Jesus as their Saviour. Others may have been born into a Christian family and always known about Jesus. For people like this there will come a time when the faith of the family became their personal faith. It may be harder to be sure exactly when that happened. What is important is that all who are considering soldiership should have the assurance of God's salvation in their hearts. Later in the course we shall be considering what it means to be saved. There is nothing that is more important than this.

### **Have you prepared yourself?**

Soldiership is not something to be undertaken thoughtlessly. We need to know about the Army before we join it. What do Salvationists believe? What should they do in certain circumstances? What are the Army's positions on matters of principle?

Corps officers and local officers have a duty to make sure those who want to be soldiers are properly prepared. This usually means a series of special classes which are planned to help those who wish to join the Army. In these the prospective soldier can ask important questions and come to understand all that is involved in soldiership. They can learn and practise some of the disciplines required in soldiers and begin to undertake some of the duties that come to soldiers. This time of preparation is vital if soldiership is to be more than just a nominal membership of the Army.

### **Are you recommended?**

Becoming a soldier is not just the decision of the recruit. The name of everyone who has been prepared for soldiership is presented to the corps census board or pastoral care council. The task of this group is not to say whether they like the person or to be a judge of their character but to confirm that they have fulfilled the conditions and that their lifestyle is appropriate for soldiership. In the New Testament we read of Cornelius the Roman centurion being welcomed into the Christian fellowship not just by Peter but by the whole church at Joppa (Acts 10:44 –48). In a similar way our corps leaders welcome and accept the new soldiers of their corps.

### **Will you stand up and be counted?**

The final condition of soldiership is to make a public witness. The Salvation Army has no secret soldiers. New soldiers sign their name to all the promises on The Soldier's Covenant (articles of war) and are sworn-in in a public meeting. In many countries new soldiers must appear in uniform for their enrolment. This, too, is a sign that we want everyone to know we have joined ourselves to an Army of people who intend to share the love of God with everyone they meet.

### **Congratulations**

All those who take this important step and make this commitment of their lives should be congratulated on the decision they have made. An early day Salvationist songwriter said:

*In the Army of Jesus we've taken our stand  
To fight 'gainst the forces of sin,  
To the rescue we go, Satan's power to o'erthrow,  
And his captives to Jesus we'll win.  
I'll stand for Christ, for Christ alone  
Amid the tempest and the storm.  
Where Jesus leads I'll follow on;  
I'll stand, I'll stand for Christ alone  
Fred Fry'*



Why do Salvation Army soldiers wear uniform?



Look at a copy of The Soldier's Covenant (your corps officer will have a copy). What are the most demanding promises included in it?



Passages from Genesis 37–45 as indicated in the notes



Pray for the many people who live in conditions of slavery today.



What happens when parents make one of their children into their favourite?

**Month 3  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Joseph'**

#### **A favourite son (Genesis 37:2–11)**

Jacob had 12 sons. Joseph and Benjamin were the two youngest and were born to Jacob's dearly loved wife, Rachel, who died when Benjamin was born.

Perhaps it is not surprising that these two boys were especially loved by their father. However, Jacob made the mistake of showing that he loved Joseph more than all the others. The older sons became very jealous of their father's favourite. Joseph was given rich, ornamented clothes and a privileged lifestyle. He soon began to think he was better than his brothers and shared dreams with them that they would be his servants.

#### **Sold as a slave (Genesis 37:12–36)**

Joseph, the boastful dreamer, was ambushed by his brothers in the desert, threatened with death, saved by his oldest brother Reuben and then sold as a slave to passing strangers. He ended up in Egypt as a house servant of a military officer. The hatred and deceit of the brothers broke the heart of old Jacob, who thought his dearly loved son was dead. The brothers thought they had seen the last of Joseph.

#### **Success and tragedy (Genesis 39:1–23)**

Just like his father, Joseph had to spend many years away from his home and family. Indeed, he never did return to Canaan. Living as a slave, away from family support, the character of Joseph emerged. He was clever. He was trusted with the management of the estate of his master. He was handsome and attracted

the attention of his master's wife. He was honest and would not take advantage of the trust that had been placed in him. He was betrayed by the woman who had tried to seduce him. So this period of prosperity ended with Joseph in prison because his master did not believe him. The favourite son was experiencing real hardship and suffering.

### **Prison dreams and palace dreams (Genesis 40:1– 41:32)**

The meaning of dreams was important to the people of the ancient world. Joseph had the gift of interpreting dreams so that they foretold coming events.

It was a gift from God. Today we know that God can help us to know his will for us in many other ways that were not considered in Joseph's time so dreams are less significant for us. While he was in prison Joseph was told of the dreams of two court officials. He helped one regain his position and foretold the death of another. When the ruler of Egypt had a strange dream, it was Joseph who was asked to explain it. The dream told of seven years of good harvests to be followed by seven years of drought and famine.

### **Saving Egypt (Genesis 41:33–57)**

The Pharaoh of Egypt appointed Joseph, the interpreter of his dream, to plan the use of the harvest through the time of plenty and the time of famine. Joseph's management skill was now given its greatest opportunity. His plan saved Egypt from disaster. When all the lands around were hungry there was food in Egypt. So the favoured son, hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, betrayed into prison, had become the highest official in the land.

### **Family reunion (Genesis 42:1–22; 45:1–8)**

Jacob, his sons and their families were also suffering because of the long famine. Eventually they had to go to Egypt to buy food. When Joseph saw them he recognised them but they did not know he was Joseph. He then tested them with an elaborate game, making sure that Benjamin came to Egypt and accusing them of theft and spying. But he discovered that they had changed. Instead of meeting the cruel brothers who had sold him into slavery, Joseph found that Reuben was prepared to be made a slave himself rather than leave Benjamin in Egypt. Their love for their father and their concern for each other had transformed the life of the family.

### **God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20–21)**

So Jacob and the family moved down to Egypt, to an honoured place in the land, and to share the plenty that Joseph's careful planning ensured. Joseph saw the hand of God in everything that had happened to him. He had been chosen to save

the people of Egypt and his own family. His slavery, his imprisonment, the hatred of his brothers and of his master's wife, were all used by God to bring something good to pass. 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives' (Genesis 50:20).



How do you think Reuben and the other brothers felt when they met Joseph in Egypt?



Discuss Joseph's integrity in dealing with Potiphar's wife and with the court officials in prison. Was this more important than his skill in administration?



Is God asking you to do something special for him? Pray that he will give you strength to say 'yes' just as Moses eventually did.



Was it good for the Israelites to spend so many generations in Egypt?

**Month 3  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Moses'**

### **The Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1)**

The story of Joseph ended with his family moving from Canaan to Egypt and being honoured there. They were there for 400 years and became a large tribe. The succeeding rulers of Egypt forgot about Joseph and the Israelites became slaves of the Egyptians instead of their guests. Afraid of their growing numbers, the new Pharaoh tried to kill all the Israelite boy babies.

### **The birth and youth of Moses (Exodus 2)**

Moses' mother tried to save her baby boy by hiding him but he was found by a daughter of the Pharaoh and brought up in the palace with his mother as a nurse. As a young man Moses had to choose between the privilege of the palace and the sufferings of his people. When he saw his fellow Israelites being mistreated he naturally took their side and murdered an Egyptian official. When he was found out he had to escape to the desert. For many years he worked in the Sinai desert, learning the skills of living there under the care of Jethro, whose daughter he married.

### **Called to lead his people (Exodus 3:1–17)**

Moses was a true Israelite, had learned the ways of Egyptian leadership and had acquired the skills of a desert shepherd. So, when Moses had been prepared like this and was ready, God called him by appearing to him in a bush that burned but was not destroyed. Moses was instructed by God to go to Egypt and to demand from its ruler that the Israelites should be free to leave the land. God promised to

give them the land of Canaan, as he had already promised Abraham. As a sign of this promise Moses was given a new name for God that would be his holy name for ever. The name of Jahweh (or Jehovah) was to be so sacred that no Jew would pronounce it.

#### **The reluctant leader (Exodus 4:1–17)**

Despite his experience and qualities Moses did not want to undertake his God-given task. He complained that the people would not follow him and that he was not a good speaker. God gave him miraculous signs to show him that he need not fear. The people would be set free because of God's work and not because of Moses' skill. His brother Aaron would be his spokesman. Eventually Moses, the reluctant leader, agreed to do as God had told him.

#### **Plagues on the Egyptians (Exodus 8:1–15)**

When Moses first demanded that Pharaoh should let the Israelites go he was met with a bitter refusal and heavier burdens for his enslaved people. God's promise was renewed and Moses had to convince the troubled people. Then followed a series of plagues on the Egyptians, foretold by Moses and only lifted when Pharaoh agreed to let them go. Every time Pharaoh broke his promise – only to face a worse plague.

#### **The final plague and the Passover (Exodus 11:1–12:13)**

The final plague would be the very worst. All the oldest sons of each Egyptian household would die. The Israelites were warned to take particular action so the angel of death would 'pass over' their houses and leave them unharmed. They were to prepare a meal and be packed ready to leave the house in a hurry. They were to sprinkle some of the blood from the animal on the posts of the door. This would be a sign that would save them.

#### **Exodus (Exodus 14:5–31)**

The name of the book means 'The way out'. On the night of the Passover the Israelites walked out of Egypt. They were free at last! But Pharaoh's army pursued them with their chariots. The Israelites walked across the boggy Red (or reed) Sea on miraculously dry land and the Egyptian chariots were lost when they tried to follow and the waters returned. So Moses led them out of slavery into the freedom of the desert. There they would have much to learn about trusting God and learning about his law and plan for them.



Imagine you were preparing for the 'Passover meal'. Describe what you have to do.



What characteristics made Moses the right man to lead the Israelites out of Egypt?



Pray for the people in your community who know little or nothing about Jesus. Pray that they may come to know him, not just as a great man, but as their friend and saviour.



Read Luke 2:41–52. When did the boy Jesus come to know that he was different? What does this reading tell us about his understanding of his purpose in life?

**Month 3  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living**

**‘God’s Eternal  
Son’**

### **Jesus – the perfect picture of God**

Last month in our doctrine studies we looked at some of the pictures of God that the Bible gives to us. We said that none of them was perfect because God is greater than any human ideas about him. But God showed us what he is really like when Jesus came to our world. He is the perfect picture of God because he is God in a human form. In him we see God and man united.

### **Jesus is truly God**

When the first disciples of Jesus heard his wonderful teaching, saw the miracles he performed, and recognised the authority he had over men and nature they began to realise that they were in the presence of more than a great man. He was more than a very good man. When Jesus asked Peter who he thought he was, Peter was inspired to reply, ‘You are the Christ, the son of the living God’ (Matthew 16:16).

In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul discussed the true nature of Jesus. He wrote: ‘Jesus Christ... being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness’ (Philippians 2:6–7).

The word we use for this God becoming a human being is ‘incarnation’. It means that God ‘takes on a body’.

### **Jesus was truly human**

The Gospels show us how Jesus felt hunger, thirst and tiredness. They show him sometimes happy and at other times sad. He could be surprised and horrified. He

grew up and matured like all young people. He was tempted but he never sinned. He suffered pain and died. These are all the qualities of a real human person. Jesus was not playing at being a human being. He was truly human while he was here on earth (Philippians 2:8).

### **The suffering God**

When Jesus, this God-man, died on the cross, it was God as well as a human being who was suffering. It was God paying the price for the wrongdoing of everyone who had been, or would be, in the world. God loved the people of the world so much that he gave his Son, Jesus, to die to save them. Jesus was the only perfect human being but he carried the weight of the sins of all the world when he died. We call this work of Jesus 'atonement'. It means that through this sacrifice of Jesus we can be 'at one' with God (Romans 5:6–8).

### **Jesus, alive for ever**

The death of Jesus is not the end of the story. He rose from death and showed himself to many people. Those who did not believe him were never able to find his dead body. His disciples were so convinced that they were prepared to risk their lives to tell the world that he was alive (Acts 2:24–26). When Jesus returned to Heaven the human part of his life was over and he remains our Lord and our God in Heaven. The word we use for the rising of Jesus from the dead is 'resurrection'.

### **The same God shown to us in a new way**

The first Christians had always believed that there was one God, who was to be worshipped. As we have said, they came to realise that Jesus was more than a good or a great man. He was more than a prophet or a spokesman for God. Jesus prayed often to God as his Father. His friends saw the loving relationship that Jesus had with God. They were never divided. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus his followers began to worship the risen Jesus. They saw that he was God who had been shown to them in a different way.



Read John 20:28. What made Thomas call Jesus 'my Lord and my God'?



What have you learned about the nature of God from reading about the life of Jesus?

**Your leader will arrange for some practical work to be done this week. We hope that you enjoy the experience and find it challenging and satisfying.**

**Month 3  
Week 4**

**Local  
practical  
studies**



Passages from Exodus and Numbers as indicated in the notes



Like the Israelites, we have to learn to trust God even in the most difficult situations. Pray for faith that is strong enough to trust God when things are hard for you.



Are the Ten Commandments a good basis for laws in the 21st century?

**Month 4  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'God's Law'**

#### **Protected by God in the desert (Exodus 15:22–27; 16:1–35)**

It was one thing to escape from the Egyptian army. Now the Israelites, who had been used to city life, had to survive in the desert. This tough experience was needed to prepare them for their lives as God's special people. They needed water to drink and food to eat. They grumbled when they were hungry and thirsty and even said life had been better when they were slaves in Egypt. They had to learn to trust the God, who had brought them out of slavery. He would supply them with what they needed to survive. Fresh water came from a polluted source when they followed God's direction. The mysterious 'manna' which they found on the desert floor provided food and poultry came in the form of quails to feed them. Would they learn to trust this God who cared so much for their survival?

#### **Laws for the community and the world (Exodus 19:1–8; 20:1–24)**

When the great crowd of Israelites arrived at the massive Mount Sinai, it was time for them to understand how they were to live. Moses called them together and told them they would receive a new set of laws from God. The people promised to keep them. They were to be given laws that would bind them in a covenant with God. They had been brought out of slavery and now God told them that if they kept his holy law they would always be his special people. Moses would go up into the mountain and receive from God two stones with 10 commandments on them. They would be the rules to live by. They would show how the people were to relate to God and how they were to relate to each other.

These simple words have become the basis for good laws all over the world.

### **Impatience leads to trouble (Exodus 32:1–14)**

Moses was a long time on the mountain with God. The people thought he had gone for ever. They persuaded Aaron, Moses' brother, to make a golden calf and began to dance around it and worship it just like the heathen people they had seen in Egypt. They had broken the command to worship only God even before it had been confirmed. God was very angry with this terrible sin and threatened to wipe out the whole nation. Moses pleaded with God and he relented but the punishment was terrible. The nation of Israel had to learn to take their relationship with God seriously.

### **A shining face (Exodus 34:29–35)**

Moses returned to the mountain to cut new stones with God's law written on them. When he came back to the people they could tell that he had been with God because his face shone so brightly that it had to be covered with a veil. With great ceremony they established the tabernacle, a tent in which God could be worshipped wherever they travelled. They promised to keep the covenant that had been given to them. A cloud of fire and smoke would show them the presence of God and lead them on their long journey through the desert.

### **Laws for every purpose (Exodus 31:12–17)**

The Ten Commandments were very simple but they had to be applied to many different situations. Many of the chapters of Exodus and Leviticus are full of the detailed instructions that came out of these basic rules. The Israelites were told how they should observe the Sabbath as a day of complete rest and worship. Every part of their lives was to be lived in accordance with the instructions that God had given. They were soon to find that it was very difficult – in fact, impossible – to please God by keeping every detail of the rules that were detailed here.

### **Spying out the land (Numbers 13:1–2, 17–20, 26–32)**

It was God's plan to lead the Israelites to the land of Canaan, the 'promised land'. But they still needed to learn to trust God to help them. When 12 men were sent to report on Canaan they came back saying it was a very fruitful land but that the people were too strong for the Israelites. Moses realised the nation was not ready for this new adventure. They still had too much to learn. It would take 40 years of wandering in the desert to prepare them for Canaan. A whole new generation would be needed before they could fulfil God's plan for them. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two optimistic spies, would survive to enter

Canaan. Even Moses, the great leader, would only see it from a neighbouring mountain top before his great work in leading the people came to an end. It took only a short time for the Israelites to come out of Egypt but it took 40 years for the memories of Egypt to come out of the Israelites.



Why did the Israelites make a golden calf and begin to worship it? Why was this so wrong?



Were the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness wasted years? What did they learn in that time?



Passages as indicated in the notes



Pray that, like Joshua, you will have the courage to rise to the challenge of any big new task God gives you.



The rule about 'no looting' meant that many people and things in Jericho were destroyed. Was this a good rule?

**Month 4  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Joshua'**

### **Joshua**

This week's Old Testament hero is the man who led the Israelites into the land which God had promised them. At last they would live again where Abraham had made his covenant with God.

#### **Who was Joshua? (Exodus 17:8–10; 24:13; Numbers 14:6–9)**

He was born in Egypt when the Israelites were slaves there. He escaped with Moses and all the people in the Exodus. As Moses' assistant he went up Mount Sinai with him to receive the Ten Commandments. He was a military leader who defeated an enemy army. He was one of the two courageous spies who urged the Israelites to go into Canaan. With all his qualities and experience he was the best man to follow Moses as leader of the people and to take them over the river Jordan and into the Promised Land.

#### **Chosen by God (Joshua 1:1–9)**

Even though Joshua had many excellent qualities as a leader they would not be enough for his task unless God was with him. When God called Joshua he was given a promise. Just as God had remained faithful to Moses through times of difficulty and stress so he would always be with Joshua. He also gave him clear instructions:

- Obey the laws given on Mount Sinai.
- Keep them always in your mind whatever you are doing.
- Be a strong leader and take courageous decisions.
- Never let difficulties discourage you.

Because he kept to these rules Joshua became one of Israel's great heroes. He is very special for Christians because his name, which means 'Jehovah is the Saviour' is another form of the name Jesus.

### **Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3)**

Joshua's first task as leader was to take the whole nation of Israelites across the River Jordan into Canaan. It was no easy task with the river in flood and enemies waiting for them. God's instructions were that the box – the Ark – containing the holy stones on which the commandments were written should be brought to the river's edge by the priests. When they entered the river the water would dry up. As long as the box remained in the middle of the river the people could pass through on dry land. When the box reached the other bank the river would flow again. They obeyed God's instructions exactly and the whole crowd crossed into the new land. On the banks of the river they made an altar from river stones to thank God for his miraculous help. They promised again to obey God and keep his covenant with them.

### **The battle of Jericho (Joshua 6:1–21)**

This famous story has often been told. The Israelites were able to conquer Jericho not because they had a stronger army but because they did exactly as God had told them to do. The walls did not fall down because of an attack but because of the obedience of the Israelites. God gave them the city and told them not to take any animals or possessions as loot. They were to destroy everything because it was God's victory and not theirs.

### **Dealing with disobedience (Joshua 7:1–12; 19–26)**

If only the Israelites had continued to obey God they would have continued to succeed. But immediately after the triumph of Jericho they faced defeat in the little town of Ai. It was because some of them – Achan and his family – had deliberately disobeyed God. They had taken animals and possessions from Jericho for themselves. The Israelites had to learn the hard lesson that the sin of disobedience to God has terrible consequences. Achan and his family paid the price with their lives before the relationship with God could be restored. We may think that all this killing and vengeance is not like the God we know. The Israelites were slow to learn of God's love, but they had to begin with an understanding of his laws and his justice.

### **Dividing the land (Joshua 13:1–7)**

Under Joshua's leadership the Israelites gradually began to take over parts of the land of Canaan. The plan was to divide the land so that each of 12 tribes would receive a part for themselves. Many of the people who had lived there before

remained. They worshipped their false gods and often fought with the Israelites. The danger was that God's people would abandon their covenant with him and become like the local people, worshipping the local gods. This would prove to be a problem for many centuries. The courage and pure motives that helped them conquer at Jericho became lost as they enjoyed the lovely land they had been given. They wanted to have God's gifts without being willing to serve and obey him.

#### **Last instructions (Joshua 23:1 – 24:33)**

At the end of his long life Joshua called together all the people for one last time. He reminded them of all that God had done for them. He warned them of the dreadful consequences of forgetting their promises to God and worshipping idols. He promised them that God would be with them if they continued to obey him. He challenged them to be loyal to God and they responded. Whatever happened they would serve the Lord. An altar stone, like the one on the banks of the Jordan, would be a reminder of the promise they had renewed. Some of the people may have failed God but Joshua remained faithful right to the end.



Tell the story of the battle of Jericho in your own words.



Compare the promise given to Joshua when he became the leader (Joshua 1) and his words at the end of his life (Joshua 23 and 24). Was he successful in completing the work God had given him?



*For the mighty moving of thy Spirit  
In our hearts and minds from day to day,  
For the gentle soothing of thy Spirit,  
When our fears had filled us with dismay  
We adore thee, heavenly Father  
And we thank thee, heavenly Father  
And we praise thee, heavenly Father  
As we pray*

*SASB 192  
John Gowans*



Which analogy for the Holy Spirit (for instance as wind, or fire, or a dove) do you think best describes his work?

**Month 4  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living**

**'The Holy  
Spirit, Lord  
and giver of  
Life'**

### Notes

This week we look at the wonderful but mysterious third person of the Trinity. Christians know the Holy Spirit as their personal and constant friend and guide. Yet we find it hard to define who he is and what he does.

### **The Holy Spirit has always been active in our world**

From the very beginning the Holy Spirit was actively involved in God's plan for his world. The Bible tells us that when God made the world the Spirit of God moved over the chaos and brought order, direction, life and peace as his gift to the creation. Throughout the Old Testament the Holy Spirit inspired special messengers who were given gifts and particular tasks to undertake for God. They helped God's people understand his purposes for them in new ways.

### **Jesus told us the Holy Spirit is invisible and yet very powerful**

In his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3) Jesus said the Holy Spirit was like the wind. We cannot control the wind or know where it comes from but we can see its power and the effects of its presence. At other times the Holy Spirit has been compared to fire which can give warmth and comfort as well as having the power to destroy. When Jesus was baptised the Holy Spirit came to him in the form of a dove, a bird of great beauty and grace but which remains free. These pictures help us to appreciate the great influence and power of the Holy Spirit and to understand that he is not controlled by human desires.

### **Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to everyone who believed**

When Jesus spoke to the disciples before his crucifixion (John 14:15–17) he promised they would not be left alone when he left them. He would ask God to send the Holy Spirit to be with them always. People who did not believe would not recognise the Holy Spirit but he would come to all who sought Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost that promise was fulfilled (Acts 2:1–4) and Peter reminded the crowd that the prophet Joel had foretold that God would give his Spirit to all who believed and not just to a special few.

### **What does the Holy Spirit do for us today?**

- He shows us our faults and failures and points us to forgiveness through Jesus (John 16:8).
- He cleanses our hearts from all sin (1 Corinthians 6:11).
- He comes alongside us to help and encourage us (John 14:25–26). He reminds us of all that we have learned from God, helps us to witness and gives us understanding of what God wants us to do. He prompts us always to do what is right.
- He gives us gifts that he sees are best for us. Some examples of these gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11. These gifts are to enable us to become what God wants us to be. We do not choose the gifts we are given and we must only use them to glorify God.
- He offers our prayers to God (Romans 8:26–27). When we do not know how to pray the Holy Spirit interprets our deepest longings to God.
- He shows the Church what it should do. We can see an example of the direction of the Holy Spirit in the way Paul was told to take the gospel to Macedonia (Acts 16:6–10).

### **Always with us**

The Holy Spirit is God with us in the everyday, ordinary things of our lives. As we try to live the Christian life we discover we are not alone. God is with us all the time in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.



What difference did the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) make to Jesus' disciples?



Older versions of the English Bible describe the Holy Spirit as a 'comforter' Newer versions use the word 'counsellor'. Which is the more appropriate description and why?



Thank God for those who have wrestled with the truth and have given us clear teachings in which to believe. Pray for all those people who find it hard to believe.



How can we express unchanging truths in language that is understood by our generation?

**Month 4  
Week 4**

**Salvation Army  
Studies**

**'What do we  
believe?'**

### **Notes**

In our studies in the Christian Living series we are looking at important Christian teachings. When young Salvationists are considering senior soldiership it is important that they look at these 'doctrines' carefully. The ceremony of enrolment requires new soldiers to say 'We believe...' to this teaching. This lesson looks at the way these statements of belief have come to be expressed.

### **Belief in God**

Where did Christian beliefs come from? The first Christians were Jewish, just like Jesus. They believed in the God they had found in the Old Testament. He made the universe. He created human beings. Sadly the people he created chose to disobey his rules for life. He continued to love the world. He made a special agreement with the Jewish people and gave them precious promises in the law and the Bible. He inspired many leaders and prophets to guide the people who were privileged to be his representatives. All this was the background to the faith of the first Christians. They believed in God.

### **Belief in Jesus**

Jesus called a group of men to be his followers. After they had spent some time with him observing his miraculous powers and hearing his new teaching he asked them who they believed he was. Peter replied, 'You are the Christ (The anointed one, the Messiah who had been promised), the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:16). They believed that Jesus was more than a good man. He was God in a human body. Here was a new statement of faith for the Christians.

After the crucifixion of Jesus his disciples knew he had risen from the dead. They met him for themselves on a number of occasions. They soon expressed this as a matter of belief. 'God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact,' said Peter (Acts 2:32). They believed Jesus was not a dead hero but a living saviour. Here was another new statement of faith.

The Early Church used simple words to express these wonderful new truths. In what was probably a very early hymn we find the words: 'Jesus Christ is Lord' (Philippians 2:11). This was a very early statement of the Christian faith. The Christians believed that Jesus was not just a historical character. He ruled their lives.

### **Belief in the Holy Spirit**

The first Christians were a group of poor, insignificant people. Yet they became so strong that very quickly the new faith spread to most of the world. They knew that the power to make this happen was not a human power. They were possessed by the power of God himself. He gave the Holy Spirit to all who believed in Jesus and they were transformed. It was this sign that marked out the first Christians. They soon recognised that this Holy Spirit was God in another form. Paul wrote that Christ will give us life 'through his Spirit who lives in you' (Romans 8:11). They believed that the Holy Spirit was the power of God working within them and that he was a real person.

### **Belief in a heavenly life**

The first Christians knew that Jesus had returned to life after his death so they believed in resurrection. When Jesus returned to Heaven their belief in a new life after this life is ended was confirmed. Jesus had told them: 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me' (John 14:3). This promise that they would go to be with God sustained them when they were threatened with persecution and death. They believed in Heaven and also in Hell.

### **The creeds**

These simple statements of the faith of the earliest Christians were gathered together in the form of a creed. This was a declaration made when a new convert was welcomed into a church and then often recited when the church gathered for worship. The first of these creeds is called 'the Apostles' Creed'. (You can find this and other creeds in *Salvation Story* – the Army's Handbook of Doctrine). It comes from a time just about 200 years after Jesus when the Church was getting organised. Our statement of faith in The Soldier's Covenant (articles of war) is the same kind of document as these first Christian creeds. It simply expresses what we believe.

### **Belief through the centuries**

The history of the Church has seen many discussions, arguments, sadly even wars over precise details of what Christians believe. Many thousands of books have been written to explain Christian teaching, and words and ideas have been modified over the centuries. But when we sign our names on the Soldier's Covenant we are adding our acceptance of the simple truths of the faith which were discovered when Jesus was here on earth. We are following in the steps of countless millions of people who have said, 'We believe...'



What made Peter cry out, 'You are the Christ' when Jesus asked them who he was? Did Peter find this out for himself or was he helped to discover it?



Why is it important for The Salvation Army to have a written statement of what we believe?



Passages from Judges and Ruth as indicated in the notes



Pray for people who have to lead their nation especially in difficult times.



Why was the time of the Judges so difficult for the Israelite people?

**Month 5  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'The time of  
the Judges'**

### **Disobedience and defeat (Judges 2:6–15)**

Joshua had brought the Israelites into the promised land and they were to stay there for many hundreds of years. But they had not completely conquered the many tribes who had lived there before they came. Joshua reminded the people that they must remain loyal to the God who had brought them out of Egypt and given them victory, but after his death the next generation forgot this vow of loyalty to God. They began to worship the idols of the local people and to mix this religion with the worship of the true God. As a result of this disobedience the Israelites faced defeat and disgrace.

### **Who were the judges? (Judges 2:16–23)**

The Book of Judges tells the stories of a number of heroes who rescued the people for a time. They were fighters who led some of the Israelite tribes in battle. Because there was no king or any other leader, they became the effective rulers, or judges, of their tribes. The stories all show the same pattern of behaviour. The people desert the worship of God and suffer military defeats. Then they are sorry and cry to the Lord to help them. The Lord raised up a judge who, often miraculously, helps them to victory. As soon as they enjoy the victory they start worshipping the false gods again. Then the pattern is repeated. It seemed that they would never learn to be faithful to God who wanted to help them.

### **Gideon (Judges 6–7)**

Perhaps the best story concerns Gideon. He was a member of the tribe of Manasseh. Although his family was the weakest in the tribe and he was the

youngest son, God chose him to be the leader. His tribe were farmers and their crops were being destroyed by Midianite herdsmen who would invade Israelite lands with their cattle. Gideon did not want to be a leader and tried to set tests to God so that he could avoid the task. But God confirmed in the tests that Gideon was the one to take his people to battle against the mighty Midianites. He destroyed the altars to the false gods and called his people to repentance. Then he set out with a great crowd of men to fight the enemy. God did not want the victory to be won through the strength of Gideon's army. So he instructed Gideon to let the fearful men and the careless men go home. With just 300 men Gideon surprised and defeated the great Midianite army. Gideon became the leader of his tribe, called them to the worship of the true God, and had a time of peace for 40 years.

### **Samson (Judges 13:1–5;24–25;15:1–20;16:4–6;15–31)**

The most famous judge was Samson. Unlike Gideon he was born to be a leader. Under God's direction he took a vow never to shave his hair or to drink wine. He grew to be a very strong man and was a natural leader of his people against their Philistine enemies. But Samson often used his position and his strength selfishly. He wanted personal revenge and not a just victory for his people. He was led astray by the women he lived with. Delilah, a Philistine girl who was in league with Samson's enemies, tricked him into revealing the secret of his strength. Then she shaved his head and he became a weakling. The end of Samson's story is very sad. The blinded hero was paraded before his enemies. He asked the Lord for one more moment of strength and brought down the building in which he was held, killing himself and all the Philistines who were laughing at him. The man who should have been a great leader became a great failure.

### **Where was God?**

This was a very dark time in the history of God's people. Their repeated failures and defeats are all clear to see. A few people, men and women, emerge as godly leaders and their example shines brightly in the darkness.

The best truth to come from the book is that God always remained faithful to his people even though they often did not deserve it. They often needed to be punished but God never stopped loving them. They remained part of his plan for the world. We can see this in the beautiful story of Ruth which comes from the time of the judges.

### **Ruth – a story of love and faithfulness (Ruth 1; 4:9–17)**

There was a famine in Israel and a family of four – father, mother (called Naomi) and their two sons – went as refugees to the foreign land of Moab. There they found food and the two sons found wives among the local girls. Later both the

father and the two sons died, leaving Naomi with her two daughters-in-law in grief and poverty. Naomi decided to return to Israel. She advised the two girls to return to their own families. But one of the girls, called Ruth, had been so impressed by the faith of Naomi that she vowed she would never leave her. Naomi's God would be her God and she would remain faithful to her mother-in-law all her life. Returning to Israel, Ruth learned to live in this foreign land. Because of their poverty she went to glean from the fields of the wealthy farmers. Her sincerity and faithfulness won the heart of Boaz, the local clan chief, and he rescued both Naomi and Ruth, making Ruth his wife. From this marriage of an Israelite to a poor foreign woman, came the family into which the great King David was born. The story shows the true faith of an ordinary family in a time of unbelief. It also shows that God was planning for the future greatness of his people even when they were disobeying him.



Why did Ruth want to stay with Naomi and live in a foreign land? Why do you admire her courage?



Compare the characters of Gideon and Samson. Who was the stronger man?



Passages from 1 Samuel as indicated in the notes



Pray that you may understand when God speaks to you and be willing to obey him.



Did God really want the Israelites to have a king like the other nations?

**Month 5  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Samuel'**

The time of the judges was a bad, sad time for the people of Israel. It ended when one of God's great men came to lead the nation forward. Samuel was the last and greatest of the judges, the first of a new kind of prophet and the man who helped Israel find its ideal king.

#### **Dedicated and called (1 Samuel 1:9–28; 3:1–10)**

Samuel's birth was God's answer to the anxious prayer of his mother, Hannah. She dedicated his whole life to the service of God and he fulfilled this promise from his boyhood by serving at the shrine where the covenant box was kept. It was here that Samuel heard God speaking to him directly. The old priest, Eli, helped him to respond by saying, 'Speak, Lord, I am listening'. So Samuel heard his own direct call to God's service.

#### **Challenging wrong (1 Samuel 3:11–21; 7:3–13)**

Young Samuel's first task for God was very difficult. Eli's sons had spoiled their role as priests by their wicked behaviour. Samuel had to announce that God would bring this to an end. Worship must be holy. If God was going to rescue the nation from their Philistine enemies then they must be pure and good.

#### **A wise judge (1 Samuel 7:15–17)**

Unlike the previous judges, Samuel was not a fighting man. His work was to unite all the people of Israel. He established a fair system to solve disputes. He acted as God's representative for all the people. In this way the people came together and peace was made throughout the whole land.

**Choosing a king (1 Samuel 8:4–22; 10:1; 10:17–25)**

The Israelites saw the nations around them had kings. They thought they would be stronger if they, too, found someone to be their king. Samuel was not sure that this was a good idea. Their true king was their God. In the end he accepted what the people wanted and God gave his blessing. Samuel found the man chosen by God. He was a strong, young warrior named Saul. He was anointed by Samuel and accepted by the people in a great ceremony.

**King Saul goes wrong (1 Samuel 15:10–31)**

We will study Saul in a later lesson but we should notice that it was Samuel, now an old man, who had to deal with the king when he broke God's rules. The authority of God's prophet was greater than the authority of the king he had anointed. The king could not do as he pleased if this was against God's law. Samuel had to tell Saul that he had been rejected by God and that his reign would come to an end.

**Finding the right king (1 Samuel 16:1–13)**

Old Samuel was very disappointed with Saul's failure but God reminded him he had one last important task to do. Saul's successor had to be found. This time it was not a tough, strong fighter but a lad who was chosen by God. In secret Samuel had to search for him. He was the youngest son of Jesse, only a boy called David. Once again Samuel told him he was to be God's choice and anointed him as king. David proved the ideal choice. He was far from being a perfect ruler, but he was the best king the Israelites ever had. Samuel had at last completed the work for which he had been dedicated and called.



How did Samuel find David and select him to the next king of the Israelites?



What were the dangers that Saul faced as king? Why did he fail?



Pray for people who are trying to live without God and who think that a sinful life is normal. Pray that God may break through to them with the love of Jesus.



Is it 'normal' for people to behave selfishly sometimes?

**Month 5  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living**

**'Distorted  
Image'**

### Notes

In previous months we have looked at what Christians believe about God. This month we look at what Christians believe about human beings. This is important because it helps us to get a proper understanding about ourselves. It tells us how privileged we are, how weak we are, and who can help us.

#### God's special creation

The Bible says that God made people in his 'image' or 'likeness' (Genesis 1:26). It says God 'crowned him (including *her*) with glory and honour' (Psalm 8:5). Although we share some similarities with other animals that God created, human beings are different. Our ability to think and feel emotion, to respond to God and to know the difference between right and wrong is a special gift that we have from God. God made us to enjoy his company and to come to him naturally in worship. All the best qualities that you see in other people are evidence of how much we are made in God's image.

#### Our special responsibility

Because God gave to human beings these special qualities he intended us to use them wisely and well. He made us responsible to look after his creation and to act towards other people and creatures with the loving concern that he always showed. The psalmist says God made us to be 'ruler over the works of (*his*) hand' (Psalm 8:6). This did not mean that we could simply do as we please but that we should take care of God's creation, including other people.

### **Human failure**

The Bible plainly shows us that we have failed in this responsibility. Beginning with the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1–24) the history of our selfishness and disobedience is told on almost every Bible page. Paul tells us that ‘all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (Romans 3:23). Instead of acting as God intended we have used our freedom for our own purposes. This has produced all the problems of violence, crime, war and even the bad feelings that sometimes exist in a Christian community. God’s best gifts have been misused. We have all fallen short of the glory and honour which God gave to us.

### **The spoiled picture**

This ‘distorted image’ means that the simple and natural relationship that we should have with God has been spoiled. Our sin creates a barrier between us and him. We feel guilty, ashamed and rebellious and God’s love for us finds it hard to break through this barrier. So we live as though God is not there and as though our sinful ways are the normal ways of living. But, in our hearts, we know that this is not right and we feel a longing for a better way. We may not know it, but we are longing for that relationship with God that has been broken.

### **God breaks through**

The good news is that this sad state does not have to remain. We could do nothing about the problem but God took action. He broke through the barrier of sin in the person of Jesus. He came to our world to show us how to live in the way God intended. He taught us what we must do. Best of all, he gave his life as a sacrifice on Calvary to take away our sin. He paid the price for the sins of everybody who had ever lived or would live. He made it possible for us to have our relationship with God restored. Paul says: ‘At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly’ (Romans 5:6). ‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God’ (Ephesians 2:8).



How did God restore the relationship between him and human beings?



In what ways are human beings ‘made in the image of God’? In what ways are we unlike him?



Pray for all new soldiers of The Salvation Army; that God will keep them faithful to the promises they have made.



What is the best age for a young person to become a senior soldier?

**Month 5  
Week 4**

**Salvation Army  
Studies**

**‘Living a  
Christian Life’**

### **Notes**

Becoming a Salvation Army soldier is not like passing an examination or passing the winning post in a sprint. It is more like beginning a long-distance run. It means learning how to live a Christian life for all the years that lie ahead. Soldiers may discover problems in their life's journey and may have to overcome them. There may be hard battles to fight. The good soldier of Jesus Christ does not just take part in a parade in a smart uniform but is involved in the real struggle for Jesus against the powers of evil in this world (see 2 Timothy 2:3–5). If the new soldier is going to be effective there are important lessons to learn.

### **There is a battle to be fought**

The new soldier has to be prepared to stand up for his faith. Peter says we should ‘always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have’ (1 Peter 3:15). We may not be clever in argument but we can tell people about what has happened to us when we accepted Jesus as our saviour. Sometimes we will face opposition from people who reject the Christian faith or who laugh at anyone who seems to be ‘different’. This can be discouraging and may make us feel that we want to hide our faith away. But the Christian soldier will try by God's help to be courageous and to stand by his beliefs. In the end the people who opposed us will come to respect us for our courage and may even start to ask questions about our faith.

### **There is work to do**

Salvation Army soldiers are people who have work to do for Jesus. Help is always needed at our corps and we should find a task which is suited to our abilities and which needs to be done. We can volunteer our time and skill and our leaders will help us to find the way in which we can best serve. No one should feel that being a soldier makes no difference to his or her life. Even the youngest and most inexperienced soldier can make a contribution to the witness that their corps makes in the district.

### **There are spiritual dangers to be avoided**

Salvation soldiers make a number of promises in the Soldier's Covenant. These promises shape our behaviour in many ways and keep us out of danger. Even when we keep them all there are other dangers which the good soldier seeks to avoid. The effectiveness of the corps can be weakened when there are disagreements between soldiers. Gossip and quarrelling can spoil all the good work that is attempted by the corps. Good soldiers will always try to think positively about their comrades and allow their leaders to correct any faults which may arise.

Sometimes the routine work of the corps can lose its attraction. It can become a danger for soldiers simply to perform their work as a duty rather than an offering to God in return for his love for us. Good soldiers keep their level of enthusiasm high.

### **Help is available**

In his first letter Peter reminds the Christians that the God of all grace will 'restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast' (1 Peter 5:10).

The Christian soldier does not struggle alone. The promise made to us in so many places in the Bible is that God will help us. He will turn our weakness into strength and will cast out our fear through his perfect love. The Holy Spirit is alongside us when we most need his help. Whatever our circumstances we can rely on him.

### **Victory is promised**

Paul wrote to Timothy: 'I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing' (2 Timothy 4:7–8). This promise of heavenly reward is also a promise that all our work for God will be worthwhile, for his Kingdom will one day be fully established.

What dangers does the new soldier face? How can they be overcome?



Why is nominal membership of the Army without a commitment to its work dangerous?





Passages from 1 Samuel as indicated in the notes



Pray for those who hold positions of authority, that they will be guided by God in the decisions they make.



Was it a mistake to make Saul the first King of Israel?

**Month 6  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'King Saul'**

### **Who wants a king? (1 Samuel 8:1–22)**

For many hundreds of years the Israelite people avoided having a king. They followed great leaders like Moses and Joshua. They had respected their priests who led their worship of God. They found temporary leaders of the separate tribes to lead them in battle. They had judges who decided their disputes.

But in the days of Samuel the people were troubled by the Philistines who had captured much of their land and kept raiding their fields and towns. They had even stolen the sacred box containing the Ten Commandments which was the centre of their worship. The Israelites became desperate. They wanted a strong leader who would rally them and be their commander in battle. They were prepared to make him their king, even though they knew that to have a king would cost them dearly. When Samuel found Saul (see last month's lesson) they thought they had found the right man.

### **A good start (1 Samuel 9:1–2; 11:1–15)**

Saul seemed to have all the qualities to be a good king. He was a tall, handsome, strong man. He seemed to be modest (1 Samuel 9:21). He was very courageous and he attracted to his cause other good, strong young men.

He made a very good start by winning an important battle against the Ammonites. 1 Samuel 11:6 says the Spirit of the Lord came on Saul. God gave him great gifts and great inspiration to use them. At the beginning of his reign as king everything went well.

**The stress of leadership (1 Samuel 14:47–48,52)**

The job of being king was never going to be easy. Saul was constantly at war with the enemies of the Israelites. He achieved some notable victories, especially because of the bravery of his son Jonathan. But it was hard to keep up the battle. It seemed that the Philistines, in particular, could never be finally defeated. While Saul could find the enthusiasm to fight some battles, the constant demands on him were hard to maintain.

**Saul's impatience (1 Samuel 13:5–14)**

The first sign of trouble came because of Saul's impatience. He was getting an army ready to fight the Philistines. Part of the preparation was to be a religious service conducted by Samuel as the priest. Saul and the army waited for seven days for Samuel to come and were growing restless. In the end Saul decided to act as the priest himself and made the sacrifices. In doing this he had taken authority in an area which did not belong to the king. He had been made king by God's anointing but what he did was against God's law. His impatience had made him disobedient to God.

**Saul's disobedience (1 Samuel 15:1–23)**

The danger for Saul was that he thought he could do just as he liked. When he was told to attack the Amalekites and destroy them completely he kept back the best of the flocks of animals. He pretended he did this to make a sacrificial offering to God but really it was to make himself rich. Samuel's response was devastating for Saul: 'To obey is better than sacrifice for... arrogance... is like idolatry.' Saul had not learned that the king of the Israelites still had to obey God.

**Saul's depression and jealousy (1 Samuel 16:14–23; 19:8–10)**

The pressure on Saul only increased. The good spirit of the Lord was replaced by black moods of despair. The Bible describes them as evil spirits from the Lord. Only David could lift Saul by playing his harp for him. Samuel had already told Saul twice that the Lord had rejected him from being king. The young warrior David seemed like a threat to his throne. When a battle was won the people had shouted for David more than for Saul. This increased Saul's jealousy of David and, when David was playing soothing music, King Saul tried to kill him with his spear. David had to escape to save his life.

**A sad end (1 Samuel 31:1-6)**

Instead of continuing the battle against the Philistines Saul decided to try to capture David. He was unable to do so. In the end Saul was driven into a hopeless battle against the Philistines. His army was totally defeated, his three sons were

killed and he killed himself. Saul might have been the ideal king. In the end he was a disaster.

**What can we learn from Saul?**

This tragic story has many lessons. No one, not even a king, can do just as he likes. If we are given privileges we will have greater responsibilities. We must all obey God's commands. He is the King of kings. Obedience to him is the first duty of all leaders. We must also know the limits of our powers. We cannot assume that we can take on other privileges that are not ours. A humble understanding of our limitations is important. Jealousy of other people who may have different gifts and privileges can destroy our best work for God.



Saul seemed to be a strong man but was really weak. What were his weaknesses?



What qualities are required in a leader of a nation surrounded by enemies?



Passages from 1 and 2 Samuel as indicated in the notes



Read Psalm 51 verses 10-12. Make this prayer of David your own prayer.



Why did the Bible writers think David was the best king of Israel?

**Month 6  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'David - The  
ideal king'**

### **From shepherd boy to king**

The story of the brave young lad who protected his father's sheep from wolves and who became the great king of Israel is dramatic and romantic.

How brave he was when he fought the fierce Philistine warrior Goliath! How generous when he saved the life of his rival Saul! How loyal to his friend Jonathan! The Jewish people have always seen David as their ideal king and Christians remember that Jesus was a descendant of David. In an old hymn Jesus is called 'Great David's greater son'.

But the story of King David is complex. He was far from perfect and the Bible is very honest about his faults. We need to look at this man and his relationships with other people and with God. Then we will begin to understand his importance.

### **David the hero (1 Samuel 17)**

This famous story shows the courage and skill of the young man David. Faced with a mighty armed opponent, he is sure the Lord will give him victory. Skills he had gained in looking after the sheep were used to fight the Philistines. The Bible records many stories of David's brave actions. He was a great hero of his nation. Eventually David was able to defeat the Philistines and to end the many years of war with them.

### **David the rebel (1 Samuel 18:1-9; 20:16-42)**

King Saul became so jealous of David's popularity with the people that he vowed to have him killed. It was only the friendship of Saul's son Jonathan that

protected David. He had to escape from Saul's army and set up a band of supporters to oppose the king. Twice he had the opportunity to kill Saul but he would not do it. He became a rebel leader, even siding with the hated Philistines for a time. Some stories of this time show David having a short temper. He might have taken steps to avenge hurts that he felt but was saved from doing so. He then thanked God for rescuing him from taking this hasty action.

### **David the king (2 Samuel 2:1–4; 5:1–10; 6:17–19)**

Two occasions are recorded of David being made king, first of the southern tribes of Judah and then of the northern tribes of Israel. The distinction between these two groups of tribes became an important issue later. David conquered Jerusalem, which was in the middle of the kingdom, and made this his capital city. The name Jerusalem means city of peace. It became known as David's city. He brought the sacred box containing the Ten Commandments to Jerusalem and this became the centre of worship for the people. In all of this David enjoyed God's blessing and approval.

### **David the selfish (2 Samuel 11; 12:1–14)**

Even though David was a good and strong leader he was not without his faults. These chapters show how badly David behaved towards someone else's wife. His adultery, his deceit, and the way he had Bathsheba's husband killed are recorded plainly. David's power as king had corrupted him. But because he was still under God's rule he had to hear the severe criticism from the prophet Nathan. The parable Nathan told ended with the words 'You are the man.' David had to acknowledge his serious sin. Despite his repentance David would suffer as a result of this failure for the rest of his life.

### **David and his family (2 Samuel 18:19–33)**

David had a large family because he had taken many wives. Many disputes arose among his children which caused him great sorrow. Within the family there was murder, rape and rebellion. David was never able to manage these family disputes. His son Absalom raised a revolt against his father and caused a war. In the course of it Absalom was killed and David wept for the son he loved. David's reign as king was never an easy time and he had to face constant trouble from within the family and from other people in the nation.

### **David the poet (2 Samuel 22:1–7)**

David was a musician and a poet. These verses are the beginning of a song of praise and thanksgiving which he wrote. We have a record of David dancing before the Lord. Many of the Psalms are said to have been written by him. In his

poetry David expressed all his emotions – from joy and happiness to despair. Psalm 51 is a record of his repentance after his great sin (see 2 Samuel 11).

**David and God (2 Samuel 7:18–29; 24:18–25)**

The first passage is a prayer of David. He thanks God for all the good things that have come to him. The last verses of the Second Book of Samuel show us something of David's relationship with God. Despite the mistakes he made and the sins he committed David was always aware of God and recognised that he depended on God. He wanted to worship God, to thank him for his mercy, to ask for his help and to make an offering that was worthy. This story shows him insisting on paying for the site and the materials to make an altar to God and to offer a worthy sacrifice. In the end it was David's humility and his willingness to repent that made him acceptable in God's sight.



Why was David a better king than Saul?



What authority did the prophet Nathan have over the king? What does the record in 2 Samuel 12 teach us about the accountability of rulers?



Pray for a friend who does not know Jesus as saviour. Pray that you may be able to help in bringing him/her to Christ.



Why did the Church decide to make a cross – a symbol of a cruel method of execution – as its main symbol?

**Month 6  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living**

**'Salvation  
Story'**

### **The Cross**

Christians believe the most important event in history was the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection. It is important, not because of an unjust sentence of death and a cruel execution, but because God himself, in the person of Jesus, suffered punishment for sin. Jesus lived the perfect life and so did not deserve to be punished. He could have used his divine powers to escape but he chose not to. He accepted human pain and death on behalf of all the world. He then showed his almighty power by defeating death itself and rising from the tomb. The Cross is the symbol of Jesus paying the price for the sins of everyone in the world.

### **Explaining the Cross**

To help us understand how the death of Jesus saves us we have a number of pictures:

- Jesus said he came to give his life as a *ransom* for many (Mark 10:45). A price had to be paid to free a guilty prisoner.
- Another picture comes from a law court. Jesus took on a legal sentence as a *substitute* for us (Isaiah 53:5).
- There is a picture from Jewish worship. Hebrews 9:12 sees Jesus as the perfect *sacrifice* replacing the repeated sacrifice of animals in the Temple.
- There is a picture from the battlefield. Jesus' triumphant cry from the Cross, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), shows him winning a great *victory*.

All these and other explanations of the Cross are intended to help us understand what Jesus did for us on that important day.

### **Love crucified**

The most important truth to learn is that it was his love for the world that made Jesus willing to endure the Cross. What Jesus said to Nicodemus – ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life’ (John 3:16) – is the heart of all our understanding about the Cross. God did not want anyone to perish but everyone to have the eternal life he came to give.

### **Our response to the Cross**

When we understand what Jesus did for us it moves us deeply. We need to make two responses.

- First we are deeply sorry about our sins. We can see that it was sins just like ours which made the Cross necessary. We want to turn away from our sins and determine that we will no longer be involved with them.
- Then we need to have faith that Jesus can truly save us. We make him Lord and decide to follow him for the rest of our lives.

### **The blessings of salvation**

When we are saved there are many blessings that come our way:

- We have a wonderful sense of forgiveness. All the guilt about our past sins is gone and we have a new start.
- There is a new relationship with God. Instead of being afraid of him we find that he is our friend. The barriers which our sins put up are gone and we have a sense of God’s peace in our heart.
- There is a new start in our life. Jesus said this was like being ‘born again’ (John3:3).
- We feel certain that we have been accepted by God as a member of his family.
- We have the promise that we shall live with him for ever.

### **How to keep saved**

A new Christian always wants to stay close to Jesus and to keep all the wonderful blessings that have been given. But it is possible to slip back into old, bad ways and to lose this great privilege. If we want to stay saved we must:

- Obey the leadings of God always. We have started on a journey to become more like Jesus every day and he will help us, through the Holy Spirit, to do this.
- Keep believing! Even when we have doubts and temptations we need to hold on to the truth that Jesus has saved us and that he can keep us.
- Keep in touch with Jesus. Regular prayers and the study of the Bible will help us to understand more and more about the Christian life and keep our faith alive.

- Witness! Sharing our faith will help it to grow. The wonderful experience of our new life in Christ is one that we will want to share with our friends. If it is real they will surely see the difference in us.

**On to holiness**

In our first year studies we looked in detail at living the holy life. When we have enjoyed the wonderful blessings of being saved we will want to know more and more about Jesus and become like him.



What do we have to do to be saved?



Which of the explanations of the meaning of the Cross is most helpful to you?

**Once again you have the opportunity to  
turn your studies into practical action  
this week. Enjoy the experience!**

**Month 6  
Week 4**

**Local  
practical  
studies**



Passages from 1 Kings as indicated in the notes.



Ask God to give you understanding and wisdom as his gifts to you. When he gives them remember who gave them to you!



Why did wealth and power change Solomon? Was it inevitable?

**Month 7  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Solomon and  
the divided  
kingdom'**

#### **A new king (1 Kings 1:32–40; 2:1–12)**

David's quarrelling family had several sons who wanted to be king when the old king died. David decided the matter by having Solomon anointed and accepted by the people before his death. He advised his son to stay strong and faithful to God but he also warned him against his enemies.

#### **A wise king (1 Kings 3:5–28; 4:29–34)**

The young Solomon knew how difficult it would be to lead the people. He asked God to give him wisdom for the task. Wisdom would be more valuable than money or power. He soon proved he could solve difficult problems. The Bible tells us how he solved a dispute between two women. He became famous for his sensible decisions and his clever sayings. He made friends with the surrounding nations, instead of fighting them. His time as king was a time of peace.

#### **A rich king (1 Kings 10:14–29)**

Solomon controlled all the trade that passed through his land and he became very rich. Some of the people grew rich with him and the whole nation had a time of great prosperity. He was visited by other wealthy rulers, like the Queen of Sheba, and he impressed them with the beauty and luxury of his palaces.

#### **Building a temple for God (1 Kings 6:2–13; 8:1–9)**

One of Solomon's greatest acts was to build a beautiful temple in Jerusalem. It was made of the finest materials, gold, cedar wood, bronze and stone. The decorations and workmanship were the finest in the world. Into the secret holiest

place the priests brought the Ark – the sacred box with the Ten Commandments in stone. Then the new building was dedicated to God. Solomon made a long and beautiful prayer asking God to make his home in this Temple.

### **What about the people? (1 Kings 9:15–24)**

Solomon also built several palaces, forts and walls around the cities. He also had a large army with chariots and horses. All this cost a lot of money and needed many workmen. Solomon forced the people to work for him for several months of the year and made many of the foreign visitors slaves to work on his projects. He made the people pay heavy taxes and they began to grumble. The people in the northern part of the land were ready to revolt.

### **What about God? (1 Kings 11:1–13)**

As Solomon grew rich and famous, he forgot that his wisdom came from God.

He entered into many marriages with foreign princesses and soon began to worship their false gods. He broke the commandment that said, ‘You shall have no God before me.’ In the end this led to the break up of the kingdom and spoiled the work that David had done in bringing the tribes together. What a disappointing end to a reign that began so well.

### **The kingdom breaks in two (1 Kings 12:1–17)**

After Solomon’s death his son, Rehoboam, was proclaimed king. The people of the northern tribes asked him to make their life easier by reducing the forced labour and the taxes. Rehoboam foolishly refused to agree and said he would make life harder for them. So the people of the northern tribes – we shall call them ‘Israel’ – rebelled and made one of Solomon’s officials named Jeroboam their king. The people of the southern tribes – we shall call them ‘Judah’ – kept Rehoboam as king. Instead of one strong nation there were now two small weak kingdoms which often disagreed and fought each other.

### **Israel and Judah**

Jerusalem and its Temple were in the southern kingdom of Judah. In northern Israel they had no centre for worship and had to build one. This led to a breakdown of the worship of the true God. Despite the warnings of the prophets, Israel turned away from God. After 200 years the nation was destroyed by an Assyrian army and the separate identity of the people was lost for ever.

In Judah they also faced the dangers of idolatry. They had many prophets to warn them. For more than 300 hundred years the tiny nation survived. Then they were conquered and went into exile in Babylon for 70 years but faithful people then returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the city and the Temple.

### **God's people**

We shall see how God continued to care for his people through all this time.

God showed his love for them when they were poor and oppressed just as much as he did when they were rich and strong under Solomon.



How did Solomon solve the problem of the two women who claimed one child?



What were the real causes of the break up of the united kingdom after Solomon's reign? What were the religious consequences?



1 Kings 17-19, 21; 2 Kings 2.



We may not be called to be prophets but we are all called to speak the truth in love. Pray for courage and boldness to speak for God.



What did God do to help Elijah when he was depressed after the excitement of Mount Carmel?

**Month 7  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Elijah'**

### **The prophets**

We now begin a study of some of the great prophets. They were people who could see God's plans clearly and were inspired to bring messages from God to the nations. They were often ordinary people without official positions. They had great personal authority, and sometimes showed miraculous powers. Sometimes they foretold future events but they always spoke out boldly to tell the people what God wanted from them.

### **Elijah (1 Kings 17:1-6)**

The first great prophet was named Elijah. He bursts on the biblical scene as though he comes from nowhere. It is 30 years since the northern tribes – now called the kingdom of Israel – rebelled against Solomon's son. The new nation was prosperous but its new king, Ahab, was a weak man. He had married a foreign princess – Jezebel – and she was determined to make her foreign gods worshipped throughout the land. Elijah arrived from his home town in Galilee and announced that God would send a terrible drought and famine to the land because of the wickedness of the rulers and the people.

### **The great drought (1 Kings 17:7-24)**

For three years there was no rain and the nation suffered. Elijah hid, first by a stream, and then, when it dried up, he stayed with a widow whom he helped to survive by miraculously providing an unending supply of food. When her son died Elijah revived him, proving to the woman that he was God's spokesman.

**Elijah and the king (1 Kings 18:1–19)**

Throughout the drought King Ahab had been searching for Elijah. Many other prophets had been rounded up and killed but Elijah could not be found. Finally, through the faithful royal servant Obadiah, Elijah met the king. He condemned the idolatry that had been encouraged by the king and announced a contest that would show which god truly had power.

**Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20–39)**

The contest was set up on Mount Carmel. Four hundred and fifty prophets of the false god, Baal, were invited to build an altar, to lay on it an animal for sacrifice. They were not to set it on fire but to ask their god to send fire. All day long they prayed, cut themselves and waited for fire. None came and Elijah mocked them. Then Elijah built an altar to the true God, laid an animal on it and drenched it with water three times. When he prayed to God the fire came and burnt up the animal, the altar and the water! This convinced the people that Elijah was the representative of the true God.

**Elijah and God (1 Kings 19:1–18)**

As the drought ended and the torrential rains came, Elijah ran away. He was not delighted with the triumph on Mount Carmel but afraid of Queen Jezebel's revenge. He exhausted himself running to the other end of the country to the holy mountain of Horeb. There God met him and sustained him with food and rest. Then God showed his powerful presence not through wind, fire or an earthquake but in the stillness of a calm day. Elijah regained his trust in God. He was given new tasks to do and reminded that God had many other people who had remained faithful.

**The downfall of King Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21:1–29)**

Once more Elijah challenged the king and queen because of the misuse of their power and the murder of an innocent man. The prophet told the king that he and his family would be destroyed, even though the punishment was delayed. The king died in battle while trying to hide. The queen was brutally murdered and the whole family came to a horrible end. The stories were a warning about what would happen to rulers who rejected the true God.

**A dramatic end (2 Kings 2:1–18)**

Elijah's whole life and work had been full of drama and excitement. It is fitting that God would bring his work to an end in a dramatic way. In the presence of his successor, Elisha, he was taken directly to Heaven in a chariot of fire. The prophetic spirit was passed to the new prophet of God and the bones of Elijah were never found.

### **Confronting evil**

The work of Elijah was to challenge evil and wickedness wherever he found it. He spoke the truth even if it put his life in danger. He knew what it was to be afraid but he trusted God to be with him and to protect him. Even though his enemies were powerful he told them the truth as God had commanded him. In this way the prophet, who had no official position, was more influential than the king.



Why did Queen Jezebel hate Elijah and try to kill him?



Contrast the characters of Elijah and Ahab.



Notes provided



Pray for people whose religion makes them afraid of evil powers. Pray that they may know the love of God we find in Jesus.



How should Christians behave towards their animist neighbours? How far can our faith include local traditions? What practices need to be challenged in the name of Christ?

**Month 7  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living  
The Christian  
and other faiths**

**'Animism  
(Primal  
Religion'**

### **Introduction**

This set of lessons gives a brief account of some of the world's great religions. It is based on the book *Our Faith and Theirs* written by John Coutts.

But why? Christians may well ask: 'Why do I need to waste time on false faiths? Is not the Lord Jesus Christ the Way the Truth and the Life?' Cannot I find God's wisdom in the Bible?' Nevertheless there are several good reasons why we should seek to study and understand the beliefs of others.

- Respect for their dignity as God's children requires us to understand what others believe and why they believe it.
- We cannot hope to commend our Lord to others if we are ignorant of their beliefs and way of life.
- Our Lord says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' In some parts of the world there is religious conflict. We cannot hope to bring peace if we do not know what the conflict is about and what others believe.
- The world has now become one. In former generations Christians were found mainly in Europe, Buddhists in South East Asia, and so on. But the great religions have now spread worldwide. The Salvation Army, founded in East London, is now at work in 111 countries. We have to learn to live together.
- Finally, there is also our own search for the truth. When Paul was preaching to country people, he told them 'God has always given evidence of his existence by the good things he does' (Acts 14:17). So perhaps there is truth to be learned from other faiths.

## Animism

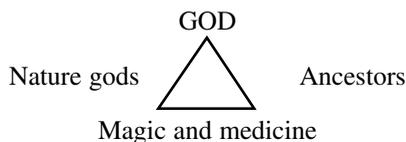
In some parts of the world there are people who believe in many gods and spirits. Often they are illiterate and have no written scriptures. Their beliefs are expressed through unwritten prayers and songs and their shrines are made of mud and thatch. Such beliefs were common in earliest times. Sometimes these beliefs are called 'Primal (First) Religion'. We shall use the term 'animism' – which means 'belief in spirits' – while not forgetting that many animists have a clear idea of God the Creator.

In many parts of the world Christians come from an animist background and may share some of the animist outlook. Here is an example:

*Suppose someone begins to behave strangely – and then runs mad: what should you do? Should the afflicted person be taken to the psychiatrist, the mental hospital, or the 'native doctor' or 'shaman'?*

### The beliefs of animism

The beliefs of animists are 'polytheistic' – 'believing in many gods'. Here is a diagram:



**God the Creator.** At the top of the triangle we see God the creator. As Paul said to the Athenians; 'The one whom you worship...even though you do not know it, I proclaim to you' (Acts 19:23).

**Gods of nature.** Nearer are the great gods of nature – such as Shango, god of thunder of the Yoruba people in Nigeria; or Ogun, the god of iron.

**Ancestors.** Also important are the spirits of the ancestors – those who have gone before. Animists often make offerings to their ancestors and ask them for help: '*My father – here is palm wine. Those who lived in my father's time here is palm wine. Let our harvest be good. Save us from sickness.*'

**Magic and Medicine.** In many languages a single word – translated 'medicine' – is used both for anti-malaria pills and amulets that are believed to give protection. Such charms can be made from grass, leaves, sticks or the bark of trees. They can also be bought from 'native doctors' or medicine men.

**What about dreams?** Also important are dreams – which are often believed to come from the spirit-world. If you dream about William Booth, does this mean the Founder of The Salvation Army is speaking to you from the great world that lies beyond us? Or have you perhaps been reading about him, and a memory has floated up into your mind while you were asleep?

**Witchcraft.** ‘Witchcraft’ is a word with many meanings. In Europe and North America, some try to revive the worship of the gods of nature, and call it ‘witchcraft’. But in many parts of the world, the word translated ‘witchcraft’ refers to an evil destructive power, which some connect to the worship of Satan. In many forms of traditional belief, witchcraft is a kind of war against souls. It is thought that the souls of witches fly out at night and meet together. They may devour the souls of other people or young children, and cause harm to crops and animals. Sometimes offerings are placed at the foot of trees where witches are thought to meet.

*Witch hunts* take place when suspected witches are chased out of town – or worse still, killed. Suspected witches sometimes confess – ‘Yes, I am a witch! I killed so-and-so.’ This looks like proof of their guilt, and evidence for the reality of witchcraft. But people will sometimes confess to crimes they have never committed. If someone says, ‘I am’ (or ‘I was’) a witch’ does it mean their confession is true?’

### **Animists and the gospel**

In the past there has been too little respect for the culture of peoples who did not possess the art of writing. Their songs and prayers were soon forgotten, and their shrines of mud were washed away by the rains. Clearly there are good things in the animist’s beliefs. Honour is given to the earth and the ancestors and God the Creator is recognised, even if little is known about him. But often the culture of the animist included horrors – human sacrifice, slaves buried in the dead king’s grave, twins babies abandoned in the bush and widows suffering disgusting ill-treatment.

Christians can help the animists to be sure of God. Through faith, the unknown God is made known in Jesus, who is present with his people through the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is perfect love and perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). By faith in God and rebirth through the Spirit, the animist can become a member of a family greater than he has ever known – the family of Christians throughout the world and in Heaven.



Why should Christians stay away from any kind of witchcraft?



What lessons can we learn from animists about respect for ancestors?  
What can they learn from Christians about God’s love for them?



Pray for people whose family is broken and for whom life is lonely.



How should we behave towards people who have broken Salvationists' standards of conduct.

**Month 7  
Week 4**

**Salvation Army  
Studies**

**'Salvationists  
and their  
families'**

### **Introduction**

The remaining lessons in this series about Salvation Army soldiership are about the standards of conduct that Salvationists accept for themselves.

When someone is enrolled as a soldier they say 'they will make the values of the Kingdom of God the standard for their lives, showing Christian integrity in their deeds, maintaining Christian ideals in their relationships, and upholding the sanctity of marriage and family life'.

### **The 'ideal family'**

An 'ideal family' may be said to begin when a man and a woman love each other so much that they are prepared to commit themselves to each other for the rest of their lives and ask God to bless their marriage. As the marriage develops their love and trust grow and their commitment to each other increases. They may be blessed with children who are brought up in a loving, caring home and come to know the God who has blessed the marriage. This is one 'ideal' standard that Salvationists accept for themselves.

### **Singleness**

But not everyone will marry. Some may not find the right person for them. Some may feel a sense of duty to care for a relative or friend. Others may find a vocation that requires them to stay single. Still others may not find members of the opposite sex attractive to them. Single people may be able to offer care, concern and Christian love to many who would otherwise be lonely. Christians

should honour, respect and accept single people as valued members of their community. This is also a situation which may be 'ideal' for many.

### **Sexuality**

Salvationists believe that the full expression of sexual love should take place only within marriage. Where this occurs outside of marriage it poses a threat to the sanctity of marriage and family life. This is a problem in many societies where young people may be physically ready for a sexual relationship before they are mature enough to make a lasting decision about marriage. Guidance from the family and possibly from the corps will help to control the emotions and moderate behaviour. When these standards of conduct are accepted and lived out this is also an 'ideal' situation. If there are failures then they have to be handled with compassion and understanding.

### **Breakdown**

Sometimes marriages break down. Even those that started with Christian ideals of love and faithfulness sometimes become full of hatred and jealousy. Both partners and especially the children may suffer greatly when this happens. This is often made worse when a sexual relationship outside of the marriage is commenced. Christians will always be saddened if this happens in their church and will try to help the partners to heal the broken relationship. If this is successful there will be great rejoicing. If it fails then arrangements to end the marriage may have to be made. Some discipline within the church may be necessary but Christian love should always be shown to all those involved in this sad situation. This is far from 'ideal' but the church can show the spirit of Christ as it deals with these problems.

### **Homosexual relationships**

A further difficult situation occurs when a minority of people find themselves physically attracted to members of their own sex. We do not fully understand why this happens but it may be something over which the person concerned has no control. The Bible does not condemn people who have this inclination. It does strongly speak against sexual relationships between people of the same sex. Salvationists should accept people with this inclination as brothers and sisters in Christ. They should be supported as they live single, celibate lives which are honouring to God. This may not be 'ideal' but it allows the church to be a welcoming community to people who may feel very lonely.

### **Living a Christian life**

The values of the Kingdom of God are often in conflict with the ideas of the world in which we live. Much of Western society has abandoned these standards in favour of a view that says we may all behave just as we please.

Salvation Army soldiers are willing to uphold biblical standards even though these may be despised and rejected by those with whom we work or study.

We believe that these are lasting standards and that God will help us to keep them.



What makes a happy family?



'The family is the building block of society. When it breaks down society disintegrates.' Discuss this statement.



Amos 5; Hosea 1 and 3



Ask God to make you sensitive to his voice, whoever brings you his message.



Do we need prophets in our generation or has the word of Jesus made new prophets unnecessary?

**Month 8  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Amos and  
Hosea'**

### **Writing down the words**

We have already been introduced to the prophets. We have read about Nathan challenging King David when he was guilty of stealing another man's wife. We have seen how Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and Queen Jezebel. They were God's spokesmen. As their influence increased it became important to write down the messages they gave. Many of the books of the Old Testament record the messages of the prophets. This week we will look at two of them.

### **Amos (Amos 1:1; 7:10–15)**

The first verse tells us something about the man. He was a simple shepherd and farmer. He lived in a small town near Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah. God called him to speak to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel and he spent most of his life at their holy place at Bethel. When he was told to leave the holy place by its priest he refused to go. He claimed he was there by God's direct command. He had to obey the instruction of the God of Israel. For him prophecy was not a job he could choose but a calling which he had to obey.

### **Israel in the time of Amos and Hosea (Amos 6:3–6; 5:11–13; 5:21–24)**

The kingdom of Israel was prosperous. The wealthy people spent their money on pleasures but they oppressed the poor. There was no justice in the courts. Corruption was everywhere. Although the people presented sacrifices at the shrine at Bethel they did not honour God's law, so their religion was false. They had forgotten the God who had brought them out of Egypt.

### **The message of Amos (Amos 5; 7:7–8)**

We can imagine this furious man as he stood outside the holy place shouting his message to those who had come to worship. He condemned the wickedness he saw all around him. He saw that God would punish the wicked nation, sending the people away in exile. Their army would be defeated and their homes destroyed. He called on the people to repent, to change their way of life. Perhaps the Lord would change his mind and not punish them. The people thought God would come to save them but, unless they changed, “the day of the Lord” would bring disaster and not salvation.

Amos used a number of word pictures to make his message clear. In one he described the nation as a wall which had become crooked. God would apply a plumb line to the wall to show how much it was out of true. The crooked wall would have to be knocked down and rebuilt. In the end Amos believed that, although the nation would be punished, God would rebuild his people.

### **Hosea and his message (Hosea 1 and 3)**

Hosea was the next great prophet after Amos. Instead of the angry words of Amos, we can picture Hosea as a wise man with a message of hope and love. He, too, spoke to the people of the northern kingdom. Hosea used his personal story as an acted parable to teach the nation. His wife was unfaithful to him and Hosea saw this as just like the unfaithfulness of the people to God. Even though his wife had deserted him and become a slave, Hosea is told to pay money to buy back her freedom and to restore her to his home and family. He does this because his love for her has not changed despite her failure.

Hosea says that in the same way God continues to love the people of Israel even though they have deserted him for other gods. His love will send him to search for them and to buy them back so that they may become his people again. The message is one of hope. However wicked the people have been, God will not stop loving them and will search for them until he finds them.

The message of Hosea was made into a musical some years ago. The whole message of the book is contained in the words of one of its songs:

*Don't assume that God's dismissed you from his mind,  
Don't assume that God's forgotten to be kind;  
For no matter what you do, his love still follows you;  
Don't think that you have left him far behind.*

*For his love remains the same,  
He knows you by your name,  
Don't think because you failed him he despairs;*

*For he give to those who ask  
His grace for every task,  
God plans for you in love for he still cares.*

*SASB 44*



How did Hosea show the people that God loved them even though they had failed him?



Which of the two prophets (Amos or Hosea) had the more effective method of bringing the people back to God?



Passages from Isaiah as indicated in the notes



Dare you make the same prayer as the young Isaiah when God called him to go for him? Will you say, 'Here am I, send me!'?



Why was it wrong for the nation of Judah to make an alliance with Egypt?

**Month 8  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Isaiah'**

### **A prophet in Jerusalem**

At about the same time as Hosea gave his message to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, a young man went to the beautiful Temple in Jerusalem. Set on the highest hill in the city, this Temple was the centre of worship for the tiny southern kingdom of Judah. It was an uncertain time for the nation. The old king had recently died and the Assyrian army was threatening to invade.

### **A vision of God's holiness (Isaiah 6:1-8)**

As he worshipped, the young man, Isaiah, had a vision of God. He saw him seated on his high throne, higher than the town or the Temple. The angels were singing of his holiness. The building filled with smoke, a sign that God was offended by the wickedness he saw. Compared to God's holiness the young Isaiah saw his own sin and cried out to God to make him clean. His sin was like the sin of the nation. The nation needed to see the holiness of God. When Isaiah knew that he was cleansed he offered himself to be a messenger to the nation. He wanted the nation to be cleansed just as he had been. This was to be his work for the rest of his life.

### **The song of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7)**

Isaiah loved to paint pictures in words to help the people understand his message. He compared the people of Judah to a vineyard which had been carefully planted and cared for by a loving owner (God himself). But instead of producing good fruit, the grapes were bad. So the owner of the vineyard would take away its

protecting walls and hedges and allow it to become a wasteland. Isaiah saw that the people of Judah had produced violence and distress instead of the good fruit of justice and goodness. The message of the abandoned vineyard was that God would not always protect Judah from its enemies if it failed to be the holy nation that God intended.

**Don't put your trust in pagan alliances (Isaiah 3:1–7; 31:1)**

Isaiah saw that there would be trouble ahead for the nation. Without good leaders it would be surrounded by enemies and all the wealth of the rich people would be of no value to them. Some of the leaders wanted to make alliances with Egypt to protect them against the army of the King of Assyria. Isaiah condemned this idea. The holy nation should trust in God and not in pagan alliances.

**The tree stump will grow again (Isaiah 10:20–21; 11:1–11)**

Although Isaiah's message was one of trouble to come it was also a message of hope. Although the nation of Judah would be cut down like a tree, in time new shoots would come from the roots and the tree would grow again. There were still good people left in the land and this small group – a remnant of the whole nation – would survive and restore the land to the worship and service of the true God.

**Be strong, do not fear (Isaiah 35)**

The people were afraid of what would happen. They saw how the Assyrian army had captured and destroyed their neighbours and they thought they would be the next nation to face this mighty power. Isaiah assured the people that God was still in control and that the power of the Assyrians would be broken. He painted a picture of a desert springing to life after rain. God would restore the land. The people simply needed to trust God and to be strong.

**The enemy is defeated (Isaiah 37:21–29)**

The Assyrian army laid siege to the city of Jerusalem. They were camped just outside the gates. King Hezekiah sent to Isaiah asking him to pray for deliverance. Isaiah sent a message back to the king. God was in control. The Assyrians would go away. At this very moment a plague struck the opposing army and the Assyrians had to withdraw. Jerusalem was saved at least for this time. The prophecy of Isaiah came true.

**Hope for the future –the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7)**

Through all the years of his work Isaiah believed that God would provide a new great leader for God's people. The Messiah – the saviour of the nation – would come. Although he may not have fully understood what this meant, Isaiah was

looking forward to the coming of Jesus. We can see in his words a description of the birth and work of the Saviour of the world.



Tell the story of Isaiah's call as if you were with him in the Temple.



Why was the name 'Immanuel' (Isaiah 7:14) important when applied to Jesus?



Thank God that he revealed himself to the Jewish nation. Pray that one day they may come to accept Jesus as Saviour.



Why have Christians so often persecuted the Jews?

**Month 8  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living  
The Christian  
and other faiths**

**'Judaism'**

### **Judaism in Bible times**

The story of the Jews (also called Hebrews and Israelites) is told in the first part of the Bible, which Christians call the Old Testament. In obedience to God's call, Abraham left his native city of Ur. His descendants became slaves in Egypt but were delivered under the leadership of Moses. In the wilderness they received the Law of God – including the Ten Commandments. They entered the land of Canaan (Palestine) where David became King in Jerusalem. His son, King Solomon, built a temple to the Lord. Sadly the Israelites often disobeyed God, but were recalled to repentance by prophets, such as Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

The Jews survived a time of captivity in Babylon. At the time of the birth of Jesus they were ruled by the Romans. Many hoped that God would send them a deliverer (the Messiah) but the majority of the Jews failed to recognise Jesus as the One who should come.

### **Judaism in history (1)**

After a terrible rebellion against Rome, Jerusalem was sacked (AD 70) and the Temple destroyed. The Jews became a people without a land, but the faith was kept alive by Rabbis (teachers) who interpreted the Law which God had given to Moses. Lacking a temple, the Jews continued to worship in synagogues (meeting houses).

Sadly the Jews were often blamed for the death of Jesus and persecuted in countries where Christians held power. Sometimes they were forced to live in a restricted area (ghetto). The evil of anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews) came to a

terrible climax in the 20th century, when the Nazi government in Germany tried to exterminate the Jewish people completely (the Holocaust).

### **Judaism in history (2)**

Many Jews had dreamt of and planned for a return to their ancient lands (Zionism), and in 1948 the Jewish state of Israel was set up. But the land was also claimed by the native Palestinians and so further war and conflict followed. Nowadays many Jews live in Israel but others are scattered throughout the world – notably in the USA.

### **The faith of the Jews**

Jewish faith can be summed up in the statement ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deuteronomy 6:4). Religious Jews regard the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) as their sacred scripture. They believe that God has made known his will through the Law of Moses (Torah) which provides guidance for daily living.

**Orthodox Jews** try to follow the Law in all its detail. They worship in the ancient Hebrew language and strictly observe the Sabbath Day (Friday evening to Saturday evening)

**Reform** and **Liberal Jews** try to adapt the faith to new understanding and to the conditions of the modern world.

**Secular Jews** may have no belief in God, but still feel they belong to the Jewish people.

### **Jewish worship and Festivals**

Worship takes place at home and in the **synagogue**, where the scroll of the Torah (Law of Moses) is kept in a place of honour. Jewish high days and holidays include **Passover** (round about Easter), which is celebrated in the home. The people recall ‘this night different from all other nights’ when their forefathers were delivered from bondage in Egypt. The Passover celebration concludes with the blessing ‘next year in Jerusalem.’ Another important festival is the **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur) when Jews reflect on their sins and ask God’s forgiveness.

### **Jews and Christians**

Jews and Christians have much in common. They share the same scriptures (the Old Testament) and profess faith in a living God. Jesus summed up the Law with two quotations from the Jewish Law: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart’ (Deuteronomy 6:4) and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ (Leviticus 19:18).

Nevertheless Jews do not accept that Jesus was the Messiah, or that he is the Son of God. The Jewish faith also denies the Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Because of the long, sad history of persecution, Jews are also wary of Christian evangelism. But some Jews who accept Jesus as their Lord seek to practise parts of the Jewish Law as part of their daily living.

Some Christians see the establishment of the State of Israel as part of God's plan for the end of the world. But such ideas can distress Palestinian Christians, who often feel abandoned by their fellow-believers overseas. So nowadays Christians who 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem' and seek the salvation of their Jewish brothers and sisters need to remember the word of Jesus, 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matthew 5:9).



Describe the scene in the synagogue in Nazareth when Jesus went there (Luke 4:16–22).



How can we work for a better understanding between Christians and Jews?



Thank God for all the gifts he has given you.  
Ask him how you should use them.



What is the difference between a steward and an owner?

**Month 8  
Week 4**

**Salvation Army  
Studies**

**'Salvationists  
and their  
resources'**

### Notes

When new soldiers are enrolled they declare that they will be faithful stewards of all they have and are. The word 'steward' comes from the Bible (for example, from 1 Corinthians 4:1 *RSV*). It means a servant who has been given responsibility for the whole house. He may have great power but he has to give an account to the owner of the house. He cannot do as he pleases. He must do what the owner wants.

Salvationists recognise that they have been given many gifts by God. They are accountable to God for the way they use them. They must use their many gifts as God wishes.

### Stewardship of time

Each day is a gift from God. Salvationists recognise this and use their time wisely. This does not mean that life has to be lived at a fast pace all the time. It does mean that there should be a balanced approach to the use of time.

- There is work to be done. Salvationists are trustworthy employees who give time to do their work well.
- There are duties to be done at home. Salvationists spend time with their families and do not neglect these responsibilities.
- There should be quiet time for prayer, the Scriptures and thought. Salvationists give time for these devotional activities.
- There is a need for recreation. Some time to relax and enjoy favourite pastimes is an important part of life.

- There is the need to worship and serve God in The Salvation Army. This has a high priority in the planning of time for a soldier.

Each Salvationist has to decide how to balance these aspects of living. To waste time, or to use it foolishly, is to throw away one of the greatest gifts that God gives to his children.

### **Stewardship of gifts and skills**

The Bible teaches us that every Christian has been given gifts by God (1 Corinthians 12:7–11). Some gifts are very obvious – like the gift of public speaking or of music – and others may be less noticeable – like hospitality or listening. Every gift and skill is given by God. It should be used first of all to bring glory to him.

Salvationists recognise their responsibility to use their gifts for God. They work hard at developing the gifts they have. They may use them to be the basis for their career but they will also be sure to offer to God's work some of the gifts they have. They will avoid the temptation to use their gifts in ways which are dishonouring to God and never forget who gave them their gifts in the first place. They may be proud of their achievements but always give the glory to God.

### **Stewardship of money and material things**

The same principle applies to the use of money and material things. Some Salvationists may have more than enough money but most have little to spare. Salvationists always think carefully about how they will use their money and what it buys. They must provide for their family's needs but they have a wider obligation to help others who are in greater need. So they will not waste money but be generous in their giving.

In the Old Testament a standard was set for giving to God. The Jewish people were required to give a tenth (a tithe) of all they had to God (Leviticus 27:30). Many Christians have accepted this standard as the one by which they will live. They set aside a tenth of their income and give this to God, through a regular pattern of giving. This is a way of recognising that all we have comes from God.

For some poor people this standard is very hard to achieve but for those with enough money it may be that more than 'the tithe' would be an appropriate gift to God. Whatever is given should be done cheerfully and gladly. Whenever this is done God blesses the one who gives.



What gifts can you offer to God in return for his love for you?



'Christian stewardship challenges our self-centred living.' Discuss this statement.



Jeremiah 1, 18, 20, 29, 31



Pray for all who are persecuted because of their faith.



Was Jeremiah right to tell the people not to fight the Babylonians?

**Month 9  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Jeremiah'**

### **The king who tried to make the nation good**

In a miraculous way God saved the tiny nation of Judah from the Assyrian army. We might expect that, because of this, they would turn back to God. In fact things got worse until a young man called Josiah became king. He tried to restore the nation, repaired the Temple and found a copy of the book of God's law. When he read it he was shocked to find how far the nation had disobeyed God. He insisted that they returned to their old faith.

Some did but many still carried on in their wicked ways. When Josiah was killed in a battle his successors abandoned the reforms and Judah slipped downhill towards certain defeat.

### **God calls another prophet (Jeremiah 1)**

In this difficult situation God found another young man. He came from a priestly family and he clearly heard God's voice. Before Jeremiah was born God had intended him to be the messenger to the people. He had a hard message to give. This young man, who was shy, sensitive and sometimes afraid, was given the task of speaking to the nation. Although he felt he was too young to do so, he accepted the challenge of being a prophet.

### **Jeremiah and the potter (Jeremiah 18)**

Like many of the prophets Jeremiah used pictures to tell the people God's message. He went to see a potter at work. Watching him form the clay on his wheel, Jeremiah saw how the pot became badly shaped. The potter pushed the

clay flat and started again until he made a perfect pot. Jeremiah told the people that this is how God can work.

God shapes our lives and the lives of nations. When things go wrong he can begin again and make the people and the nation beautiful and useful.

### **Jeremiah and the exiles (Jeremiah 29:1–14)**

Before long another army came to threaten Judah. The Babylonians took away many of the best people into exile. Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem but he sent a message to the exiles in Babylon. He told them to settle down and make a life in the new land. He told them that they could worship God there as well as at Jerusalem. He told them that God was still in control and that one day they would return home. He told them that God still had plans for them and would give them a hope and a future.

### **Jeremiah and the rulers**

The kings, the priests and the false prophets hated the messages that Jeremiah spoke. Instead of telling the people to fight the invading army Jeremiah was telling them to accept the loss of their land. The rulers tried to silence Jeremiah. They threatened to kill him. The king ripped up the scroll on which Jeremiah had written his prophecy and burnt it. Jeremiah patiently wrote out all the words again. They imprisoned Jeremiah and threw him down a muddy well. Still the prophet would not be silenced. He felt he had no alternative but to give God's message to the people.

### **Jeremiah complains (Jeremiah 20:7–9, 14–18)**

It is not surprising that poor Jeremiah was angry with God. Why had God chosen him to deliver this unpopular message? He even wished he had never been born! But when he decided to keep quiet he soon felt that he simply had to go on speaking for God. The message was like a fire inside him. He had to let it out.

### **Jeremiah's message of hope (Jeremiah 31:1–34)**

Jeremiah saw that the little independent nation of Judah could not survive. Eventually Jerusalem itself was captured and the people sent away. This did not mean that God had finished with them. They would come back from captivity and this time of hardship would change them forever. There would be peace and prosperity again. Those who continued to trust God and believe in his promises would find that he still loved them. Instead of the old covenant that was based on sacrifice and rigid laws, God would give them a new covenant. He would write his law in their hearts and they would help each other to love and serve God. This message of hope was Jeremiah's final gift to his people.

### **Just like Jesus**

Some people think that Jeremiah was a very gloomy man. He certainly suffered for his faith. Despite complaining about his lot, he never changed his message even though it was rejected by the people. He remained faithful. He can be compared to Jesus, who was rejected by the leaders of the Jews and suffered and died for us all. Jesus would not change his message even though it was rejected. Some of those who knew Jesus remembered Jeremiah and made the comparison.

There can be no greater tribute to the Old Testament prophet than to say that he was just like Jesus.



Why was Jeremiah's picture of the potter and the clay a good illustration of God's love for Israel?



Was Jeremiah a willing servant of God or was he forced to be a prophet? What part does our free will play in serving God?



Passages as indicated in the notes



Pray for those who have to make a new beginning in a new place.



Can you still worship God even if your building for worship is destroyed?

**Month 9**  
**Week 2**

**Bible Study**  
**The Old**  
**Testament**

**'Exile in**  
**Babylon'**

### **By the rivers of Babylon (Psalm 137:1–6)**

Jerusalem had been destroyed. The beautiful Temple was a ruin. The people had been taken away to a foreign land. Now they were in the great city of Babylon with its gardens, its heathen gods and its great rivers. By the riverside they thought about Jerusalem, their homeland, and they longed to be back there. Among the exiles was a young priest called Ezekiel. He thought and prayed about what had happened to his nation. He knew they had forgotten God and that this was the reason for their exile. What would God do with them now?

### **A strange vision (Ezekiel 1:1–3, 25–2:5)**

When God spoke to young Ezekiel it came in the form of a strange and terrifying vision of creatures and wheels. Then came someone who looked like a man and spoke with a voice that was like the glory of God. Ezekiel was afraid but the voice spoke to him and sent him to the people with a message from God himself. Once again the message would not be popular but it was to be what the exiled Jews needed to hear. Ezekiel was given a scroll of words to eat. He had to understand them for himself and then speak them to the people.

### **Shepherds and sheep (Ezekiel 34:1–31)**

Ezekiel knew where all the trouble had started. The kings, the priests and the other leaders of the nation had not taken their responsibilities seriously. Instead of leading the people in the right paths they had only been concerned with their own interests. The people were like sheep who had been led astray by careless and

wicked shepherds. Now God himself would become the shepherd of Israel. He would lead them back to fertile pasture and guard them against the wild animals who might hurt them. He would make sure that they were all treated fairly.

The nation no longer had a king or a priesthood so God would lead them himself. God would be their shepherd.

#### **Dry bones can live again (Ezekiel 37:1–14)**

The famous story of the dry bones must have come to Ezekiel when he visited the desert areas around Babylon. There he would have seen the bones of animals that had died during periods of drought. It seemed that the life had gone out of the Jews as they lived in exile. They were like dry bones. Ezekiel saw the possibility of them coming together again, the bones growing flesh and then the spirit of God breathing on the dead bodies and bringing them back to life. Instead of scattered dry bones they would become a great, mighty army. God would revive the people and give them a new spirit of life.

#### **The new Temple (Ezekiel 43:1–12)**

Ezekiel looked forward to the day when the Jews would return to Jerusalem and build a new temple there. He described in great detail what the new building would be like and how the priests and other leaders would serve there. He knew that the old temple had often been spoiled by the wickedness of the nation which had spilled over into their worship. The new Temple would be different. The glory of God which had gone from the old building would return and God would make his home there once again. Ezekiel died before the people returned to Jerusalem. He might have been disappointed because the new temple worship was not as perfect as he had hoped. But the new Temple was built and the worship of the true God did return to the holy city.

#### **The exile – a time of new beginnings**

The Jewish people were in exile in Babylon for 70 years. It was a hard time but they learned a great deal in those years. They realised that their most precious possession was their faith. Never again would they play with other gods. They would worship only the true God. They understood that the law that had been given to Moses was important. They would try to understand it, explain it and keep it faithfully. They set up places of teaching called 'synagogues' to share their faith with their children. When they did return to Jerusalem they did not try to be a powerful nation but, instead, to be faithful to God. We shall see that they did not always succeed but the exile was a turning point in their history.



What was Ezekiel seeking to teach with his vision of the dry bones which came to life?



What important lessons did the Jews learn from their time in exile?



Consider the prayer of Jesus found in John 17:20–21. Make this prayer your own.



To what extent does the faith of your parents decide your own faith?

**Month 9  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living  
The Christian  
and other faiths**

**'Christianity'**

*'In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son.'* (Hebrews 1:1)

Christians believe that God's Son, Jesus Christ, fulfils the promises made to Abraham and Moses. Jesus was born in Palestine at the time when the Romans were ruling. He came with good news – freedom from sin and ill-health, love for one's enemies, and eternal life with God.

After Jesus had been cruelly killed, God showed the power of his love by raising his Son from the dead. At Pentecost (Acts 2) the Holy Spirit was given to inspire his followers, both personally and as a group.

### **The Christian Scriptures: Old and New Testaments**

The first Christians accepted the Jewish Scriptures (the **Old Testament**). Then new writings were added: the four Gospels told the story of Jesus, and the Acts of the Apostles gave an account of the earliest church. To these were added letters by Paul and others – plus the book of Revelation – to form the **New Testament**.

### **Christian beliefs**

Christians express the meaning of their faith in the doctrines of the **Trinity** (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three in one), the **Incarnation** (Jesus – truly God and truly man), and the **Atonement** (the death of Jesus on the cross is a victory over sin, once and for all).

These beliefs are expressed in the **Apostles' Creed** and the **Nicene Creed** – statements which are recited in the services of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and

Eastern Orthodox churches. The Salvation Army's more detailed doctrines are found in the Eleven Articles of Faith.

### **Who then is a Christian?**

A *nominal Christian* is someone who agrees that the faith is true in theory, but does not give heart and mind to the Lord.

*Committed or 'born again' Christians* believe with heart and mind. With the mind they accept the general truth of the faith, and with the heart they turn away from sin and trust in Christ as Saviour

### **The Church united**

All living souls who love the Lord are members of his worldwide Church, the sign of which is the presence of 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' ( 2 Corinthians 13:14.) Those who have died in the faith are part of the 'church triumphant' – in Heaven.

### **The church divided**

The Church of Christ is also divided – mainly on points of church organisation and practice. These divisions go back far into the past.

**Roman Catholics** believe that Jesus appointed Simon Peter to be head of his people, that Peter became bishop (church leader) in Rome and that this authority was passed on to his successors. They also show reverence to the saints – and especially to the Virgin Mary. (Roman Catholics do *not* worship Mary)

The faith and practice of **Eastern Orthodox Churches** is similar to that of the Roman Catholics, but they do not accept the authority of the Pope.

**Protestants and Evangelical Christians** believe that gospel truth must be based on the Bible. But they disagree on some points of Christian practice.

*Should infants be baptised with water – or only those people who are old enough to understand what is happening?*

*Should women be allowed to take part in Christian ministry, and if so, how?*

*When will our Lord return? Some believe that the Second Coming of our Lord will be soon – and can be worked out by detailed Bible study.*

### **Christians working together**

Although there are many Christian denominations, Christians also work together through Bible societies, and councils of churches. They also cooperate in book and music publishing.

### **The Salvation Army and the worldwide Church**

The Salvation Army is 'an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church'. On some points it maintains a special witness not shared by all other believers:

1. Both women and men are allowed to take full part in Christian ministry.
2. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be understood in a spiritual sense.
3. The Salvation Army uses military language – derived from the New Testament – and its committed members are called 'salvation soldiers'
4. For love of God and neighbour, salvation soldiers promise to abstain from tobacco, alcoholic drinks and other addictive drugs.

### **The worldwide Church**

Followers of the Lord Jesus are found in most parts of the world. The Salvation Army is at work in 111 countries.

In some countries Christianity is the majority religion. The Church – or one particular denomination – may be recognised by the state.

Elsewhere Christians may be a small minority – at times put under pressure or persecuted by governments or followers of other faiths.



How do Christians from different churches work together in your community?



What beliefs and practices does The Salvation Army share with all other Christians? In what ways are our beliefs and practices different?

**Here is your opportunity to make your  
witness for your Saviour!**

**Month 9  
Week 4**

**Local  
practical  
studies**



Isaiah 40, 43, 53, 55



Pray for courage to be a messenger of hope when other people are despairing.



Why was it necessary for God's servant to suffer in order to redeem the world?

**Month 10  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Messages of  
Hope'**

### **An unknown prophet?**

About 30 years after the work of Ezekiel was completed, another prophet appeared. We do not know his name but his words are some of the most powerful in the whole Bible. He was compared to the great Isaiah, who lived in Jerusalem before it was destroyed. So it was decided to add his prophecies to Isaiah's book. We know his work was much later than Isaiah because he names Cyrus, the Persian king who conquered Babylon (see Isaiah 45:1). This happened at the end of the Jewish exile.

### **Comfort for the people of God (Isaiah 40:1–5)**

The long years of captivity in Babylon ('hard service' in verse 2) are coming to an end. Israel has paid a heavy price for their failures (their 'sin has been paid for'). Now God will restore the nation. The people will find comfort and joy as they return to their homeland. They are to prepare for the glory of God being revealed to them. It will be like an earthquake transforming the land.

### **The greatness of God (Isaiah 40:10–28)**

The prophet asks the people to compare the power of God with the weakness of even the strongest nations. Babylon, like Assyria before it, will disappear like a dying flower. It is God himself who is the great Creator and whose power outlasts all human power. Yet God cares for his people like a gentle shepherd carrying newborn lambs. God never gets tired. He gives special strength to those who serve him. They, too, can work without tiring for God.

**A word of encouragement (Isaiah 43:1–7)**

It is not surprising that the people of Israel are afraid after the long years as captives. But God encourages them to be strong as they face the huge task of rebuilding their nation. He has called them by name. He will be with them in the difficult times. Through floods and fires they will be protected. The nation will be gathered from the furthest regions to come together again in Jerusalem.

**God's servant (Isaiah 42:1–4)**

In a series of four poems the prophet introduces us to the ideal servant of God. Specially chosen by God and filled with his Spirit, the servant will establish a world in which justice and goodness are delivered with kindness and mercy. As well as restoring the nation of Israel, God's servant will bring salvation to everyone on earth (Isaiah 49:6). It is not clear from the book whether the prophecy means that all the people of Israel will become God's servant or whether God is going to choose one special person. Christians have seen in these pictures of the ideal servant of God, a portrait of Jesus.

**The suffering servant (Isaiah 53)**

This very moving poem is a picture of the suffering of Jesus painted in words hundreds of years before it happened. It shows that to bring a wicked world back to God would be very costly. Someone would suffer in a way they never deserved. God's servant would be humble. Many people would despise him. He would pay the price for the sins of others through his own suffering. He would not fight back but would accept this pain and suffering. He would die in order to save others. Because God's servant was prepared to suffer in this way God would give him the highest honour.

**Seek the Lord (Isaiah 55)**

This final message must have given great hope to the captives in Babylon. Even though they were poor, God would offer them many good things. The wine, milk and bread given away in verses 1 and 2 stand for the great spiritual blessings which God will give to his people. They must seek the Lord for themselves. His promises will be fulfilled for those who turn to God and find forgiveness from him. The peace and joy they find in God will be like a spring day with all the plants and trees coming into flower.



Write your own version of Isaiah 55:1–8 so that you could use it to speak to people who need to find the Lord.



The New Testament frequently quotes from these chapters of prophecy. How does Luke 3:4–6 and Luke 4:18–19 bring out the real meaning of verses from this prophecy?



Passages from Ezra and Nehemiah as indicated in the notes



Read Nehemiah 2:1–5, thinking about the instant prayer that Nehemiah made to the king. Practise instant prayers when you are not sure what you should say.



Why did God decide to use a heathen king (Cyrus) to bring about the restoration of the Jewish nation?

**Month 10  
Week 2**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'Going home  
to Jerusalem'**

### **Thank God for Cyrus! (Ezra 1:1–8; 2:1–2)**

When the Jews had been in captivity in Babylon for 70 years the empire was overthrown and Cyrus, King of Persia, became the new and powerful ruler of the whole area. Although he did not believe in the God of the Jews, he encouraged them to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews saw him as God's agent and were thankful for his new law.

### **Building a new Temple (Ezra 3)**

Very soon after their return, the people began to rebuild, first the altar and then the whole Temple in Jerusalem. Each stage of the building was marked by religious ceremonies. These were taken from the books of the law that had been carefully preserved and collected during the years of exile. Tears of joy for the new Temple were mixed with tears of sorrow for the old one. At last they were home.

### **Opposition (Ezra 4:1–5, 12–16)**

Soon there was trouble. There were people who had stayed in Jerusalem throughout the years of exile. At first they wanted to help with the rebuilding but were not allowed to do so. Zerubbabel, the leader of the Jewish community, would not accept them as true Jews even though they said they worshipped the Lord. So they became enemies and complained to King Cyrus. The work was halted and only restarted when a new king, Darius, came to the Persian throne.

### **The first Passover (Ezra 6:19–22)**

Finally the building was finished. The Jews celebrated by holding the feast of the Passover (see Exodus 12). This was the first time it had been held since the destruction of the old Temple. It was a sign that they were God's special people. Once again they had been delivered from captivity. Just as God had brought them out of Egypt centuries before, now he had brought them home from Babylon.

#### **Enter Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1– 2:6)**

Some of the Jews stayed behind in Babylon. One of these was a high official in the king's court named Nehemiah. He received a message from Jerusalem saying that the returning Jews were in trouble. He kept a diary telling us how he felt about his fellow countrymen. Although he was afraid to do so, he asked the king's permission to go to Jerusalem to organise the rebuilding of the walls of the city. Nehemiah's instant prayer (Nehemiah 2:4) was followed by his hard work.

#### **Build and fight (Nehemiah 4)**

The enemies of the Jews tried to stop them building the walls of the city. As soon as a section was built they would come and knock it down again. They laughed at the builders saying that a fox could knock down the wall. Nehemiah arranged an alarm system to warn the builders when their enemies were coming. Everyone had a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other so that they could defend the wall. Eventually, after 52 days of non-stop work, the wall was completed. Nehemiah had saved the little group of Jews from their enemies.

#### **The need for purity (Ezra 10:1–12)**

The 70 years of exile had taught the Jews some lessons. They realised that they would never be a great military power again. The wealth and power of Solomon would not return. What made them unique was their belief in God. That is why they had survived during the years away from home. They remembered that it was when they were unfaithful to God that troubles overtook them. When Solomon married foreign princesses they turned his heart away from God. So from now on they would be a pure nation. Ezra, the priest who had led the second group of exiles to return, made all the people promise not to marry into other nations. He believed that separation from the rest of the world would keep them close to God.



Tell the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 4) as though you were one of the builders.



Why was Ezra so concerned about the Jews intermarrying with non-Jews? What were the good and bad consequences of this rule?



Pray that Christians and Muslims may live in peace and harmony.



Is religion a matter of duty or love?

**Month 10  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living  
The Christian  
and other faiths**

**'Islam'**

### **Islam**

In the Arabic language, the word Islam means 'submission to God'. Muslims believe that God has revealed his will in the sacred book – the Koran- which was revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

#### **The life of Muhammad**

Muhammad was born at Mecca in Arabia in about AD571. Most of the Arab tribes of his time were polytheists—they worshipped many gods. In Mecca there was a small temple with an ancient holy stone called the Kaaba.

It is said that one day Muhammad was praying on Mount Hira, when the angel Gabriel appeared and told him: 'Recite! Recite in the name of your Lord.' Muhammad then began to preach about the one true God, the wickedness of idol worship and the coming day of Judgement. These messages which he recited – known as 'Suras' – were later collected into the Koran.

Many Meccans opposed Muhammad – and so in AD 622 he went to live in the city of Yathrib (now called Medina). There the prophet began to organise the community of believers – the 'House of Islam'. At last Mecca surrendered and was made the centre of the new faith.

#### **The growth of Islam**

After the death of the prophet, the Koran was edited in its final form. Islamic armies moved out of Arabia and conquered most of the Middle East, North Africa and Iran. Islam has also become the majority religion in Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

### **Divisions in Islam**

Just over 20 years after the prophet's death a dispute broke out about the succession. Who should be the Caliph (leader) of Muslims? This led to fighting and caused a split which continues to the present day. The majority of Muslims follow the 'Sunna' (or Way), while the 'Shia' believe that Ali -the Prophet's murdered son-in-law – was the first true Imam (leader).

The Shia have split into numerous groups. Some believe that a hidden imam (leader and teacher) will return as the Mahdi – 'the rightly guided one' – to establish Islamic rule throughout the world.

### **The faith of Islam**

Muslim belief is summed up in the **the Five Pillars of Islam**.

1. **Confession of Faith:** 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.' This means that God alone is worthy of worship and that no prophet can be as great as Muhammad.
2. **Daily Prayers:** These should be offered at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset and bedtime. Worshippers must face towards Mecca and follow rules about standing, bowing, kneeling and sitting.
3. **Fasting:** As a spiritual duty, Muslims are expected to fast, especially in the month of Ramadan. No food or drink should be taken between dawn and dusk.
4. **Almsgiving:** Muslims have a duty to give money for charitable purposes.
5. **Pilgrimage:** At least once in a lifetime a Muslim should make the holy journey to Mecca. Dressed in simple white clothes, pilgrims move round the Kaaba with thousands of fellow believers.

### **Public worship**

Public prayers are held on a Friday in the mosque. Men and women are separated.

### **Christianity and Islam**

The Koran (Holy Book) is to Islam what Jesus Christ is for Christians. Christians believe that 'the word became flesh' – while in Islam 'the word becomes book'.

While both faiths speak of one God, they disagree on crucial questions. The Koran refers to many figures who are mentioned in the Bible. It declares that Jesus was born of a virgin and performed miracles. But it also denies that he was the Son of God, or that he was crucified. The Koran also condemns the Christian doctrine of the Trinity – God the Father, Son and Spirit.

**Traditional Islamic Law (Sharia)**

This is imposed in many countries. The law, for example, makes it easy for a man to divorce a woman – but not the other way round.

### **The veiling of women**

The Koran teaches that women should dress modestly. This is interpreted in various ways – from the wearing of headscarves to complete concealment of the body.

### **Islam and toleration**

Most Muslims believe that since their faith is true, it is wrong for a Muslim to abandon it. This rule of ‘one-way conversion’ makes life difficult for Muslims who become Christians, especially in countries where Islam is the majority faith.

Because of the Israel/Palestine conflict, Muslims often see themselves as persecuted by ‘The West’ – which they often identify with Christianity.

### **Our faith and theirs**

It is plain that Islam and Christianity have much in common. The Koran declares, ‘Nearest among them in love to the believers (ie, the Muslims) wilt thou find those who say, “We are Christians”.’

The Christian can only invite the Muslim to read the New Testament with an open mind and look at Jesus as he appears in the Gospels. He may see that in Jesus the secret strength of God’s power is shown in faithful and redeeming love.

Muslims pray regularly five times a day. How often should Christians pray?

Does it matter how Christians say their prayers?



Christians and Muslims have often been in conflict. What aspects of their faith do they share? How should a Christian deal with a Muslim neighbour?





Pray for people who are slaves to addiction.  
Pray that they will allow God to enable them to break free.



What temptations to addiction trouble young people in your society today?

**Month 10  
Week 4**

**Salvation Army  
Studies**

**'Salvationists  
and  
Abstinence'**

### **The pledge**

Salvation Army soldiers declare that they 'will abstain from the use of all enslaving substances and harmful activities'. This promise began as a pledge to avoid the use of alcoholic drinks but now covers anything which may harm the body and mind.

### **History**

In the 19th century the use of beer and spirits grew very rapidly in Europe and America. Many poor people who were living in dreadful conditions found a short-term escape from their misery by getting drunk. Their health suffered badly and there was often no money left for food for their families. Violence and prostitution often followed.

There were many who saw this evil and wanted to do something about it. Leading the way were Christians leaders including Catherine Booth, who, with her husband, William, founded The Salvation Army. They invited their converts to sign a 'pledge' promising that they would never use alcoholic drinks.

### **Harmful substances today**

Alcoholic drinks still present problems to many people. Wealthy people try to escape from boring lives by its use. Some people have a tendency to become addicted to alcohol and find it very difficult to stop drinking. Although it is said by some that alcohol can be used 'responsibly' for social purposes, Salvationists still see it as a potential danger to health of body and mind. In many countries

alcohol is a major cause of family breakdown, violent crime, traffic accidents and preventable illness.

Tobacco has also been proved to pose a serious health threat. Restrictions on smoking in public places are being introduced in many countries to limit the damage to health. Some drugs may be taken for 'recreational use' instead of being used to control disease and pain. They can have serious consequences for those using them. In some parts of the world plant extracts are chewed. These alter the state of mind of the user and can be dangerous.

With all of these substances, Salvationists choose to abstain from any use. Not only does this safeguard themselves but it also acts as a witness and an encouragement to others to make the same choices. More positively, the Army has always been involved in the highly complex task of helping people who are addicted to find freedom from their problems. Alcoholics have been helped to 'dry out'. Drug users have been helped to be clean. Smokers have found their health greatly improved when they have been helped to give up the habit.

### **Harmful activities**

It is much more difficult to spell out what is meant by this phrase. Salvationists avoid gambling. Some entertainments are temptations to unwise or sinful behaviour. Some books or sites on the internet can lead to trouble. These and other activities will vary according to where you live. The young Salvationist will take advice before becoming involved in activities which may be harmful.

### **What is addiction?**

Any action which gains control over our lives can be addictive. Even an over-indulgence in, say, chocolate may need to be watched! At the other extreme some young people become obsessed with losing weight and this requires medical help to control.

The Christian believes that the body is 'a temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 6:19). We want the Holy Spirit to have control of what we are and what we do. So we will not allow anything into our lives that will be in conflict with the Spirit and gain control over our mind or body.



Why was Catherine Booth so opposed to alcoholic drink?



Is the Salvationist's stand on addiction still relevant in today's world?



## The Book of Jonah



The story of Jonah reminds us to pray for people we do not naturally like. Pray especially for people you find it hard to like.



Is the story of the 'whale' the important part of the Book of Jonah?

**Month 11**  
**Week 1**

**Bible Study**  
**The Old**  
**Testament**

**'Jonah'**

### **A different book**

The Book of Jonah is unique among the books of prophecy in the Old Testament. Instead of recording the words that a prophet spoke it tells the story of the work of a prophet. It is about what Jonah *learnt* instead of being about what he *said*. Jonah starts off by representing the views of the majority of Jewish people. As a result of God's intervention in his life he discovers a new understanding of God's purpose for the Jews and for the world. The message of the book is still important for us today.

### **God calls and Jonah disobeys (Jonah 1:1-3)**

As we have discovered in our previous studies, God often spoke to those he had chosen to be his messengers. Quite often they did not want to accept this calling (see Jeremiah 1:6; Isaiah 6:5). In the end all the other prophets obeyed but Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to prophesy. Nineveh was the hated enemy of the Jews. Their army had attacked Jerusalem and had killed many thousands of people. It was not surprising that Jonah was afraid to go to that city. He saw no reason for God to give them a message. So he ran away as far as he could go in the opposite direction. He set sail in a ship to Spain.

### **God takes action (Jonah 1:4-17)**

Jonah soon discovered that it was dangerous to disobey God! The ship was almost wrecked in a storm. Jonah realised that it was his fault. The sailors reluctantly agreed to sacrifice him by throwing him overboard. Then the storm suddenly

ceased and the heathen sailors began worshipping God. Jonah did not drown but was saved by a 'great fish' which swallowed him whole.

### **Jonah repents (Jonah 2)**

The writer of the book gives Jonah a beautiful psalm as his way to repent of his disobedience. He realises that it is God who has saved him. Then he finds himself landed on a beach!

### **God calls again (Jonah 3)**

One of the great messages of the book is that God did not give up on Jonah. Despite his disobedience Jonah is given another chance to be God's messenger. This time he obeys and goes to Nineveh. He preaches his message throughout the enormous city. Because of their great wickedness God says they will be destroyed. To Jonah's amazement the people of Nineveh accept the message. They truly repent and change their ways. They show by their actions that they are sorry for all their sins. And God forgives them. He decides not to destroy the city.

### **Jonah's anger (Jonah 4:1–4)**

You might have thought this was a happy ending to the story. Jonah should be pleased that the people accepted his message. But Jonah was furious. He hated the Ninevites. He wanted them to be destroyed. He was angry with God for forgiving them. He thought there was no purpose to his ministry as God had not carried out his threat of destruction. Jonah decided that all his life – the voyage, the shipwreck, the time in the great fish – had been wasted. He would be better off dead.

### **God's lesson (Jonah 4:5–11)**

God provided a large, quick-growing plant to shelter Jonah from the blazing sun. Jonah was grateful and cheered himself up. Then, as quickly as it grew the plant died. Jonah was sorry that the plant died. So God taught Jonah a lesson. Jonah was sorry for one plant, which he had not grown or tended. God was sorry for a whole city. He had cared for all the thousands of people of Nineveh all through the ages. He loved Nineveh just as he loved Jerusalem.

### **A universal message**

The message of the Book of Jonah was revolutionary. It was that God loved the whole world and not just the Jewish people. He loved the people of Nineveh. They were as precious to him as any other people. The Jews had been specially chosen to be God's messengers but this did not mean that he was only concerned for their interests. They were to be 'light for the Gentiles' (Isaiah 42:6). They

were chosen to bring God's message of love to the whole world. This looked forward to the coming of Jesus (Luke 2:32) and the promise that 'God so loved the *world* that he gave his one and only son' (John 3:16).



Why did Jonah try to run away from God? Why did God give him a second chance to obey?



Compare the spirit of the Book of Jonah with that of the Book of Ezra. Which is nearer to the true message of God?



Daniel 1, 2, 3, 6, 12.



Pray for courage to be true to your faith even when people around you oppose you.



What effect does persecution have on convinced Christians?

**Month 11**  
**Week 2**

**Bible Study**  
**The Old**  
**Testament**

**'Daniel'**

### **What happened to the Jews?**

We left the story of Jewish history as Nehemiah and Ezra led the people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the Temple. They were still under the control of the Persian kings but had freedom for their religion. When Alexander the Great conquered the Persians he established the Greek language and culture throughout his empire.

The rulers who followed him tried to impose Greek religion on all their people. The worst of them turned the Jewish Temple into a Greek place of worship, set up a statue to the god Zeus and sacrificed pigs on the altar. This was especially offensive to the Jews who thought these animals were unclean. When the Jews tried to observe the Sabbath, or practised circumcision, they were punished by death.

In these dreadful circumstances the Jews led a revolt against their enemies and many thousands were killed. For a time they won their independence until the new Roman Empire conquered the land.

### **Courage remembered (Daniel 1)**

It was while the Jews were faced with persecution and danger that they remembered the heroes of the past. Among them were four young men who showed great courage in the days of the exile in Babylon. Daniel and his three friends were chosen to serve the King of Babylon. They refused to eat food forbidden in Jewish law and yet were healthier and wiser than those who did eat the king's special food.

**Coming events in a dream (Daniel 2:1–3, 25–47)**

Daniel was able to interpret dreams. When all the astrologers were unable to tell the king about his dream, Daniel was called for. The dream was of a great statue with a head of gold, a chest of silver, a stomach of bronze and feet of iron and clay. Daniel showed the king that the statue was of a series of empires that would follow each other – first the Babylonian, then the Persian, then the Greek and lastly the Roman. They would decline in greatness but each would fall and make way for a new kingdom – God’s Kingdom – that would last for ever. Other signs and dreams were interpreted by Daniel. The message was always the same. Earthly kingdoms only last for a short time. God’s rule is for ever.

When the Jews were being persecuted they remembered Daniel’s dreams. It encouraged them to know that God was still in control of history. The enemies would be defeated and God’s Kingdom would come.

**The fiery furnace and the den of lions (Daniel 3 and 6)**

The most famous stories of Daniel and his friends are about their faithfulness in worship. The King of Babylon ordered everyone to worship a statue he had set up. Three young Jewish men refused to do so. Their punishment was to be burned alive in a furnace. They confidently said that God would protect them and he did. God himself walked with them unharmed in the furnace.

Later on, jealous rivals of Daniel set a trap to catch him. He, too, refused to worship the King of Persia and continued to pray to God. His punishment was to be attacked by lions in a cage but the Lord shut the lions’ mouths and they would not hurt him.

Jews being persecuted in Jerusalem remembered the courage of Daniel and prayed for similar courage when their faith was being attacked by the Greeks.

**Secret messages (Daniel 12)**

The rest of the Book of Daniel is full of strange signs and messages which we find hard to understand. They were given as secrets to the Jews in a time of terrible trouble. Some people have tried to work out the numbers and dates and used them to predict the end of the world. It is better to see them as signs of hope in a very difficult situation. They were meant to encourage Jews when they were frightened and despairing. They all say that God is in control of his world and that those who trust him need not be afraid.



Tell the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace as if you were a friend watching what happened.



The Book of Daniel in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament were both written to encourage the readers in times of trial. What similarities and differences do you find in the books?



Thank God for the faith of many Hindus. Pray that they may find the God of love through Jesus Christ.



India is becoming a powerful and prosperous nation. What effect will this have on Hinduism throughout the world and Christianity in India?

**Month 11  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living  
The Christian  
and other faiths**

**'Hinduism'**

### **The religion of India**

Hinduism means 'the religion of India' – although Hindus are now found in many parts of the world. Hinduism takes many forms: a Hindu may believe in One God or in many.

### **Reincarnation**

Most Hindus are united by belief in 'reincarnation' or 'rebirth'. After death the human soul is reborn in another body, and bad deeds in this life will lead to rebirth in a worse situation. People are controlled by 'karma' – it is our own actions that decide how we shall be reborn. Deliverance would come through escape from the wheel of birth and rebirth.

### **The caste system**

Long ago, Indian society became divided into groups known as castes. Each person belonged to a caste by birth and could not change it. At first, it seems there were four castes – the priests (Brahmins), soldiers, traders and farmers, but now there are many more. Outside the caste system were the despised 'untouchables' – now known as 'Dalits'.

### **The coming of the Aryans**

The Aryans were warlike invaders from the north who entered India from the north-west about 1500 BC. They worshipped many gods, representing the powers of nature. The praises of the gods, composed in the Sanskrit language, are found in the *Vedas* – which remain the sacred scripture of the Hindus to this day.

### **Hindu thinkers**

Hindu philosophers thought long and hard about God and the gods. They decided that the ultimate reality was Brahman, the Great Spirit who brings everything into being. Through prayer, meditation and self-denial it might be possible for us to understand that our own soul (atman) is really a part of the Great Spirit (Brahman). Only then could we be set free from the wheel of rebirth. But while some expressed belief in One Spirit, others continued to worship the great gods and goddesses – such as Shiva, Vishnu and Kali

### **God in human form**

Hindus also believe that God appears on earth many times, in human or even animal form. Such teaching is found in great poems *The Ramayana*, *the Mahabharata*, *the Song of the Lord*, (*Bhagavad Gita*) in which the chariot driver Krishna – the god Vishnu in human shape – speaks words of wisdom to mankind.

### **Hindu worship**

Devout Hindus worship in the home. A room may be set aside, with an image or picture of the family's favourite god. Incense, flowers and food may be offered. Temple worship may include hymn-singing, the burning of incense, offerings to the gods, and a reading of a passage from the *Vedas*. Hindu festivals are linked to the seasons of the year. They also celebrate stories about Krishna and other favourite gods.

Holi comes in spring. It is a time of fun when caste divisions can be forgotten. Divali is the autumn festival of lights, linked with the goddesses Kali and Lakshmi.

### **Reformers in Hinduism**

Popular Hinduism – practised in the countryside – continues to encourage the worship of many gods, but reformers point towards the One Reality. Outstanding was Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) who rejected the caste system and renamed the 'untouchables' 'Harijan' – 'children of god'. He taught non-violence in politics and encouraged a life of simplicity. He gained the title 'Mahatma' – or 'Great Soul'.

At the end of British rule in India (1947) the country was divided into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of India – which has a Hindu majority. India is a secular state (it does not have an established religion) but some nationalists would like to increase the influence of Hinduism.

### **Do all roads lead to the same goal?**

So is there One God or are there many? Some Hindus believe there can be *levels of truth*: uneducated people may believe in the reality of local gods, others can

express love to a personal divinity, while the deepest thinkers will come to know that the Supreme Being is beyond our knowledge.

### **Christians and Hinduism**

Hindus are often opposed to religious conversion. If all roads lead – as they believe – to the One God in the end, why should anyone try to persuade someone to follow a different path? Christians can acknowledge the depth of much Hindu thinking, but they believe that ‘God is love’ and that we approach him through faith. God’s love is made known to us through Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again ‘once and for all’ (Hebrews 9:26). The Christian gospel also denies the caste system, teaching that ‘all are one in Christ’ (Galatians 3:28).



Look at Galatians 3:28. How does this compare with the caste system in Hinduism?



How would you give your testimony to a Hindu, showing how the love of Jesus reached your heart?



Pray for all young people who are considering becoming Salvation Army soldiers.



What difficulties face new soldiers in your community? How can they be overcome?

**Month 11  
Week 4**

**Salvation Army  
Studies**

**'Salvationists  
and  
commitment'**

### **The cost of discipleship**

When new soldiers are enrolled they say that they freely enter into the soldier's covenant, convinced that the love of Christ requires the devotion of their lives to his service for the salvation of the whole world. They say that they are determined, by God's help, to be true soldiers of The Salvation Army.

Although they do not have to pay money to become a soldier they have to consider the high cost of this form of Christian discipleship. Why do people gladly make this commitment?

### **The price paid by Jesus for our salvation**

Salvation Army soldiers are very much aware of the price Jesus paid for their salvation. Our sin separates us from God and we can do nothing to repair this damage. Jesus suffered pain, rejection and death for us and took the burden of our sin on his shoulders. We cannot fully understand what this meant for the pure and holy Son of God but we know it cost him everything to save us. This 'costly grace' demands that we give ourselves in love to God. It is not enough to pay for our salvation but it is the least we can offer.

Isaac Watts, a great hymn writer, wrote:

*Dear Saviour, I can ne'er repay  
The debt of love I owe!  
Here, Lord, I give myself away;  
'Tis all that I can do.*

*SASB 105*

### **Towards the salvation of the whole world**

Salvation Army soldiers have a vision of a world that will, one day, turn to Jesus. They remember the promise in Philippians 2:10–11: ‘At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord’.

Because they have experienced the joy that comes from knowing Jesus, they want to share that joy with as many other people as possible. If this is to happen they need to give themselves enthusiastically to the task. People will not hear about Jesus unless someone tells them. That is the work of The Salvation Army and it is the work of each soldier.

Evangeline Booth, one of the early Generals of the Army, wrote:

*The world for God! The world for God!  
I give my heart! I will do my part!*

SASB 830

### **A disciplined Army**

Salvation Army soldiers join a disciplined movement. The early-day Salvationists did not want to have endless committee meetings discussing what they should do. They wanted to follow a strong leader. They were willing to take on difficult jobs and to make sacrifices for the sake of the gospel. That is why they called themselves an ‘army’.

Today there are many more opportunities to help to plan the Army’s work but soldiers still need to be willing to take on sacrificial service for the love of God and the salvation of the world.

Edward Turney wrote:

*I’ll go in the strength of the Lord  
To conflicts which faith will require,  
His grace as my shield and reward,  
My courage and zeal shall inspire.  
Since he gives the word of command,  
To meet and encounter the foe,  
With his sword of truth in my hand,  
To suffer and triumph I’ll go.*

SASB 734



Why do we call people in The Salvation Army ‘soldiers’ instead of ‘members’?



How does a commitment to soldiership compare with commitments to a family, an employer, a school or college, and a nation?



Psalms as indicated in the notes



Use Psalm 27 as a prayer in your class this week.



Conduct a search in your song book to find songs which are based on one of the biblical Psalms.

**Month 12  
Week 1**

**Bible Study  
The Old  
Testament**

**'The Songs  
of Israel'**

### **Songs of praises**

The Book of Psalms was the hymnbook and prayer book of Israel. It was used in the Temple services, often sung by the Levites, who were specially chosen worship leaders. The earliest psalms were written by King David. Many other people added their own songs of praise and petition and these were collected together over hundreds of years to make up the book as we have it today. The psalms show every kind of human feeling offered to God in worship. They contain songs of praise to God, confessions of sin, cries for help and even shouts of anger.

They have been used as the basis for many Christian hymns. They are written as poetry with ideas and phrases repeated or contrasted. This makes them easy to remember.

### **Praise the Lord (Psalm 103)**

This psalm sings praise to God. It is very personal, thanking God for all the good things he has done. It sings about God's love. It reminds us that God has forgiven and forgotten our sins. It compares the everlasting love of God with the brevity of human life. It calls on the angels and all God's creation to praise him.

This psalm has often been used as a basis for Christian hymns. One example is 'Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven'.

### **Sad song in a foreign land (Psalm 137)**

This psalm was written just after the Jews had returned from 70 years exile in Babylon. It shows how sad the Jews were in the land of their exile and how they

longed to return to Jerusalem. It also shows how angry they were about the way they had been treated. They thought their God could not be with them in a foreign land. How could they sing songs of joy?

Their anger exploded against the people who had betrayed them and the Babylonians who had captured them. Their cry for revenge against the babies of the people of Babylon shows us that they still had a lot to learn about the God who loved the whole world!

### **Humble prayer for forgiveness and cleansing (Psalm 51)**

David was a great man but the prophet Nathan had to confront him with his sins. David was so ashamed of what he had done that he wrote this prayer of confession. This psalm is his cry to God for forgiveness. It shows David wanting to change his life completely and asking God to accept his repentance. Verses 10 to 12 show David's prayer at its most sincere: 'Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation.'

This psalm provides a pattern for those who need to acknowledge their failure and to seek God's forgiveness.

### **Has God forgotten me? (Psalm 22)**

This desperate prayer was made by David when he was being attacked by his enemies and no relief seemed possible. He felt that God had deserted him in his time of need and cried out to God for help. Jesus spoke the words of the first verse of this psalm when he was being crucified (Matthew 27:46) and it is thought that he used the whole of the psalm as a prayer as he was dying. Verses 14 to 18 sound like a description of the Crucifixion. Many people have thought this psalm was a prophecy of what Jesus would suffer. The end of the psalm shows how David found victory over the despair that he felt. For Jesus the feeling of desertion was replaced by triumph when he cried out, 'It is finished!' (John 19:30). The work was done.

### **The Lord is my shepherd (Psalm 23)**

This is probably the most famous of all the psalms. It has encouraged people to trust in God ever since it was written. It compares God's care for his people to the way a shepherd looks after his sheep. In Palestine the shepherd would lead the sheep to the best pastures and keep them away from dangerous places. Even when the sheep are threatened, perhaps by a wild animal, the protection and care of the shepherd is still there. Jesus used the same language when he spoke of himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)

The psalmist has complete trust in God to care for him. In the end God's love for him will bring him to the joys and delights of Heaven.



Which of the psalms you have read in this lesson is your favourite? Why do you like the psalm you have chosen?



The writers of the Book of Psalms were able to express all their feelings in their praises and prayers. Is it right to express anger and despair to God when we pray? How will God answer those kind of prayers?



Passages in the notes



As you complete this lesson you will be waiting for Christmas to come. Use this prayer time to turn your thoughts away from excitement about gifts and parties to think about the meaning of the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.



Does God's plan for the future overrule our freedom to choose between good and evil?

**Month 12**  
**Week 2**

**Bible Study**  
**The Old**  
**Testament**

**'Waiting for**  
**Jesus'**

### **From the old to the new (2 Timothy 3:15–16)**

This course has introduced you to the Old Testament, the story of how God revealed himself to the Jewish people over many centuries. Paul advised his younger assistant, Timothy, to study these writings because they give the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Christians believe that the Old Testament Scriptures point to Jesus and that he is the one who fulfils all the promises that were made by God to the Hebrew people.

### **How God led the people of faith (Hebrews 11:1–12:2)**

Let us look back on the key moments of the Old Testament story. Let us see how God was leading his people through the thousands of years of their history.

- God chose Abraham to be the father of the nation. He left his homeland and travelled to the land promised to him, even though he did not know where it would be. God gave him a promise that his family and, through them, all the world would be blessed.
- Famine took the chosen family to Egypt, where they suffered slavery until God chose Moses to lead his people out of captivity. God's gift of his law (the Ten Commandments) turned the slaves into a nation and brought them out of the desert into the promised land.
- In spite of their frequent failures, God gave them a king in David who made them a great nation. His son, Solomon, was allowed to build a Temple as their centre of worship in Jerusalem.

- When apparent success turned the people away from him, God gave to the nation prophets who denounced their idol worship and sought to recall the people to himself.
- Disobedience to God led to the loss of 10 tribes and to the remaining two tribes being taken into exile in Babylon. While they were in exile God taught them new ways of worship, a renewed faith, and a new sense of community that enabled them to return and rebuild the Temple and to establish synagogues for worship and teaching.
- While the nation remained under the control of the Persians, then the Greeks and finally the Romans they held on to their faith, despite terrible persecution. Some of them came to believe that God would raise up a new deliverer who would restore the glories of King David. This group of people read the words of the great prophets and never lost hope in the coming of 'Messiah', the Saviour.

#### **What kind of Messiah? (Luke 2:22–32)**

If God was going to send the Messiah (a deliverer) for his people, what kind of leader would God choose? Most of the Jewish people thought he would be a fighting king who would throw out the Romans and establish a strong earthly kingdom. But they had known leaders like that in the past. However successful those leaders appeared to be, their success never lasted and military strength often went with spiritual weakness. A few realised that God would send a leader who was holy and provide them with an example of goodness and love. Simeon had been waiting in the Temple for many years to greet the Messiah when he came. He saw, in the newborn baby Jesus, God's deliverer. He would bring salvation for all the people of the world, a light for the Gentiles and the glory of Israel.

#### **What kind of Kingdom? (Luke 4:16–20)**

Jesus' first declaration to the people of Nazareth was taken from the Book of Isaiah, perhaps the greatest of the Old Testament prophetic writings. It showed that the Kingdom Jesus had come to establish would not be about earthly power and conquest but about saving the people. God's law, good though it was, had not been enough to keep them from sin and failure.

God had sent his own Son to be 'Messiah', the Saviour. Through his great love and his willingness to suffer death he would redeem his people and make God's salvation available to the whole world. Even though many of the Jewish people did not recognise it, Jesus was the Messiah they had all been waiting for. He was the fulfilment of the hopes of all the thousands of years of their history.



What are the three most important moments in the Old Testament story that show how God chose the Jewish people to be the means by which he would bring salvation to the world?



How does the Old Testament prepare us to receive Jesus Christ as the Messiah?



Pray for Buddhists who find it hard to live up to the standards of their faith. Pray that they may find Jesus, who can forgive and help them.



Do we take our prayer life as seriously as a Buddhist takes the work of meditation?

**Month 12  
Week 3**

**Christian  
Living  
The Christian  
and other faiths**

**'Buddhism'**

Buddhism is the religion of those who follow the teaching of Gotama, who became known as 'The Buddha' ('The Enlightened One').

### **The Life of Gotama**

It is thought that Gotama was an Indian prince, born in about 560 BC. As a young man he lived a life of luxury and pleasure. His father tried to keep him from all sights of pain and disease. But one day, while driving in his chariot, Gotama was shocked by the sight of an old man, a sick man and a dead man.

Later he met a wandering holy man, who was searching for truth by living a life of self-denial. Gotama left his wealthy home and family to do the same.

### **Gotama's search for truth.**

Buddha grew up in the world of Hinduism and accepted the Hindu belief in rebirth. This stated that a person's place in the present world depends on the sins they committed in a previous life. Like many thinkers of the time, he wondered how it was possible to escape from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

For six years Gotama prayed and meditated, and went without food or sleep. But at last he decided that too much self-denial was as harmful as too much self-indulgence. He began to eat normal food again, and as he sat and meditated under the Bo tree he became 'the Enlightened One' – the 'one who knows' – the 'Buddha'. This is called 'The awakening.'

**Gotama's answer: The Four Noble Truths.**

Gotama's 'enlightenment' showed him a way to escape from the wheel of rebirth. He expressed his new understanding in *The Four Noble Truths*.

1. Everything in life is subject to suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is desire – attachment to people and things.
3. To escape from suffering we must overcome desire.
4. To overcome desire we must follow *The Middle Way* – between self-denial and self-indulgence.

*The Middle Way* leads us along *The Noble Eightfold Path* – consisting of right belief, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

To help them follow *The Noble Eightfold Path*, Buddhists are given *The Five Great Commands*.

1. To abstain from taking life.  
(‘Taking life’ includes not only human life, but animal and even insect life as well)
2. To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from false or untrue speech.
5. To abstain from strong drink.

**Gotama's mission**

Gotama accepted the Hindu idea of ‘karma’ or ‘continuity’ – that good produces good and evil gives rise to evil. A person suffers in this life for their sins in a previous existence. Throughout 50 years of missionary work, Gotama taught that those who follow *The Noble Eightfold Path* can also become ‘enlightened.’ They will not go through another rebirth but will enter ‘nirvana’.

Nirvana is sometimes compared to Heaven. The word seems to mean ‘fading away’ – and some believe that ‘nirvana’ means ‘non-existence. But some Buddhists think of it as ‘dreamless sleep’ and others as ‘unspeakable joy’.

**The branches of Buddhism**

The southern form of Buddhism, found in Sri Lanka and South East Asia, is called *Theravada* or ‘the teaching of the elders’. In Burma, for example, every Buddhist is expected to spend some time as a monk, wearing a yellow robe, and accepting food from the common people. But only monks, it seems, can hope to achieve nirvana.

The northern form of Buddhism, found mainly in China and Japan, is called *Mahayana* or ‘greater vehicle’. Here we meet the Bodhisattva – the ‘Enlightened Being’ – who is ready to leave the world of birth and death, and postpones entering nirvana in order to help suffering humanity. In China we meet Kuan Yin

– the ‘goddess of mercy’ – a Bodhisattva whose kindness can help believers in trouble.

Tibetan Buddhism is a branch of the *Mahayana*. Perhaps the best-known Buddhist is the Dalai Lama, who was forced to leave his native land when the Chinese Communists took over Tibet.

### **The teaching of the Buddha and the teaching of Jesus.**

Unlike Jesus Christ, Gotama did not believe in a living, loving God. Perhaps he was repelled by the many gods of popular Hinduism. To the Christian, the teaching of Buddha looks like a sincere attempt at self-salvation.

We can accept that *The Five Great Commands* and *The Noble Eightfold Path* present ideals with which we can agree but we do not believe that we can live up to them without God’s help.

The Buddhist’s concentration on a life of meditation should make us take our prayer life more seriously.

We believe that Jesus begins where the Buddha leaves off. Instead of trying to save ourselves we trust in a loving God who calls us, not to the destruction of our own self but to eternal fellowship with himself.



How does Jesus help us to live a good life? Could we manage to do this without his help?



How do *The Noble Eightfold Path* and *The Five Great Commands* compare with the teaching of Jesus?

**Take this opportunity to try out your studies in evangelism in a practical way.**

**Month 12  
Week 4**

**Local  
practical  
studies**