

cell outlines
DECEMBER 2019

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our web site. For more information and other Cell resources, visit salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This month we will be unpacking the story of Paul in Athens. After his conversion on the Damascus road, Paul travelled through the city of Jerusalem teaching the gospel of Christ. It is important to remember that this is the same man who once persecuted those in Jerusalem for being believers and doers of the gospel of Christ. As a result he was feared, and when he wanted to join the disciples they were unwilling to accept him due to their fear. Whilst he was in Jerusalem there were many attempts on Paul's life. The Jews were angry because of his teachings and how he communicated, encouraged and mixed with the Gentiles. It was not long before Paul was driven out of Jerusalem due to the attempts on his life.

Paul journeyed through Greece teaching the gospel, and shortly after being imprisoned he ventured to Athens where he introduced the Jews and Greeks to the one true and living God. It is here our topic for the month will be focused.

UNPACKING PAUL IN ATHENS

WELCOME

- * Welcome everyone to the session and catch up on their week / plans over the holidays.

Discussion starters

- 🗣️ When have you witnessed an injustice that has provoked you to act? What was the injustice and what did you do to resolve the matter? If no action has been taken, ask the group if they witnessed something like that again what would they do differently, if anything?
- 🗣️ Think about the first time you were introduced to the gospel. Who was it that spoke to you and what exactly did they say that made you want to continue to build a relationship with God / read the Bible?
- 🗣️ Tell the group to imagine themselves sailing with friends/family, when suddenly they are thrown off course by a wave. Their boat reaches an island where there's a group of people staring at them who do not speak English... What do they do or say next? What would their day look like? (The idea behind this is to have the group imagine what it would be like for Paul as he travels from one country to another meeting different people, being exposed to different cultures and witnessing different religious practices.)

WORD

Activity / Role Play: Decorate the room with 10 inanimate objects (vases, jugs, chairs, tables whatever you can find) and ask various people what this object means to them, if the objects are special and how important the objects are to them in their everyday life.

- * Based on the feedback, rank/place these objects in order of importance and line them up from 1 (very important) to 10 (least important).
- * Now choose someone to be 'Paul' and then split the group into two; half will be watchers and the other half will be worshippers. The worshippers should go up to their favourite object and ask it to help them in their lives, or anything else they want to say to the object, whilst the watchers stand with Paul.
- * Ask Paul and the watchers how they felt watching the group 'pray' to objects that cannot speak and have no power to answer their prayers. Also ask Paul and the watchers what they thought of the worshippers when they watched them 'praying' to these objects.
- * Ask Paul and the watchers what they would say to try to convince the worshippers to stop praying to objects.

Now read through Acts 17:16-33 (NIV)

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the market-place day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, 'What is this babbling trying to say?' Others remarked, 'He seems to be advocating foreign gods.' They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?' ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.' ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas).

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.'

²⁴ 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ "For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

²⁹ 'Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.'

³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, 'We want to hear you again on this subject.' ³³ At that, Paul left the Council.

- ▶ Remind the group that not everyone who hears the word of God will believe, but it is our responsibility to share anyway.

WORSHIP

1. Activity – Providing the group with pens/markers, paper and ribbon, ask the group to decoratively draw or write down one of the following passages (hole punch the top of the paper so ribbon/string can be put through for hanging on their door knobs / bedposts).

'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.'

- 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

[Jesus said] 'Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?'

- Matthew 6:26 (NIV)

2. Reflection/Prayer – With eyes closed, ask the group to reflect on what God has said to us through Paul and the above two passages. Ask the group the most significant lesson they have learnt today. The group should utter a prayer of gratitude to God.
3. Listen to this song – 'To worship you I live' by Israel Houghton, and end the session
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWENUK96aBM

ACTION

Paul was a missionary, a man of action and words. Upon his conversion on the Damascus road he did nothing but preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was willing to be stoned and imprisoned and even to die in order for the world to hear about Jesus Christ. He wrote letters to churches and spoke in places no one else would. He did what God asked of him and gave 100 per cent to it.

- * Approach at least two people and ask them what it is they would like you to help them with. It could be helping your parents or siblings with something around the house, or assisting the kids group at your corps... Whoever you ask, make sure you execute and give it 100 per cent of your time and effort.
- * Once you have completed the task, go back to the person and inform them / show them. How do they react?
- * Now think about how God feels when he asks us to do something and we do it.

WHAT DOES PAUL IN ATHENS MEAN FOR US TODAY? – POINTING OUT GOD IN ALL CREATION

WELCOME

Welcome everyone and ask if anyone would like to recap last week's session. Then ask the group if they made any new observations or received any insight since last week's session.

We ended last week with this call to action: 'Approach at least two people and ask them what you can help them with'. Ask the group if they did this and what response they received.

Discussion starter

Read this scenario to the group and ask them the questions below:

Scenario – You are walking with a group of your friends when you come to a bridge and see a man on the side of the bridge talking to himself and swaying. As you get closer you can hear him chanting: 'Jump, just jump.' He suddenly loses his footing and almost falls, but grabs hold of the railing in time. He bends down to pick up his unfinished bottle of beer. He puts the drink to his mouth and starts walking away. At the point when you had seen him almost falling, you had called 999 for help. But you cancel this call when you see the man walking away towards the bridge stairs back to safety...

Q1: Was this man worth saving?

Q2: Why is/isn't he worth saving?

Q3: Is it fair to conclude that the man does not want to live, as he is drinking and putting himself in dangerous situations?

Q4: When the scenario was read out to you, did you at any point think of God? What thoughts did you have if you did?

Q5: What do you think God thinks of this man?

WORD

Paul wasn't fazed by people of other religions; he was able to see God in all. This week we will look at pointing out God in all creation. The reason we started the session with a scenario is because, more often than not, there are times when we judge people based on their appearance, actions, beliefs etc. The problem with doing this is that we forget that he/she is God's child, and sometimes the way we act or speak towards that person is contrary to how God says we should love one another.

In today's society it is difficult not to make judgments and stereotypes of people, food, clothes etc, as there are so many things around us that influence us daily. Most of these notions tend to be negative and are fed to us subliminally through social media. It is important therefore to remember that the Bible says, 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will' (Romans 12:2 (NIV)

When thinking of creation, our first thought should be to think of God as Creator. The first two chapters of the Bible focus on how God created the Earth and all that is in it. Upon completion we are told that 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good' (Genesis 1:31 (ESV).

1. What is the definition of Creation?

A dictionary says: 'You can refer to something that someone has made as a creation, especially if it shows skill, imagination or artistic ability' (www.collinsdictionary.com)

In the Bible there are more than 30 passages which refer to creation; below are a few of them. Ask the group what

their favourite creation passage is and why. (It does not have to be one of those below, but passages not listed should be looked up and read out to the group.)

Psalm 139: 13-14 (NIV) – For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) – For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Genesis 1:27 (NIV) – So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Hebrews 3:4 (NIV) – For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

2. How do you see yourself as God’s creation?

In last week’s worship session, you wrote down one of two passages to hang on your door / bedposts (1 Peter 2:9 and/ or Matthew 6:26 – please re-read to the group if they have forgotten).

Both Scriptures informed us of how special we are in God’s eyes, and for some of us this will also be how our parents/ guardians/friends etc think and feel towards us. Although it is important to be loved and feel loved in such a way, what is more important is how you see yourself, as this can help in allowing you either to excel or crumble in every aspect of your life.

Please ask the group how they see themselves, using the following questions:

- 🗣️ What do you love about yourself?
- 🗣️ What would you say your strengths are?
- 🗣️ What is your best feature?
- 🗣️ How would you describe yourself in three words?

NB This may be a hard task for some. Please ensure that anyone who shows signs of struggling with positive things to say is spoken to and prayed with. You could even get members of the group to help with affirming them.

3. How will you point out God’s creation?

Provide the group with A3 paper and ask them to create a banner or poster of their response to the question ‘How will you point out God’s creation?’

Question: **What does pointing out God in all creation mean to you?**

(If the group are struggling, provide some examples – such as deciphering what creation is, being aware of the gifts God has given people, interacting with people of different faiths, taking care of the Earth he created for us to live in, etc.)

WORSHIP

Play ‘Let Creation Sing’ by Hillsong on YouTube

1. Ask the group to think about what we have discussed in this week’s session and which part of the session had the most impact on them and why.
2. Ask the group to think about all creation (including themselves). The group should name three things that God took his time to intricately create that they take advantage of (eg, trees and how they provide us with oxygen; our bodies and how they are made up of vessels; our genetic DNA, etc).
3. Close with the group reading this prayer:

In the beginning, Lord,
I was alone.
Like the Earth
Before your Spirit moved over the waters
I was formless and empty,
and darkness filled the depths of my heart.
Then, it was as if you declared
'Let there be Light',
and out of the darkness
I began to see hope,
like a shimmering ray of love
breaking through the parting clouds at the conclusion
of the night.

In the beginning, Lord, I was alone,
but when I saw you in the light I was no longer afraid.
You held out your hand,
and though I had a choice
I had no choice,
because to refuse
was to embrace again the darkness.

In the beginning, Lord, I was alone,
Now I feel again a part
of your creation,
loved, wanted, needed, family.
In the light of your presence,
I hold out my heart that others
might glimpse through it your reflection,
and be drawn from the darkness that I once embraced
into the light of your sunrise,
the brightness of your face.

Prayer from - www.faithandworship.com/creation_prayers.htm

WITNESS/ACTION

In the upcoming week challenge the group to take time to search for God in all creation.

- * If your classmate has a great skill, compliment them on it and thank God for providing them with that ability - feel free to pray with them (with permission).
- * As you walk around your neighbourhood, look at the buildings and nature, and thank God for the various designs you see. Offer up thanks to God for giving us the ability to create with our hands.
- * When you connect with people of different faiths, cultures, races, abilities and ages, offer up thanks to God that though we are all created in his image we are all different.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: SERVICE

WELCOME

The spiritual discipline this month is Service. This is a discipline that should be exercised daily; but as humans we can be intrinsically selfish, trying to ensure only our needs are fulfilled. However, for God to reach others we need to allow him to use us. It says in the Bible: *'The service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God...'* (2 Corinthians 9:12-13 (NIV)).

Christians are called to live a life of service to God and each other. To fulfil this appointment we can use Jesus as our primary example. Whilst on Earth, Jesus displayed countless times what it means to serve others – from washing his disciples' feet to healing the sick, raising the dead and ultimately dying for our sins. He lived his life in service to God and us. He summed up this discipline of service in this sentence: *'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all'* (Mark 9:35 (NIV)).

We often make use of the phrase 'What would Jesus do?'. If we decide to walk in his footsteps, we would adopt a lifestyle of service, we would submit and lay down our lives as a sacrifice of service to God and others; and in doing so, God will be glorified.

WORD

Role Play

Please ask four people to volunteer to take part in the following role play. For this play we will be following one person (customer) as they experience three different types of service.

The four roles are

1. Customer
2. Shopkeeper
3. Bus driver
4. Banker

* group of school kids can be played by the rest of the group

Customer starts their day by going to the shop to top up their Oyster card (you may need to explain how this works for those outside London). When they arrive at the shop there are four school kids inside the shop, and Shopkeeper is shouting, 'Two at a time, or get out!' One of the kids tells him, 'Stop shouting! It's bad manners. We only came here to buy drinks.'

At this point Shopkeeper is enraged and says sternly, 'I don't care what you want to buy. There is a sign on the door that says "Two school kids only at a time". You have to adhere to the rules or leave.'

The kids leave the shop complaining of Shopkeeper's rudeness.

Customer (*walks up to the till*): 'Can I top up my Oyster with £10 please?'

Shopkeeper: 'Yes, of course. Where's the money?'

Customer: 'Oh – it's here.'

(*Customer gives him a £20 note and the Oyster card. Shopkeeper takes both out of Customer's hands and tops up the Oyster as Customer waits patiently.*)

Shopkeeper (*pings the buttons of the till then holds out £10*): 'Here's your change, and here's your Oyster.'

(*Customer leaves the shop perplexed.*)

At the bus stop...

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(Customer steps on to the bus and taps the Oyster card. The machine registers 'Insufficient funds'. Customer taps the card reader again impatiently. Other passengers are queueing, tapping their Oyster and barging past. Customer keeps trying.)

Bus driver: 'Hey, you keep tapping your card when it says you don't have sufficient funds. Are you OK?'

Customer: 'Err... yes... Sorry. I've only just topped up this Oyster, so I don't know why it's not working.'

Bus driver: 'Do you have your receipt?'

Customer *(starts looking for receipt, then remembers the shopkeeper never gave one)*: 'Oh no, I wasn't given a receipt.'

(At this point Customer is panicking as he/she has an appointment with the bank and missing this bus will make them late.)

Bus driver: 'Well, do you have a bank card instead? If not, I'm going to have to tell you to get off my bus. I can't keep the other passengers waiting.'

Customer: 'Oh yes, of course. I understand.' *(finds contactless card and taps the machine)*

Bus driver: 'Thank you. Make sure you go back to the shop to get it sorted.'

Customer: 'I will - thanks.'

(Customer arrives at the bank just in time for the appointment.)

Bank worker: 'Good afternoon. Can I help you?'

Customer: 'Yes, please. I have an appointment with Bank worker today.'

Bank worker: 'Oh yes - that's me. You must be Customer. How are you today?'

Customer: 'Fine, thank you. And yourself?'

Bank worker: 'I'm great, thank you.' *(leads Customer to the room where the appointment is and motions for Customer to take a seat)* 'Would you like a coffee, or glass of water?'

(The meeting proceeds. End of play.)

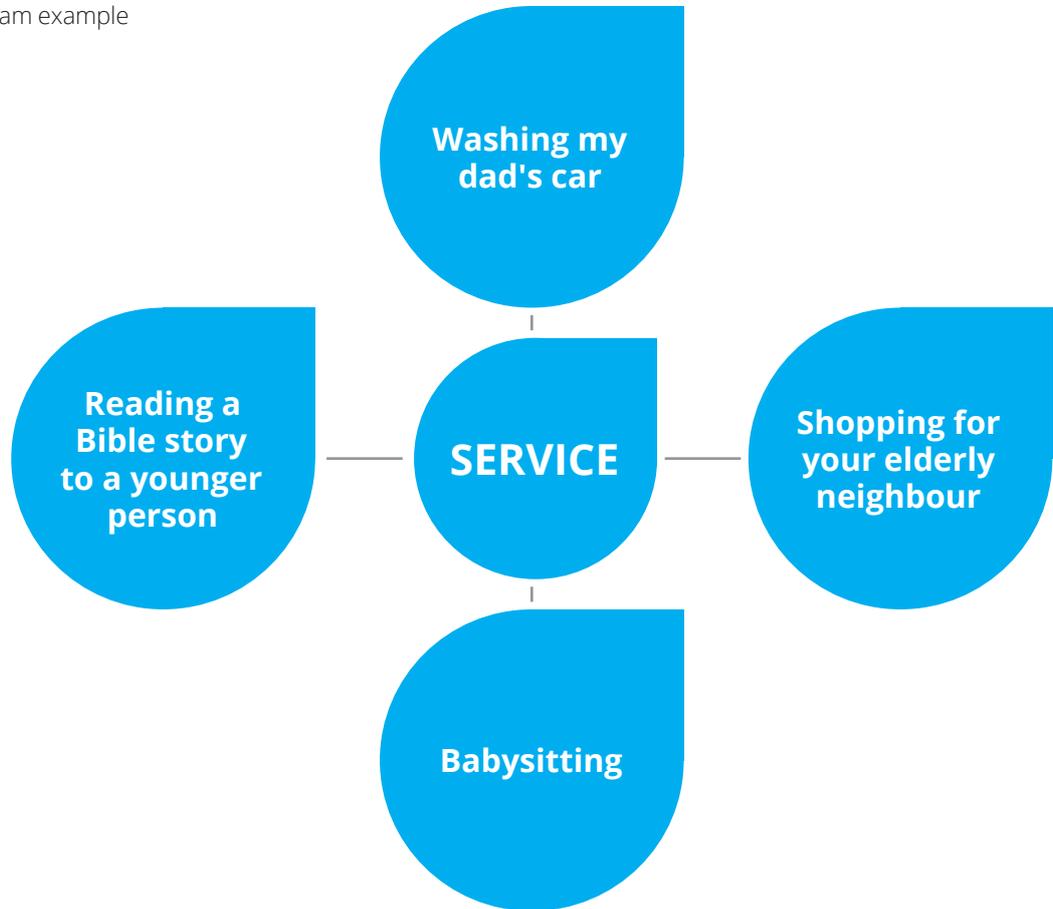
Feed back on the play:

- * What is your definition of service?
- * Who gave the best service in the play and why?
- * What was wrong with the service the Shopkeeper gave?
- * If the Shopkeeper receives a complaint, what can the Shopkeeper do next time to improve Customer's experience?
- * What does service mean to you as a Christian?
- * How do emotions affect the service we provide?
- * When you receive good service, how do you feel?
- * When you receive bad service, how do you feel and what do you think?

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV): 'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.'

Ask the group what they think this Scripture means. Then provide paper and drawing materials and ask the group to draw a spidergram listing 10 different acts of service. Each service should have good and bad examples attached to it. Each individual should present their diagram to the group.

Spidergram example



WORSHIP

Give the group 10 minutes of quiet time to think about how they serve God and others in their everyday life. Allow the group to feed back their daily acts of service.

Play the below video on Service:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHgYmbXDEMg

Discuss any new findings from the video with the group. Split the group into pairs and ask them to recite to each other the words of 'The Servant Song' by Richard A.M. Gillard:

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are family on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the miles and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping,
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrows
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in Heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I might have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

(SASB 1005)

SESSION
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WITNESS/ACTION

Challenge the group to do one or all of the following points in the following week:

- * Every day say a five-minute prayer for one person in your life (do this for a different person every day).
- * Each morning read one Scripture verse on service. Then ask God what you can do to serve him or those around you for that day (you will soon find plenty of opportunities to serve!).
- * Offer to go to the shop for your parent/guardian.
- * Wash the dishes after family dinner.
- * Instead of spending your pocket money on yourself, buy something for a friend / younger family member.
- * Buy a meal and drink for a homeless person.
- * Take 20 minutes out of your day to clear your mind and do something you love that makes you rest and relax (you can only serve others when you are refreshed yourself).
- * Help someone complete a task that they haven't had the time to finish / they've had difficulty with.

ACTS INTO ACTION: THE DISCIPLINE OF CELEBRATION

This month we have looked at service, idolatry, and pointing out God in all creation. We will be ending this month in style by looking at the discipline of celebration, just in time for Christmas! We will be putting all we've learnt into action.

The month of December is usually a celebratory month because it is the time we associate with Jesus' birth. While we are in the midst of receiving gifts from loved ones, eating a lot of food and sharing our time and love with others, we must remember not to make the celebratory activities more important than God. Remember that anything that you 'worship' is known as an idol; so be mindful when getting excited about gifts or sitting in front of the TV for hours on end watching Christmas shows.

Some tangible things we can do to celebrate whilst remembering God's creation are below. You can take part in one or more of these options:

1. Get a group of friends and family together to organise a community party. Invite people in the neighbourhood and call it a thanksgiving party, since some people's faith means they do not celebrate Christmas.
2. Volunteer with Crisis at Christmas or your local night shelter (NB This does require training and background checks). Once you finish serving the homeless you can celebrate with them: www.crisis.org.uk/get-involved/reserve-a-place-at-crisis-at-christmas
3. Arrange a candlelit carol service at your local park. Give out little candy sticks to those who you meet and pray with people if they are happy for you to do so. You'll be praising God whilst serving others.
4. Make a video about God's creation: go to different places so you have a variety of creatures, plants, people etc to show in the video. Then share the video on your social media platforms.
5. Post Christmas cards to your neighbours. You could go as a family to put the cards through the letter box. Address the cards with something like: 'To my lovely neighbour / To the beautiful family in this household'.

Have a think about other acts you can involve yourself in that will end in celebration, involve all God's creation and provide a service to others.