

SUFFERING

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



INTRODUCTION

YCMU's All Terrain Podcast explores Alexander Shaia's Quadratos – an ancient, but new to us, way of looking at the Gospels. Written about in 'Heart and Mind,' Shaia suggests that each Gospel is written to a particular question. Matthew asks, how do we face change? Mark, how do we move through suffering? John, how do we receive joy? And finally Luke, how do we mature in service? As we face a global pandemic, we have seen all four questions become significant to us all. Our dedication is to help our young people in how they do discipleship; when everything has changed, when suffering feels all around us, when joy feels far away and when service looks like never before.

Before starting we would recommend listening to a few episodes of the All Terrain Podcast to give you a better and deeper understanding of this framework. You can find it on most podcast platforms. Click for direct links on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#) and [Podbean](#).

The special edition episode with Alexander Shaia would be an excellent listen as you prepare yourself to delve into these questions with your young people, available [here](#).

Reading through each session well in advance will give you time and space to ensure you are comfortable with the technology you choose to use and make sure you and your young people have everything you need to participate.



MOVING THROUGH SUFFERING

Reading: Mark 14:12-31

Ahead of the session (as we are looking at The Last Supper) encourage everyone to get into their 'posh clothes' and set up a tea party which you can all enjoy together virtually.

WELCOME

Everybody enjoys a tea party together. You could ask people a series of 'would you rather' questions (see Appendix 1). Invite the group to share any new things they have done based on their commitment last week.

WORD

- * Show a picture of 'The Last Supper during Lockdown' (see Appendix 2) using screen share and introduce today's story.
- * Invite someone to read Mark 14:12-31 (you could ask group members to look this up in their Bibles or display the passage on your screen) and show the original artwork whilst reading (see Appendix 3).

In the passage, Jesus is sharing a meal with his friends. It is a beautiful moment where we see Jesus' humanity as he shares in this time with those he is closest to, washing their feet (see John 13:2-11) and then sharing bread and wine with them. It is here that he tells those he loves that he is about to go to the cross and that it is someone in that room who will betray him.

- * Invite the group to write all the words that they think would describe what was going on in the room during this time, in the chat box.

We know how this story ends. We know that the ending is good and we are always keen to get there, to the place where we can celebrate the joy. But there is a lot we can learn from how Jesus moved through the pain that came before, and apply it to our lives during times of suffering.

ACTION

Some people might be feeling pain in these days and may be wondering how to get through it. We can follow Jesus' example:

- * Allow yourself to feel it – Henry Nouwen, in his book *The Living Reminder* says: 'How are we healed of our wounding memories? We are healed first of all by letting them be available, by leading them out of the corner of forgetfulness, and by remembering them as part of our life stories. What is forgotten is unavailable and what is unavailable cannot be healed...' It is important that we acknowledge what we are going through and allow ourselves to feel any feelings that may arise. Even those that are hard. Being angry, sad, worried, frustrated, frightened, in grief... these feelings are all important. We saw Jesus experience all of these and so we must allow ourselves to feel these also. No feelings are bad or sinful. They are all part of what it is to be human.
- * Tell God about it – In *The Message* version of this story, Jesus says to his friends, 'You are all going to feel that your world is falling apart and that it's my fault' (v27). There is no shame or guilt attached to this statement but an invitation to share your pain with him. You may blame God, you may feel like your world is falling apart and you may be having some really complex feelings. You can tell God all of this.
- * Share with friends – Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live in community. He had a group of friends he deeply trusted (even though he knew that one would betray him) and he shares in all of life with them. In this upper room he demonstrates the ultimate of sharing in the breaking of the bread (his body) and sipping of wine (his blood). They also had each other. And it is the same for us. There is always someone you can talk to about what you are going through and it is really important that you don't suffer alone.

SESSION ONE

PRAYER

- * Listen and watch either video. As you listen, think about something you are holding on to that you want to let go and give to God. You may want to open your hands as a symbol of handing it over.

▶ **'The Garden' – Kari Jobe** (5mins 35secs)

Or

▶ **'Remember Me' – Emma Pears** (3mins 12secs) (may be more enjoyable/useful for younger people)

Appendix 1

WOULD YOU RATHER

(Taken from Conversation Starters World)

1. Would you rather always be 10 minutes late or always be 20 minutes early?
2. Would you rather have unlimited international first-class tickets or never have to pay for food at restaurants?
3. Would you rather be forced to dance every time you heard music or be forced to sing along to any song you heard?
4. Would you rather only be able to use a fork (no spoon) or only be able to use a spoon (no fork)?
5. Would you rather be compelled to high-five everyone you meet or be compelled to give wedgies to anyone in a green T-shirt?

Appendix 2 LAST SUPPER LOCKDOWN



Appendix 3

A REALISED VERSION OF 'THE LAST SUPPER' BY LEONARDO DA VINCI


LOVE LANGUAGE

This session focuses on the greatest commandment Jesus gives us: to love God, love others and love ourselves. We will look at how easy or painful we find these relationships and how speaking love into these relationships nurtures peace.

WELCOME

Get everybody to think of a celebrity the majority of the group will know and have the others guess who it is by asking yes/no questions.

WORD

 Read Mark 12:28-31, a really well-known passage.


We may have seen it on mission statements in churches – ‘Love God, Love others’ – but this misses the third part of the commandment: ‘as you love yourself’. These three relationships are all of equal importance and all three relationships need our investment. Show Appendix 1 using the share screen function.

When we last looked at Mark’s Gospel and what it says to us about moving through suffering, we looked at these relationships (with God, others and our own self) and how focusing on them can help to move us through our suffering. But sometimes it is these relationships that can be the cause of our suffering. As we start or grow our relationships (with God, others and/or ourselves), we may encounter some pain, hurt, confusion, fear or worry. It is important to speak these out and name them. And it is important to do that with kindness and compassion.


Speaking with compassion doesn’t mean that we don’t have hard or challenging conversations – if we feel that someone is treating us badly, we are frustrated with God or there is something about ourselves that feels hard to overcome, we are compelled to speak that out (we have examples of when Jesus does all of this throughout Mark’s Gospel); but HOW you say it matters. The posture you take and the words you speak can have a powerful impact. So first, before any word is uttered, we must find our compassion.

It is, however, hard to find compassion in how we speak to others or how we speak to God if we don’t first speak to ourselves with compassion. For some of us, our relationship with ourselves can be the hardest relationship we have. We may have absorbed messages which have led us into speaking words over ourselves that are unkind and untrue. This is not God’s heart for us.

ACTION

 Read Sarah Bessy’s ‘You’re already so loved’ (Appendix 2).

Whilst somebody is reading, invite the group to write down the phrases that stand out to them – maybe new messages that they need to absorb – either in the chat box or on a whiteboard.

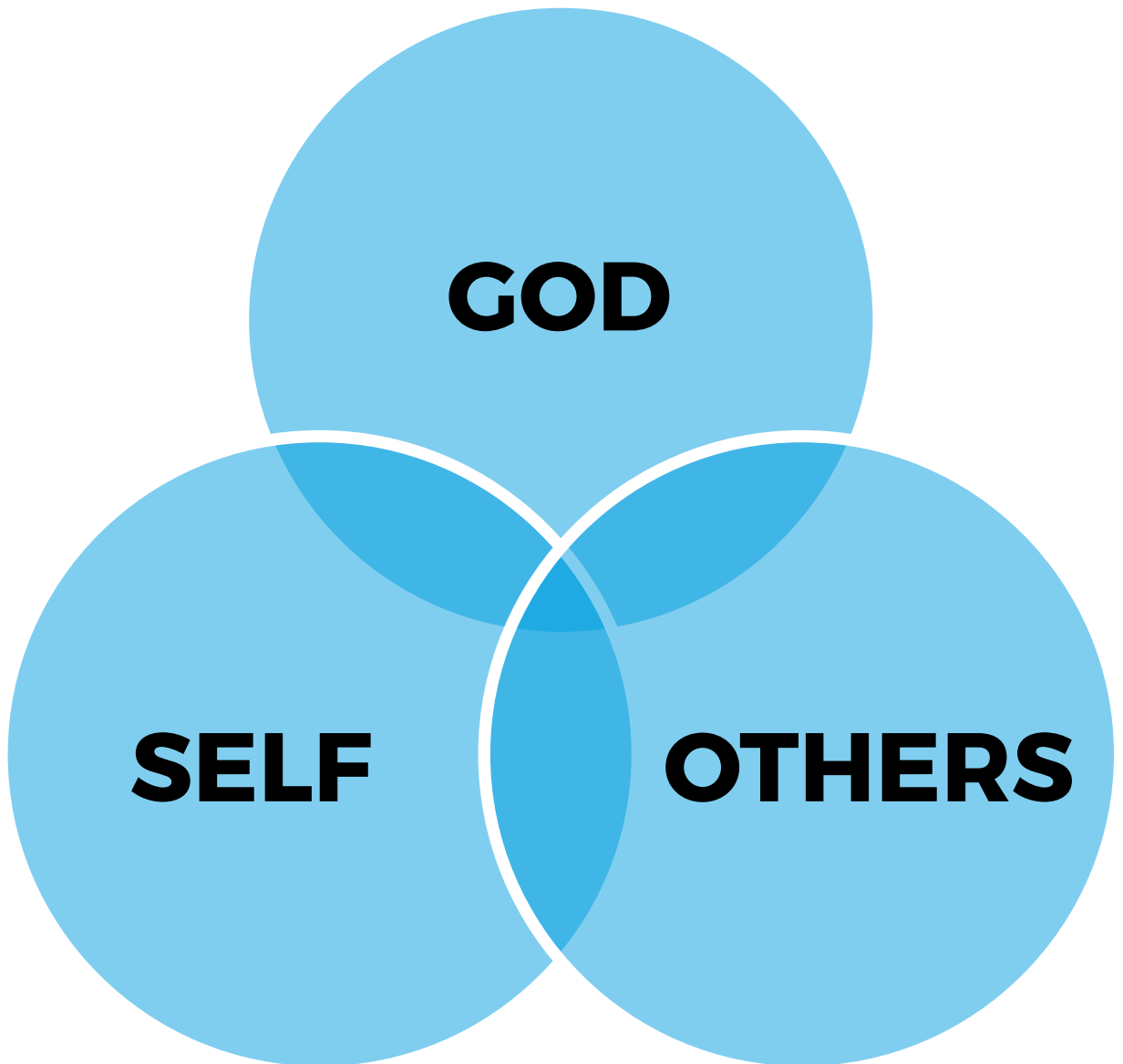
 **Group discussion:** What phrases were written down and why?

PRAYER

Email ‘wrist bands’ to the group – you may want to use some from Appendix 3, make your own or get them to make their own.

Have each person pick three words:

1. One for themselves that they will wear – a word they speak over their life.
2. One for someone else – they can pray that word over them.
3. One word that they want to claim for who God is – they can put it somewhere where they can be reminded of the nature of God on a daily basis and offer up a prayer of gratitude.



Appendix 2

YOU'RE ALREADY SO LOVED

(Sarah Bessey – <https://sarahbessey.com/already-so-loved>)

You don't have to be productive and you don't have to change the world. You're already so loved.

You don't have to be smart. You don't have to be simple. You don't have to read all the right books by the right people. You're already so loved.

You don't have to be beautiful and thin with an articulated and ironic fashion sense, not at all. But if you're into that kind of thing, well, that's OK, too, darling. You don't have to be healthy in your mind or in your body. You don't have to be in full-time vocational ministry. You can watch horrible television or you can be proud of your television-less home. You can be artistic or scientific. You can spend your life travelling to meet beautiful people or you can live and die in the town where you were born.

You don't have to be straight or white or powerful. You can be from the wrong side of the tracks or the gated community, suburbs or urban or rural. You can work with your hands and your mind, your back and your brain. You don't have to be educated, not at all. You don't have to have a degree or letters after your name. You don't have to know the right people and boast a carefully curated Instagram feed with the famous and the beautiful and the influential. You don't have to be conservative and you don't have to be liberal. You don't have to identify with certain political persuasions or ideology on sexuality or science or socio-economics or foreign policy. You can be a social justice warrior or, you know, not.

None of that moves the metre of your belovedness. God won't say, OK, now I love her just a bit more because, look, she is finally out of debt or thin or powerful or influential or tireless.

Your family story can be beautiful or terrible or, like most of us, it's likely a bit of both. Perhaps you're famous or well-known or influential, that's

OK. Perhaps you are quiet and unknown – maybe you hate that, maybe you love it. You don't have to be a mother or a father, you don't have to be married, you don't have to be single, you don't have to want children or raise children. You don't have to be sober or clean. You don't have to give away everything you own and take a vow of poverty, you don't have to be prosperous either. Church or no church or a certain kind of church only – whatever.

You have nothing to prove. You have nothing to earn.

Sure, any one of those things might change because you are loved. You may know already where God wants to breathe change and wholeness into you, bringing your life more into line with the person you were meant to be all along.

Love can and does and will transform us in every way – our ideology, our opinions, our habits, our values, our priorities, our very names. But it's not a prerequisite or a requirement, it's not behaviour modification, it never is, not for love.

Love has happened and it is happening and it will happen. It is kind and patient towards you.

You're already so loved – you aren't earning a breath of love or tenderness more than what you already have just by breathing, just by existing, just by being here in the wonder. Your name is already written in the lines of the hands of the universe, you're star-breath-of-dust and you are beloved, intimately, faithfully, wholly. It's your lifelong rock – you are known. You are loved with delight and abundance, with choice and desire, with covenantal love.

And watch now – the places of weakness will become places of strength. Your desert will bloom with flowers. The well will never run dry. Everything will be redeemed.

You are so loved. You are so loved. You are so loved.

Appendix 3

Credit: GoZen.com [NB 'Humor' is the American spelling!]



SEASONAL LIVING

Today we are taking a quick tour of Jesus' life and ministry. We will explore what we can learn from how he lived, and how this can impact us in the different seasons of life we move through.

WELCOME

Scavenger Hunt

Say: Go and find something in your house (or surroundings) that represent...

- * You
- * Your youth leader
- * How you are feeling today
- * Each season (spring, summer, autumn and winter)

Keep these last four with you as we will need them for later.

You may want to put a time limit on how long they have to find each item to keep the game moving along.

WORD

As we think about the life of Jesus, it is very easy to remember the joyful times or the exciting times – there are a lot of stories of where Jesus shows us something of himself that is extraordinary. However, Mark's Gospel also documents the times when Jesus encountered challenges, struggles and heartache. He was fully human, after all! It's important to remember this, because so often we may feel that God can't relate to what we are going through. But Jesus went through all the different 'seasons' of life just like us and we can learn a lot from him as we also journey through the seasons in our lives.

Spring – Anticipation and Hope – Mark 1:1-8

We start Mark's Gospel with John the Baptist who is paving the way for Jesus' coming. The Jewish community has been anticipating this Messiah for a VERY long time. The levels of anticipation are high. With anticipation comes hope. Finally the one that has been promised to them will come and save them from their lives of suppression and suffering at the hands of dictators. Jesus is going to come and save them all. Which (as we know) he did, but not in the way they had expected.

Summer – Flourish and Thrive – Mark 11:1-11

This story (Mark 11:1-11) is just one of many that could have been picked. But Palm Sunday really shows us Jesus in this point in his life and ministry. People were lining the streets to worship him and to praise him. It was a moment of glory.

We could have picked any number of stories about Jesus' life to explore. We can see numerous stories of how Jesus brought about healing, joy, amazement and love. Wherever he went, whoever he encountered (and don't forget he intentionally encountered those whom others considered outcasts), he thrived in his ministry. And he gave others the opportunity to thrive and flourish as well. All who encountered him became better versions of themselves. He brought a sense of excitement with him like never before or since.

Autumn – Beauty and Acceptance – Mark 14:12-26

We looked at this passage a number of weeks ago. This occasion in the life of Jesus is a significant one. In this upper room with his friends, Jesus shares a very intimate moment. A moment of beauty where he washes their feet and a moment of acceptance about what is next as he shares in bread and wine with his friends. This upper room is not fraught or dramatic; it is a simple and gentle time where he can dwell in the here and now, finding space in this beautiful time, knowing what is to come but not rushing into it or away from it.

SESSION THREE

Winter – Sorrow and Stillness – Mark 15

Just before Jesus breathes his last, we hear that ‘darkness came over the whole land’ (v33) and we move into the next season of Jesus’ life and ministry – his death. Jesus dies, and the world is still. It goes through a time of mourning – a time when there is no sign of life or activity. There is a period of waiting for the next sign of spring but feeling sorrow and loss. In this story the waiting is short (but they wouldn’t have known that at the time) but important. In that time of waiting, faith was tested, tears were shed and hope seemed far out of reach. But we know that seasons run in a cycle and there were signs of spring everywhere; they were perhaps just hard to see amongst the bleakness.

We will always find ourselves in places in our lives where it feels like winter – maybe even for very long periods of time. But we can find reassurance from the life and ministry of Jesus that hope is going to break through. We will flourish and thrive again. We will be able to find beauty and acceptance when we are faced with moving into a new season, and there will always be peace and stillness to find in times of sorrow. That is the good news of the gospel. We are never left or forsaken, whatever season we find ourselves in.

ACTION

- * Ask yourself where are you at the moment (spring/summer/autumn/winter?).
- * Using the items you collected earlier, pick up the one that represents where you are at right now (you can change the item to something else if you need to). Spend some time looking at it, investigating it.
- * Notice what thoughts/feelings/reactions you have as you reflect on this item. What is it saying to you right now?
- * If anyone is willing, give some time for individuals to share with the group.

PRAYER

- * If people are comfortable, open up the group to pray out loud for each other, particularly for those that have shared.
- * Finish the time with the breathing prayer (see Appendix 1). You may want to send this breathing prayer around for people to use it as a personal practice.

A Breathing Prayer

(Credit: Christine Sine - <https://godspacelight.com/2009/02/16/a-breathing-prayer/>)

I suggest that people sit with their hands in their laps palm up while they say the first line and take a deep breath, then turn palms down and breathe out as they say the second line. The lines in bold can be recited by the whole group if you like.

Breathe in the breath of God.

Breathe out your cares and concerns.

Breathe in the love of God.

Breathe out your doubts and despairs.

Breathe in the life of God.

Breathe out your fears and frustrations.

We sit quietly before the One who gives life and love to all creation,

We sit in awe of the One who formed us in our mother's wombs,

We sit at peace surrounded by the One who fills every fibre of our being.

Breathe in the breath of God.

Breathe out your tensions and turmoil.

Breathe in the love of God.

Breathe out your haste and hurry.

Breathe in the life of God.

Breathe out your work and worry.

We sit quietly before the One who gives life and love to all creation,

We sit in awe of the One who formed us in our mother's wombs,

We sit at peace surrounded by the One who fills every fibre of our being.