

# *The Year We Stayed at Home*



A Pick and Mix Resource pack of activities and Bible linked materials for reflecting on our shared experiences of the COVID 19 Pandemic



# The Year We Stayed at Home

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*Material created collaboratively by Dawn Lonsdale and Carolyn Gower  
With credited guest contributions*



# Why this? Why now?

The COVID 19 Pandemic has been undeniably tough for everyone and particularly for those communities where our Unlock work is focussed.

We believe that **all of us** need, (without moaning or whingeing), to be prepared to acknowledge the energy drain and the emotional cost of COVID 19, for ourselves, for each other and in our communities.

*Everyone* is more or less bereaved all of the time, even if we have not lost anyone, and even if we have plenty to be grateful for. We have all lost opportunities and precious time with loved ones, we have all had to let go of hopes and dreams and plans; and that disappointment is real and painful. As well as that everyone is dealing with heightened levels of fear and anxiety, and having to manage day to day decisions that potentially have far more significant consequences than we are accustomed to. Many of us know at least some people who have lost loved ones, which is both sad to bear and adds to the fear. Plus we have all had to adjust repeatedly and fairly swiftly to new ways of doing things and to relate, usually by pretty clunky means, to everyone else who is dealing with all of that stuff as well, but probably differently! It's hard to rest and feel refreshed when we do not have access to many of the ways we would usually do that, and the end is still some way off. Self-care and care for one another are going to be really critical over the next 24 months or so at least; and creating safe environments where people can express their pain and vulnerability, without abdicating responsibility or getting sucked into unproductive self-pity, are going to be an essential part of what we need to offer out of our faith, both personally, as Unlock and as Churches.

We may feel that we just want to move on and forget all about it but ultimately that will not help us to grow and learn from these exceptional experiences. It's going to be essential that we support one another to remember and process the collective trauma of COVID 19, that includes allowing appropriate grief, acknowledging anger and remembering effectively, both the good and the bad things.

So we are offering you this resource pack as a way to start to do that work, in your own places, with your own people. We hope and pray that you will find it useful.

*Dawn Lonsdale, Chief Officer*





We suggest that you begin with the **timeline activities on pages 6&7**. We have noticed that, in the course of this pandemic, the details of what was happening just a few months ago become hazy memories quite quickly. It is hard to keep a clear picture of what happened when; when we last saw so and so, when we last went inside someone else's home, when we last left our home town and so on. The timeline will help us to get some perspective, a long overview of all that has happened. Those experiences will be different for everyone and it will be good to explore them together. You will be amazed at how much you have forgotten! You might return to the timeline activities as part of each of the other sections, or at the end, to see if there are any new insights to add.

We have chosen **six topics** that have formed a part of our own journey and reflections through 2020 and 2021. They are **Lament, Gratitude, Patience, Hope, Kindness and Discernment**. Each topic has its own section, which includes a reflection, some creative activities for groups or individuals, and some Bible material. These sections are not in any particular order and you can use them in any way that you like.

You are encouraged to **be selective**. Not only can you use the sections in any order but you can use as much or as little of them as you like. You know your people and your place. You know what will connect for folk, and what will engage them; please feel free to **choose** from this material and use only that which seems best suited to your own context. There's no reason why you can't present your groups with some options and respond to what they would like to do.

The **topic reflections/introductions** (these are on the pages with coloured backgrounds; e.g pages 9-11) are intended as *preparatory reading for group facilitators*. Facilitators can choose how much of that material to share with their groups and how. Please note that there is absolutely no need to provide printed copies of all of the material for everyone involved!

The approaches in this pack are based on the **Unlock learning cycle** which you will find on page 118. Unlock has been using this approach for nearly 50 years. It is linked to the ways in which Jesus taught; using stories and connections with people's day to day lives; and we continue to use it because it works. We recommend that in using this material you use the learning cycle to structure your approach. The most important aspect is that we engage with our *own stories before* we explore what the Bible has to say, not the other way around.

It is important that you take some time when you are planning to **really understand the needs of your local group**, so that you can select activities and material that are appropriate for them, and work in a way that fits your local context. You can use pages 20—27 of our facilitator training pack, **'Unlock DIY'** to help you reflect effectively on the needs of your group(s). <http://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/documents/UnlockDIY2020update.pdf>

We recommend that you give yourself and your group plenty of **time and space** to work through this material. You will all get more out of it if you don't rush it, allow yourselves to be **creative** and to break free of the notion that there are 'right' answers. This is much more about sharing our experiences, what we can discover together, and how we can support one another in doing that, than it is about getting from point A to point B.

The participants are not the only ones who will benefit from thinking about this stuff, but not everyone will come and join in with group activities. So **share what you are doing**; find creative ways to display the results of your activities so that other people can see them and have a moment to do their own reflecting too.

See page 118– 120 for further Unlock facilitator guidance.

What follows on pages 6&7 is an activity to help us begin to recall, process and understand the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on us personally, as a group, or groups, and also as a community.

The Timeline image maps some of the key events of 2020 (you can add others in 2021) and helps us place our personal key events into this framework.

The timeline image on page 6 is only for illustration. Obviously it is far too small for people to use to work on. The Unlock office has a supply of ready printed A2 copies of the timeline so (unless you have your own facilities to print page 6 at A2 size) you need to contact the Unlock Office and request sufficient copies to have at least one per person for your group(s). There is an order form below, or you can e-mail or telephone the Unlock office providing the necessary information.

The idea is that each person has their own individual copy and can personalise it by adding anything that feels important for them to remember. The coloured squares are deliberately left blank as spaces where people can add in their own personal events, milestones and experiences. Page 7 gives suggestions for the kind of things we might think about and add into our own copy of the timeline. Items can be added using pictures, words or a combination, or using cut out images pasted on. This needn't be a one off activity. We can return to our timelines and add more to them at any stage.

Groups can work both individually and together to help each other remember what happened when.

Ultimately each person's timeline will be their own personal record of their lives during the pandemic, a kind of visual diary, which they can keep and use to recall 'The Year We Stayed at Home', and perhaps to explain what it was like to future generations!



**Covid timeline order form**

**The Year We stayed at Home**

Please mail . . . . . copies of the Unlock Covid timeline to -

Name: . . . . . E-mail address . . . . .

Postal address: . . . . .

Telephone number (in case we need to check anything with you) . . . . .

Please send completed orders to the Unlock Office, (C/O Shiloh) 15 Station Road, Rotherham, S60 1HN or to office@unlock/urban.org.uk Tel: 01709 380318.

*We welcome (but do not require) donations to cover the cost of printing and postage.*





One day; I will know it is over when ...



# Unlock COVID Timeline

A2 timeline prints are available on request from the Unlock office.

Supporting resources at [www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources.php](http://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources.php) or contact Unlock Office 15 Station Road, Rotherham, S60 1HN Tel: 01709 380 118 e-mail [office@unlock-urban.org.uk](mailto:office@unlock-urban.org.uk)

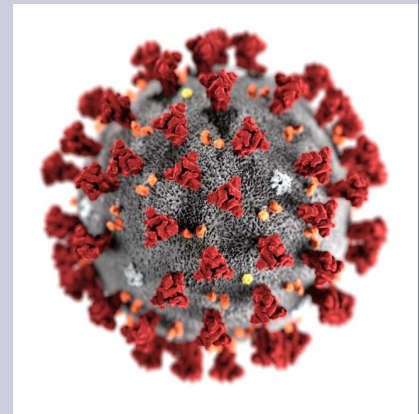
# COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline Activities

You can add to the timeline anything that you want to record and remember about your personal experience of the pandemic.

You can use words, symbols, stickers, colours, drawings, pictures, or a combination; as you prefer.

You could include:-

- **Things that just were: -**
  - ◇ Family events, birthdays, etc
  - ◇ Significant moments or turning points
- **Lost or missed things: -**
  - ◇ People, activities or things you have lost or missed
  - ◇ Places you didn't go.
- **New things and things to be glad about: -**
  - ◇ Things you enjoyed
  - ◇ Things you are grateful for
  - ◇ Places you went
  - ◇ Things you made
  - ◇ Things that helped you get through
  - ◇ Things you learnt, or noticed
  - ◇ New things that you didn't do before that you want to keep
  - ◇ People you spent time with, either face to face or in other ways
- **Your responses and reactions: -**
  - ◇ What you discovered about yourself
  - ◇ What emotions did you feel?
  - ◇ When were you most afraid?
  - ◇ When were you most at peace?
  - ◇ Where was God for you; and where were God's people?



We have not included the regularly issued data on case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths. If you want to add in that kind of data you can find it here <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

You might find this Wikipedia timeline useful for reference, especially if you like to have precise dates and details [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic\\_in\\_England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_England)

You can use the months that are blank, either to continue to journal as the months go by, or to express your hopes for what is to come (or a bit of both!) The big yellow box at the bottom is for you to make a note of things you want to do when it's over that you can't do now.

*Once groups can meet again safely the timeline could be used to structure a group or community reflection process.*



The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. How much sorrow can I hold? That's how much gratitude I can give. If I carry only grief, I'll bend toward cynicism and despair. If I have only gratitude, I'll become saccharine and won't develop much compassion for other people's suffering. Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible.

~Francis Ward Weller



Photo by Magne Traeland · Unsplash

BRASSBALLS TENDER HEART <https://www.brassballs.com>





# Lament

*Which may also include anger*

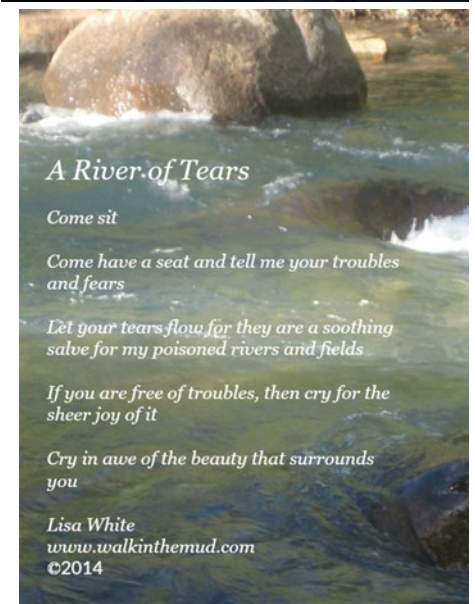
Let's start somewhere we know: in the book of **Lamentations 3: 22-23**; you know the chorus probably: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies (compassions) never fail (come to an end); they are new every morning, new every morning; great is thy faithfulness oh Lord, great is thy faithfulness.

Well, not only does that give you a near-completely false understanding of the tone and content of the five chapters of national degradation which is Lamentations, it's also rubbish, isn't it?

Most of the Psalms are lamentations, in poetry usually. Striking examples are **Psalms 22, 44 and 88**. (Spooky eh!). They are not long ones; please read them if you can.

Psalm 22 starts with the words Jesus repeated on the Cross. v9-10 are a beautiful image of God and the final 25% is very positive about God (like the end of many Psalms of lament). It's a very personal lament; or perhaps complaint is a better word.

Psalm 44 is communal; the defeated remnant of a nation, complaining,



"What will we do without them" by The Spanish painter [Juan Lucena](#)



lamenting, in great distress. The end here isn't exactly upbeat; 'Awake, O Lord... Rouse yourself! This can't go on forever... can it' (I paraphrase; but it could be a COVID-nation talking).

Psalm 88 feels very personal; it's definitely a complaint, an outpouring of deep distress, in loneliness and rejection and in the face of anticipated death. The final word in the Hebrew is 'darkness'. There is no respite; just darkness.

It is no bad thing to say to God, for example 'my eyes are dim with grief' Ps88 v9a. But the reason why lament is also complaint in all the biblical writing is because 'its God what done it'. And that's why I say, when you are in the pits, the lamentation based chorus is rubbish. These days we're ever-so-sophisticated and we know that bats and chickens and Chinese wet markets are not the agents of God to bring judgement on us; rather we know that we are living with the continuing consequences of our disobedience.

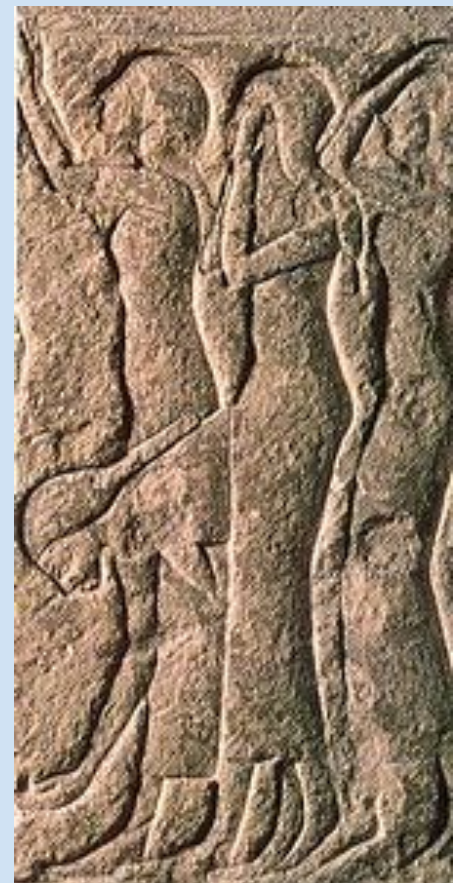
But don't let that stop you.

You might reasonably ask of an ever-loving God: why the weakest, why the poorest, why the alien.

You can rail about our rulers and their advisers and those who inflict rules and then take another's wife... you could get quite biblical!



And why, oh why, should many die alone; why can



we not at least say  
goodbye and grieve well?  
Listen to your heart: you'll  
have plenty to say.

In the Chair's bit of the  
2020 Annual Report I said  
this about lament: ....there  
have been losses; there is  
much to lament. We have

not been able to fulfil our purpose for most of this year. Some work  
will have lost momentum; some opportunities will have been lost.  
Some people have been lost. Together we will, I hope, sit with that  
reality. Not rush through it. But sit with it; face it; cry out to God  
about it; be angry and sad and say whatever we need to say to a  
faithful God who can take it. And hopefully relieve ourselves of  
burdens we can't take.

THE STEADFAST LOVE OF  
THE LORD NEVER  
CEASES, HIS MERCIES  
NEVER COME TO AN  
END; THEY ARE NEW  
EVERY MORNING;  
GREAT IS YOUR

*Faithfulness.*

-LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 NRSV



***By Andy Dorton***

***October 2020***

**One bold message in the Book of Job is that  
you can say anything to God.  
Throw at him your grief, your anger, your  
doubt, your bitterness, your betrayal, your  
disappointment— he can absorb them all.  
As often as not, spiritual giants of the Bible are  
shown contending with God.  
They prefer to go away limping, like Jacob,  
rather than to shut God out.**

Philip Yancey

Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud

#readthereforequote #pragmaticcommunion

www.juliestilesmills.com

If leaders want to explore the  
idea of lament further they  
might want to watch this pre-  
pandemic video from  
Archbishop Justin Welby; but  
please think carefully about  
whether and how it is  
appropriate to share the  
contents with your group

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=UduqyYy2954&t=455s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UduqyYy2954&t=455s)



# Activities to help us think about Lament

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of lament.*

**Pictures:** Photographs which remind us of lockdown (on page 15-16 there's a bit of a collection but you can find your own if you prefer). Facilitate a discussion by encouraging general comments about different photos. What emotions do we feel when we look at the photos? The emotion cards (on page 17) might help with this. Encourage people to share their own lockdown/COVID stories.

**Emotion Stations:** Set up no more than 6 separate stations around a room (or outdoor space), each should be labelled with one emotion (we suggest that you choose no more than 6 of those most associated with lament from page 17). At each station folk can write a postcard (templates on page 18) which says what part of the pandemic made them feel that emotion. This will work well if you use coloured card to make the emotions signs and then match the postcard colours to the signs for each station (e.g. make the 'sadness' station blue, with blue postcards, the overwhelmed station green, with green postcards, and so on).

After we have all had an opportunity to visit as many stations as we want, the postcards are gathered and handed out anonymously to people for them to read aloud to the group (if you are not confident that everyone present can read out a card then the facilitator can read them out, or people can help each other).

**Discussion:** Which cards other than the ones you wrote do you relate to most?



## Community Scrapbook:

The completed postcards could be included in a community scrapbook, with drawings, photos, newspaper (or internet) cuttings and notes to help people to remember 'The year we stayed at home'.

## Listening:

Allow the group to listen to some of the poems and songs provided



below. Choose the ones that are most appropriate for your group, or set all of these up as a playlist for people to listen to while doing some of the other activities.

## Things we have lost:

### Listen to: -

- Annie Lennox sings 'Dido's Lament' with massed online choir  
[https://www.classicfm.com/composers/purcell/annie-lennox-didos-lament-with-london-city-voices/?fbclid=IwAR2k8VMLH3eiCxLvY7dIIIRhYTm\\_Vu0Nap-Fb0K8WV6Tu3IX68s6WxTGEuxY](https://www.classicfm.com/composers/purcell/annie-lennox-didos-lament-with-london-city-voices/?fbclid=IwAR2k8VMLH3eiCxLvY7dIIIRhYTm_Vu0Nap-Fb0K8WV6Tu3IX68s6WxTGEuxY)
- The Lament for Boromir - from the Lord of the Rings Film - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDN1sA3Fpqq&list=PLvM65\\_qRuWZsrXapSiO47DjnU5HD2TP6N&index=78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDN1sA3Fpqq&list=PLvM65_qRuWZsrXapSiO47DjnU5HD2TP6N&index=78)
- Eric Clapton's song River of Tears - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CrH8sylimw0>
- Weep with me by Rend Collective - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEAIWy72acc>
- O Lord you never let go by Matt Redman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y83-vMeWc9E>
- Rob Halligan, Singing Myself to Sleep - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqSvshPin5Q>

**Materials:** White cloth, masking tape, fabric dye or paint (choose a limited range of colours that work well together), brushes

**Method:** Use masking tape to write words or "draw" a simple picture or symbol to represent the thing(s) that COVID times have taken away from you. Press the tape down firmly. Paint swirly lines over the top and around the tape, using fairly watery paint. Leave to dry for an hour. Peel off the tape to reveal the white stencil. The idea is to facilitate conversation while people are working on this and at the end the results can be displayed.

*(With thanks to Unlock Hull for this activity.)*



## Create a Community Lament to Express our loss:

Following on from activities selected from those above invite the group to work together to create their own community lockdown lament in poetry and images. You might use the 'My Sister is Not Statistic' poem by Dorothy Duffy on page 19 to start your group thinking. Groups of 3/4 work together to write their own lament of about 7 lines which can then all be combined into one. Those who are not so confident with words and writing can suggest images to go alongside the words, draw them, or cut them out of magazines and newspapers (or, if you have the facilities, print them from the internet).

**Watch:** - The Archbishop of Canterbury visits the Covid memorial Wall in London

<https://fb.watch/50VsSpm3Mp/>



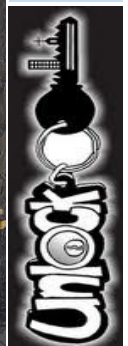
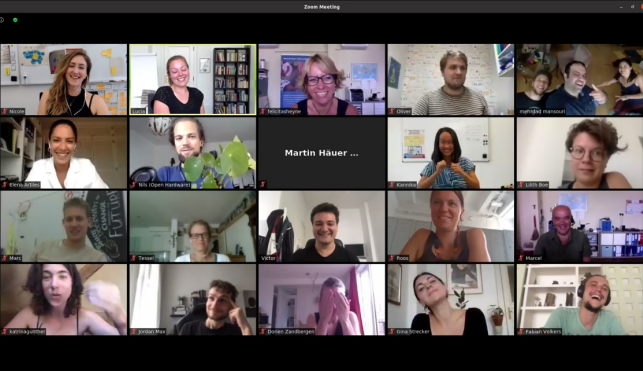
## Display & Share:-

Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, clouds, nature display, cards, painted stones, banner, posters, scrapbooks, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.



# COVID Lockdown picture collection

## Lament—Resources





# Lament—Resources





## Emotions cards

Angry

Loved

Ashamed

Disgusted

Terrified

Humbled

Betrayed

Trusted

Rejected

Lonely

Deceived

Overwhelmed

Hopeful

Desperate

Lost

Sad

These are just some suggestions;  
you can add your own if you'd like to.



I felt  
.....  
when  
.....  
because of  
.....

I felt  
.....  
when  
.....  
because of  
.....

I felt  
.....  
when  
.....  
because of  
.....

I felt  
.....  
when  
.....  
because of  
.....



**MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC**

Tomorrow, when the latest  
Deathometer of Covid is announced  
in sonorous tones,  
While all the bodies still mount and  
curl towards the middle of the curve  
Heaped one atop and alongside the  
other  
My sister will be among those  
numbers, among the throwaway lines  
Among the platitudes and lowered  
eyes,  
*an older person with underlying  
health conditions,*  
A pitiful way to lay rest the bare  
bones of a life.

**MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC**

Her underlying conditions were  
Love  
Kindness  
Belief in the essential goodness of  
mankind  
Uproarious laughter  
Forgiveness  
Compassion  
A storyteller  
A survivor  
A comforter  
A force of nature  
And so much more

**MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC**

She died without the soft touch of a  
loved one's hand  
Without the feathered kiss upon her  
forehead  
Without the muted murmur of  
familiar family voices gathered  
around her bed,  
Without the gentle roar of laughter  
that comes with memories recalled  
Evoked from a time that already  
seems distant, when we were  
connected by the simplicity of touch,  
of voice, of presence.

**MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC**

She was a woman who spanned the  
seven ages.

A mother  
A grandmother  
A great grandmother  
A sister  
A Friend  
An aunt  
A carer  
A giver

**MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC**

And so, she joins the mounting  
thousands

**THEY ARE NOT STATISTICS ON THE  
DEATHOMETER OF COVID**

They are the wives, mothers, children,  
fathers, sisters, brothers  
The layers of all our loved ones  
If she could, believe me when I say, she  
would hold every last one of your loved  
ones, croon to and comfort them and  
say - you were loved.  
Whilst we who have been left behind  
mourn deep, keening the loss, the  
injustice, the rage.  
One day we will smile and laugh again,  
we will remember with joy that, once,  
we shared a life, we knew joy and  
survived sadness.

**You are my sister ..... and I love you.**

**Dorothy Duffy  
4th April 2020**

You can hear this poem read aloud at  
either of these links:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOJHEgfg2M4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KotYIc5C4Ec>



## River of Tears by Eric Clapton

It's three miles to the river  
 That would carry me away  
 And two miles to the dusty  
 street  
 That I saw you on Today  
 It's four miles to my lonely  
 room  
 Where I will hide my face  
 And about a half a mile to the  
 downtown bar  
 That I ran from in disgrace  
 Lord how long do I have to  
 keep on running  
 Seven hours, Seven days or  
 Seven years  
 All I know is since you've been  
 gone  
 Feels like I'm drowning in a  
 river  
 Drowning in a river of tears  
 Drowning in a river  
 Feels like I'm drowning  
 Drowning in a river  
 In three more days I'll leave  
 this town  
 And disappear without a trace  
 A year from now maybe settle  
 down  
 Where no one knows my face  
 I wish that I could hold you  
 One more time to ease the  
 pain  
 But my times run out and I got  
 to go  
 Got to run away again  
 Still I catch myself thinking  
 One day I'll find my way back  
 here  
 You'll save me from drowning  
 Drowning in a river  
 Drowning in a river of tears  
 Drowning in a river  
 Feels like I'm drowning  
 Drowning in a river  
 Oh how long must this go on  
 Drowning in a river  
 Drowning in a river of tears

Songwriters: Eric Clapton,  
 Simon Climie

The **Lament for Boromir** was a song sung by [Aragorn](#) and [Legolas](#) as the funeral-boat of [Boromir](#) drifted away:

Aragorn sang:

*Through [Rohan](#) over fen and field where the long grass grows  
 The West Wind comes walking, and about the walls it goes.  
 'What news from the West, O wandering wind, do you bring to me  
 tonight?  
 Have you seen Boromir the Tall by moon or by starlight?  
 'I saw him ride over seven streams, over waters wide and grey,  
 I saw him walk in empty lands until he passed away  
 Into the shadows of the North, I saw him then no more.  
 The North Wind may have heard the horn of the son of [Denethor](#),  
 'O Boromir! From the high walls westward I looked afar,  
 But you came not from the empty lands where no men are.'*

Then Legolas sang:

*From the mouths of the [Sea](#) the South Wind flies, from the sandhills  
 and the stones,  
 The wailing of the gulls it bears, and at the gate it moans.  
 'What news from the South, O sighing wind, do you bring to me at  
 eve?  
 Where now is Boromir the Fair? He tarries and I grieve.  
 'Ask not of me where he doth dwell – so many bones there lie,  
 On the white shores and the dark shores under the stormy sky,  
 So many have passed down [Anduin](#) to find the flowing Sea.  
 Ask of the North Wind news of them the North Wind sends to me!  
 'O Boromir! Beyond the gate the seaward roads runs south,  
 But you came not with the wailing gulls from the grey sea's  
 mouth'.*

Then Aragorn sang again:

*From the [Gate of the Kings](#) the North Wind rides, and past the roaring  
 falls,  
 And clear and cold about the tower its loud horn calls.  
 'What news from the North, O mighty wind, do you bring to me today?  
 What news of Boromir the bold? For he is long away.'  
 'Beneath [Amon Hen](#) I heard his cry. There many foes he fought,  
 His cloven shield, his broken sword, they to the water brought.  
 His head so proud, his face so fair, his limbs they laid to rest,  
 And [Rauros](#), golden Rauros-falls, bore him upon its breast.  
 'O Boromir! The [Tower of Guard](#) shall ever northward gaze,  
 To Rauros, golden Rauros-falls, until the end of days.*

[Gimli](#) then comments that they left the east wind to him, but he would not sing it. Aragorn responds that the people of Gondor endure the east wind but do not ask it for tidings, because in that direction lies [Mordor](#) and the Evil in the East.





## Bible Stories to help us think about Lament

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together how these stories connect with our COVID experiences of lament.*

**Mark 5:24b-34** - A woman who had been in social lockdown for 12 years

So many people were going along with Jesus that they were crowding him from every side.

There was a woman who had suffered terribly from severe bleeding for twelve years, even though she had been treated by many doctors. She had spent all her money, but instead of getting better she got worse all the time. She had heard about Jesus, so she came in the crowd behind him, saying to herself, “If I just touch his clothes, I will get well.”

She touched his cloak, and her bleeding stopped at once; and she had the feeling inside herself that she was healed of her trouble. At once Jesus knew that power had gone out of him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

His disciples answered, “You see how the people are crowding you; why do you ask who touched you?”

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. The woman realized what had happened to her, so she came, trembling with fear, knelt at his feet, and told him the whole truth. Jesus said to her, “My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your trouble.

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-10** - Solomon (privileged King!) Declares That Life Is Useless

These are the words of the Philosopher, David's son, who was king in Jerusalem.

It is useless, useless, said the Philosopher. Life is useless, all useless. You spend your life working, labouring, and what do you have to show for it? Generations come and generations go, but the world stays just the same. The sun still rises, and it still goes down, going wearily back to where it must start all over again. The wind blows south, the wind blows north—round and round and back again. Every river flows into the sea, but the sea is not yet full. The water returns to where the rivers began, and starts all over again. Everything leads to

weariness—a weariness too great for words. Our eyes can never see enough to be satisfied; our ears can never hear enough. What has happened before will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing new in the whole world. “Look,” they say, “here is something new!” But no, it has all happened before, long before we were born. No one remembers what has happened in the past, and no one in days to come will remember what happens between now and then.

**Jonah 4:1-11** - Jonah is Hacked off with God (after the people of Nineveh Repent and God lets them off)

Jonah was very unhappy about this and became angry. So he prayed, “LORD, didn't I say before I left home that this is just what you would do? That's why I did my best to run away to Spain! I knew that you are a loving and merciful God, always patient, always kind, and always ready to change your mind and not punish. Now then, LORD, let me die. I am better off dead than alive.”



The LORD answered, “What right do you have to be angry?”

Jonah went out east of the city and sat down. He made a shelter for himself and sat in its shade, waiting to see what would happen to Nineveh. Then the LORD God made a plant grow up over Jonah to give him some shade, so that he would be more comfortable. Jonah was extremely pleased with the plant. But at dawn the next day, at God's command, a worm attacked the plant, and it died. After the sun had risen, God sent a hot east wind, and Jonah was about to faint from the heat of the sun beating down on his head. So he wished he were dead. “I am better off dead than alive,” he said.

But God said to him, “What right do you have to be angry about the plant?”

Jonah replied, “I have every right to be angry—angry enough to die!”

The LORD said to him, “This plant grew up in one night and disappeared the next; you didn't do anything for it and you didn't make it grow—yet you feel sorry for it! How much more, then, should I have pity on Nineveh, that great city. After all, it has more than 120,000 innocent children in it, as well as many



animals!”

**Lamentations** - (Jeremiah’s outcry after the destruction of Jerusalem’s Temple) is the closest Bible link we can find to the COVID pandemic: Wholesale devastation (of Jerusalem) at all levels of society; Starving mothers - cannibalism; Best of the population are enslaved and exiled; End of religious traditions.

**Chapter one - just as an example (it goes on a bit!): -**

How lonely lies Jerusalem, once so full of people!  
Once honoured by the world, she is now like a widow;  
The noblest of cities has fallen into slavery.

All night long she cries; tears run down her cheeks.  
Of all her former friends, not one is left to comfort her.  
Her allies have betrayed her and are all against her now.

Judah's people are helpless slaves, forced away from home.  
They live in other lands, with no place to call their own—  
Surrounded by enemies, with no way to escape.

No one comes to the Temple now to worship on the holy days.  
The young women who sang there suffer, and the priests can only groan.  
The city gates stand empty, and Zion is in agony.

Her enemies succeeded; they hold her in their power.  
The LORD has made her suffer for all her many sins;  
Her children have been captured and taken away.  
Her enemies succeeded; they hold her in their power.  
The LORD has made her suffer for all her many sins;  
Her children have been captured and taken away.

The splendour of Jerusalem is a thing of the past.  
Her leaders are like deer that are weak from hunger,  
Whose strength is almost gone as they flee from the hunters.

A lonely ruin now, Jerusalem recalls her ancient splendour.  
When she fell to the enemy, there was no one to help her;  
Her conquerors laughed at her downfall.

Her honour is gone; she is naked and held in contempt.  
She groans and hides her face in shame.  
Jerusalem made herself filthy with terrible sin.

Her uncleanness was easily seen, but she showed no concern for her fate.  
Her downfall was terrible; no one can comfort her.  
Her enemies have won, and she cries to the LORD for mercy.

The enemies robbed her of all her treasures.  
She saw them enter the Temple



itself,  
Where the LORD had forbidden  
Gentiles to go.

Her people groan as they look for  
something to eat;  
They exchange their treasures for  
food to  
keep themselves alive.  
“Look at me, LORD,” the city cries;  
“see me in my misery.”

“Look at me!” she cries to everyone  
who passes by.  
“No one has ever had pain like mine,  
Pain that the LORD brought on me in  
the time of his anger.

“He sent fire from above, a fire that  
burned inside me.  
He set a trap for me and brought me  
to the ground.  
Then he abandoned me and left me in  
constant pain.

“He took note of all my sins and tied  
them all together;  
He hung them around my neck, and I  
grew weak beneath the weight.  
The Lord gave me to my foes, and I  
was helpless against them.

“The Lord laughed at all my strongest  
soldiers;  
He sent an army to destroy my young  
men.  
He crushed my people like grapes in a  
wine press.

“That is why my eyes are overflowing  
with tears.  
No one can comfort me; no one can  
give me courage.  
The enemy has conquered me; my  
people have nothing left.

“I stretch out my hands, but no one  
will help me.  
The LORD has called enemies against  
me from every side;  
They treat me like some filthy thing.

“But the LORD is just, for I have  
disobeyed him.  
Listen to me, people everywhere;  
look at me in my pain.  
My young men and women have  
been taken away captive.

“I called to my allies, but they  
refused to help me.  
The priests and the leaders died in  
the city streets,  
Looking for food to keep themselves  
alive.  
“Look, O LORD, at my agony, at the  
anguish of my soul!  
My heart is broken in sorrow for my  
sins.  
There is murder in the streets; even  
indoors there is death.

“Listen to my groans; there is no one  
to comfort me.  
My enemies are glad that you  
brought disaster on me.  
Bring the day you promised; make  
my enemies suffer as I do.

“Condemn them for all their  
wickedness;  
Punish them as you punished me for  
my sins.  
I groan in misery, and I am sick at  
heart.”

### Lamentations overview:-

Chapter 1:1-16 The story of the  
destruction (+vs 16 personal  
response - weeping etc..)





Chapter 3:1-20 Personal response

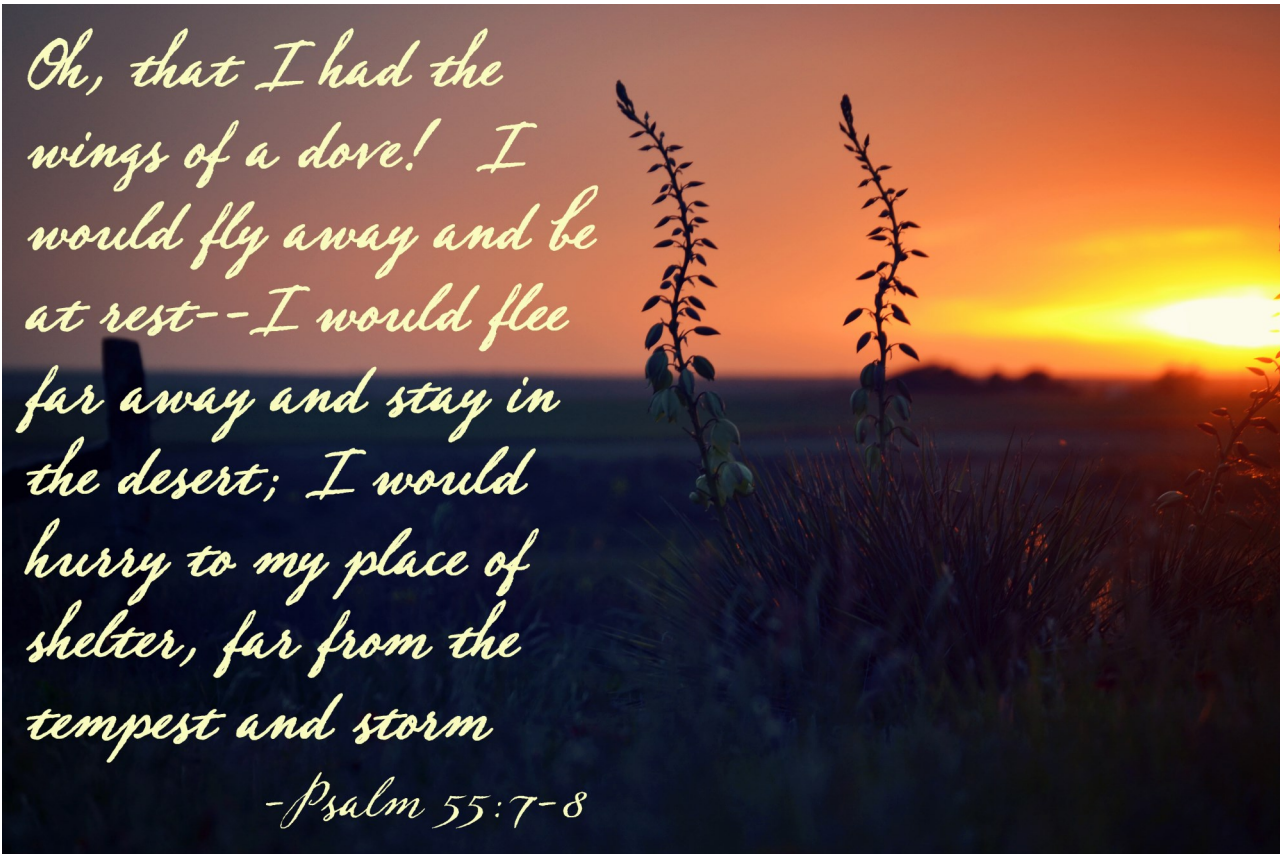
Chapter 3:21 Remembering what is lost

Chapter 3:22-33 God's character known from previous experience

Chapter 5:19-22 Final plea to God

**Job** is an interesting one! Job 3:1-26 and on through the long book! Job 40:1-5 God speaks and Job is contrite; Job 42: 1-6 repentance.

### The Psalms:



*Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest--I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm*  
-Psalm 55:7-8

Personal lament -

Psalm 13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMy9CoDkxDA>

#### Psalm 55:1-8

Hear my prayer, O God;  
don't turn away from my plea!  
Listen to me and answer me;  
I am worn out by my worries.  
I am terrified by the threats of my enemies,  
crushed by the oppression of the wicked.  
They bring trouble on me;

they are angry with me and hate me.  
I am terrified,  
and the terrors of death crush me.  
I am gripped by fear and trembling;  
I am overcome with horror.  
I wish I had wings like a dove.  
I would fly away and find rest.  
I would fly far away and make my home in the desert.  
I would hurry and find myself a shelter



**Psalm 88**

LORD God, my saviour, I cry out all day,  
and at night I come before you.  
Hear my prayer;  
listen to my cry for help!  
So many troubles have fallen on me  
that I am close to death.  
I am like all others who are about to die;  
all my strength is gone.  
I am abandoned among the dead;  
I am like the slain lying in their graves,  
those you have forgotten completely,  
who are beyond your help.  
You have thrown me into the depths of the  
tomb,  
into the darkest and deepest pit.  
Your anger lies heavy on me,  
and I am crushed beneath its waves.  
You have caused my friends to abandon me;  
you have made me repulsive to them.  
I am closed in and cannot escape;  
my eyes are weak from suffering.

LORD, every day I call to you  
and lift my hands to you in prayer.  
Do you perform miracles for the dead?  
Do they rise up and praise you?  
Is your constant love spoken of in the grave  
or your faithfulness in the place of destruction?  
Are your miracles seen in that place of darkness  
or your goodness in the land of the forgotten?  
LORD, I call to you for help;  
every morning I pray to you.  
Why do you reject me, LORD?  
Why do you turn away from me?  
Ever since I was young, I have suffered and  
been near death;  
I am worn out from the burden of your  
punishments.  
Your furious anger crushes me;  
your terrible attacks destroy me.  
All day long they surround me like a flood;  
they close in on me from every side.  
You have made even my closest friends  
abandon me,  
and darkness is my only companion.

**Community lament - Psalm 44 & 137****Psalm 44**

With our own ears we have heard it, O God -  
our ancestors have told us about it,  
about the great things you did in their  
time, in the days of long ago:  
how you yourself drove out the heathen  
and established your people in their land;  
how you punished the other nations  
and caused your own to prosper.  
Your people did not conquer the land with  
their swords;  
they did not win it by their own power;  
it was by your power and your strength,  
by the assurance of your presence,  
which showed that you loved them.  
You are my king and my God;  
you give victory to your people,  
and by your power we defeat our enemies.

I do not trust in my bow  
or in my sword to save me;  
but you have saved us from our enemies  
and defeated those who hate us.  
We will always praise you  
and give thanks to you forever.

But now you have rejected us and let us be  
defeated;  
you no longer march out with our armies.  
You made us run from our enemies,  
and they took for themselves what was ours.  
You allowed us to be slaughtered like sheep;  
you scattered us in foreign countries.  
You sold your own people for a small price  
as though they had little value

Our neighbours see what you did to us,  
and they mock us and laugh at us.  
You have made us a joke among the nations;  
they shake their heads at us in scorn.



I am always in disgrace;  
I am covered with shame  
from hearing the sneers and insults  
of my enemies and those who hate me.

All this has happened to us,  
even though we have not forgotten you  
or broken the covenant you made with us.  
We have not been disloyal to you;  
we have not disobeyed your commands.  
Yet you left us helpless among wild animals;  
you abandoned us in deepest darkness.

If we had stopped worshipping our God  
and prayed to a foreign god,

you would surely have discovered it,  
because you know our secret thoughts.  
But it is on your account that we are being  
killed all the time,  
that we are treated like sheep to be  
slaughtered.

Wake up, Lord! Why are you asleep?  
Rouse yourself Don't reject us forever!  
Why are you hiding from us?  
Don't forget our suffering and trouble!  
We fall crushed to the ground;  
we lie defeated in the dust.  
Come to our aid!  
Because of your constant love save us!

### Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon we sat down;  
there we wept when we remembered Zion.

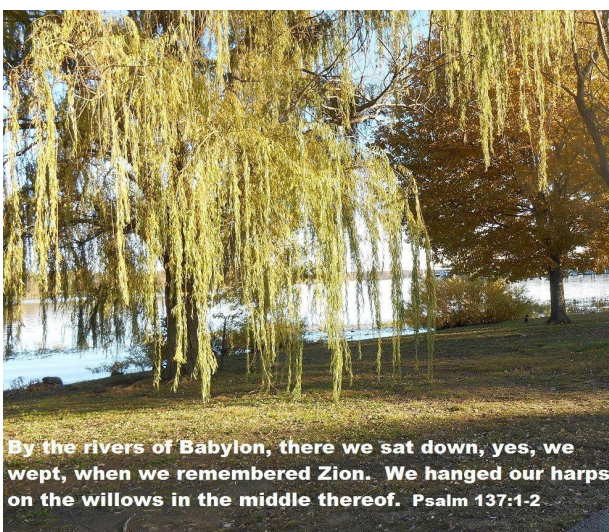
On the willows near by  
we hung up our harps.  
Those who captured us told us to sing;  
they told us to entertain them:  
“Sing us a song about Zion.”

How can we sing a song to the LORD  
in a foreign land?  
May I never be able to play the harp again  
if I forget you, Jerusalem!

May I never be able to sing again  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not think of you as my greatest joy!

Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did  
the day Jerusalem was captured.  
Remember how they kept saying,  
“Tear it down to the ground!”

Babylon, you will be destroyed.  
Happy are those who pay you back  
for what you have done to us -  
who take your babies  
and smash them against a rock.



By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps on the willows in the middle thereof. Psalm 137:1-2

### Psalm 102:4-8

I am beaten down like dry grass;  
I have lost my desire for food.

I groan aloud;  
I am nothing but skin and bones.  
I am like a wild bird in the desert,  
like an owl in abandoned ruins.

I lie awake;  
I am like a lonely bird on a housetop.

All day long my enemies insult me;  
those who mock me use my name in cursing.

### The Psalms on Page 9: -

Psalm 22 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGW7DKP1twE> ,

Psalm 44 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywmDsAgL5gQ> ,

Psalm 88 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgdViCeJfPk>

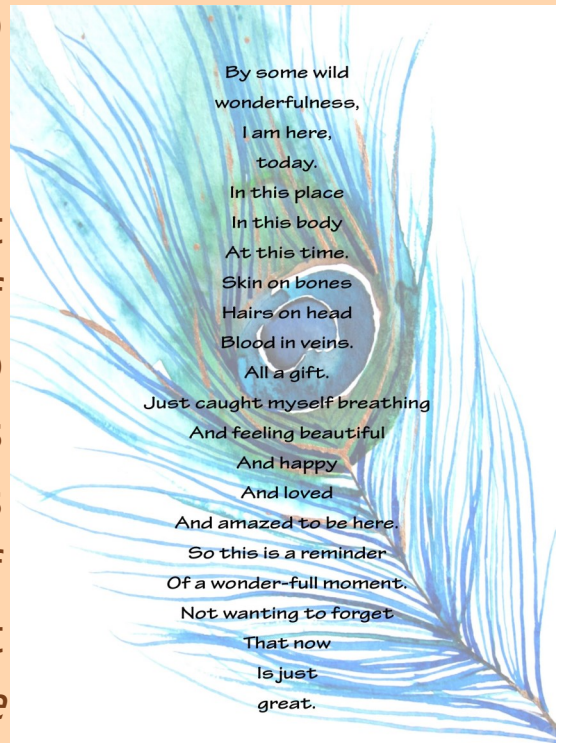


# Gratitude

By Dawn Lonsdale

October 2020

As children many of us were taught to 'say 'thank you' nicely', because it is seen as polite, well behaved, good manners. And we grow up thinking that is what gratitude is all about; a way of demonstrating that you know how to behave properly. Sadly, I fear that this misses the point, and to some extent fails to motivate us. It suggests the kind of 'good behaviour' that we are somewhat inclined not to bother with when *no one is looking*. How much more motivated we would be to be grateful, if we realized how good it is for *us*. Just as we learn to brush our teeth and wash our hands for the sake of our physical health, how great would it be if we could learn to live with grateful hearts for the sake of our spiritual health and mental wellbeing.



Poem and illustration by Fiona Parker



In one way or another I think that most of us, if we were connecting with current realities at all, experienced a degree of shock, stress and even trauma

in the



spring of 2020. The world as we had known it seemed to have been turned upside down and inside out in a very short space of time. We were having to adapt rapidly to changes we had not expected or prepared for. I dare say that people reacted in different ways but for many of us there was a real sense of fear, especially in the early weeks; if only fear of the unknown, and of something that we could neither see nor contain.



So, faced with all these changes, and frankly, afraid of what this might all mean for me and the people I love, I sat down with God and went; 'Okay, so what can we do about this?' The truth was that there was, in fact, an awful lot of it that I could do *nothing* about; so what were the things that I *could* do? Inspired by Jesus words in Mark 14:8 I have long believed in focussing on what is *possible*; rather than dwelling on what is not. In the spring of 2020 people were dying alone in hospitals and care homes, without the comfort of having their loved ones close; people were facing bereavement, with no opportunity for bedside goodbyes. So, having no power to change them, I accepted that those things were real possibilities and that, although there were things we could, and would, do to limit the risks; they could not altogether be eliminated.

"She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed."  
~Mark 14:8-9



<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/446419381798562308/>

@treasuredministries

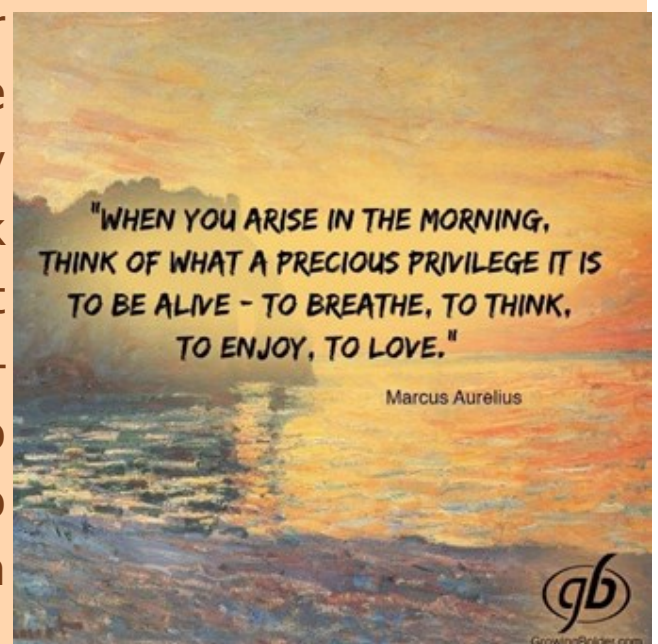


So then, I considered, what *can I do now* that will help us to be prepared for those situations should they occur? And I realised that the thing I *could* do was to make sure that we all had as many good and lovely things to look back on as possible, if tougher times came.



What that translated into was noticing and remembering the good stuff; in other words, *practicing gratitude*. First there were the obvious things; (which I mention because we may sometimes take them for granted) a family, most of whom were able to stay reasonably safe for most of the time, a safe and comfortable home and garden in which to spend lockdown, a church and community that were looking out for each other; but there was smaller stuff too and soon it all added up to something pretty big. When you find you are onto a good thing you want to share it, so I started a trickle feed on my personal social media which I called 'stockpiling small delights'; often it was just one or two flowers in my garden, or some birdsong (in the spring and early summer there was plenty to work with) but once you start looking at things that way, it's habit forming – in a good way. The idea was to gently encourage other people to

recognise things in



their lives that they could be grateful for.

In the last few weeks before the lockdown my community choir had started to learn a new song called 'Omnia sol' by an American composer who goes by the impressive name of Z(ee) Randall Stroope. I had first heard the song at my nephew's wedding, in the Autumn of 2019, and had taken it to the choir to learn because it's ever so beautiful. (If you'd like to hear how it goes you can listen here

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MZdTIy7qQE&fbclid=IwAR24qg3Ez1X7codABw1nY0mpCtgT6jybS4XYZwqQ6FRcamn28G1F7XvKUo0)

[v=0MZdTIy7qQE&fbclid=IwAR24qg3Ez1X7codABw1nY0mpCtgT6jybS4XYZwqQ6FRcamn28G1F7XvKUo0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MZdTIy7qQE&fbclid=IwAR24qg3Ez1X7codABw1nY0mpCtgT6jybS4XYZwqQ6FRcamn28G1F7XvKUo0)

On the surface it is a poignant song of farewell, but the full sense of it is something much deeper. Essentially it is saying that ***the love we have known will sustain us through all the changes and challenges of life, even when we face deep loss and despair.***

That song seemed so appropriate

for the times and it became a sort of a COVID anthem for me, constantly running through my head and lifting my spirits, and it connected with the new ways in which I was practicing gratitude.

Gratitude became an antidote to fear and loss, almost a weapon I could use against them. I now know that, whatever happens, I will not, *cannot possibly*, die



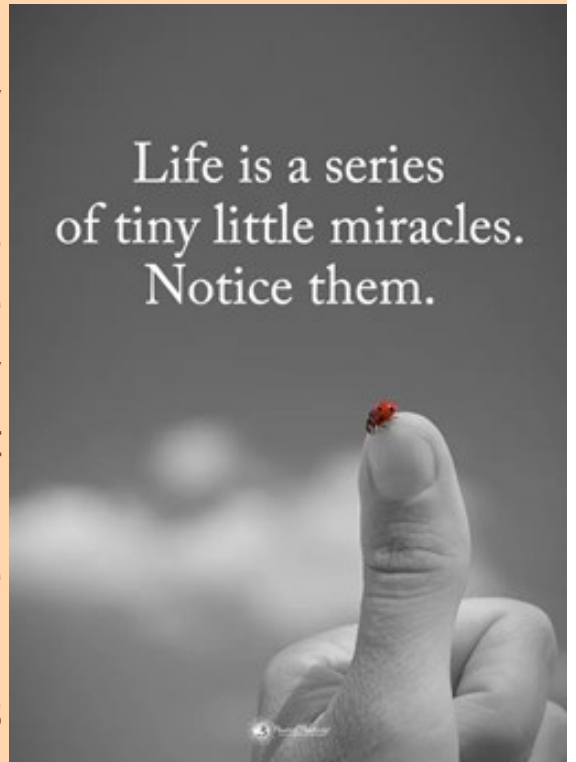
alone, neither can the people I love. Even if I, or they, are physically alone, we will be surrounded by one another's love and God's too, and we will know it!

Take a break and listen to the song 'Surrounded' - sung by Julie Costello;  
composed by Phil Baggaley, Sam Hill & Ian Blythe  
from the Album 'Shipwrecks and Islands'.

<https://littleroommusic.bandcamp.com/album/shipwrecks-islands>

I started to think about all of this as a kind of 'banking of joy' – storing up the goodness we experience every day as a reserve for hard times to come. And the great thing about this bank account is that you can withdraw from it again and again without ever diminishing the capital. But first you have to develop the habit of saving; you have to put things *into* the bank so that they will be there when you need to draw on them. You need to slow down enough to pay attention, and to notice the delights and blessings that God generously strews across our path; to cherish the moments, the smiles, the tiny expressions of trust, all those things that express care for each other and joy in one another's company; to notice the natural world too, the colours in a stormy sky, the patterns in a butterfly's wing, the sound of birdsong (we could hear so much more of that during lockdown); to take joy in art and music, poetry and dance.

Life is a series  
of tiny little miracles.  
Notice them.





The neuroscience backs this up -

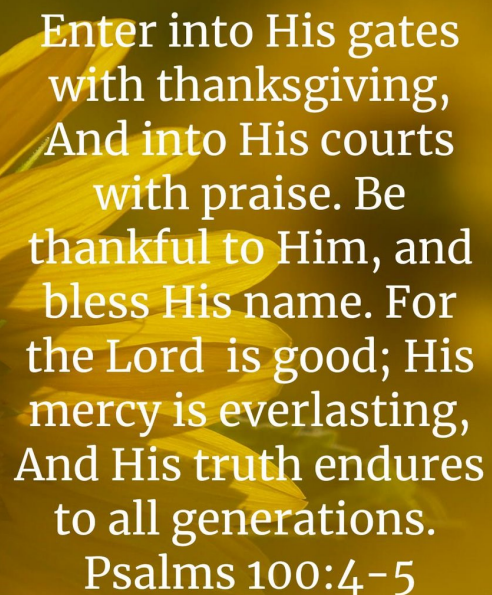
Research shows that when we express and receive gratitude, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the two crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions, and they make us feel 'good'. They enhance our mood; immediately, making us feel happy from the inside.

Practicing gratitude is measurably addictive; it has been demonstrated to be effective in pain reduction, and better sleep, and it reduces stress, anxiety, and depression.

In times when we have little control over what is going on around us, what we can control is how we react, our own attitudes.

But we know that life is not a bed of roses all of the time, so where does this leave us when we have much less to be grateful for? I wonder how easy it is to be grateful if our home life is insecure, or our income is precarious and minimal? How then do we respond to being asked what makes us glad. I hope and pray that, even on our hardest days, we can all find something good to talk about. My instinct is that there is always something to be grateful for, once you learn how to look for it.

Now that's fairly easy to say, if you have a life of relative privilege, but the Bible seems to agree. Over and over again we are exhorted to give thanks to God **in all things.**



Enter into His gates  
with thanksgiving,  
And into His courts  
with praise. Be  
thankful to Him, and  
bless His name. For  
the Lord is good; His  
mercy is everlasting,  
And His truth endures  
to all generations.  
Psalms 100:4-5

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/4158329743129089531/>



And it never says, give thanks to God - when you are lucky, or give thanks to God - when you are rich, or when you are safe, or when good things happen to you; scripture just keeps on saying, *always* give thanks to God, *all* the time, whatever! And it kind of turns the whole concept on its head because what happens is that when you learn to be thankful, as your default setting, then you find that there *are always* things to be thankful for.

There are endless Bible references to gratitude (see pages 40-43) and there are good reasons why. Many of the things that the Bible encourages us to do, not only make the world a better place, but they are beneficial for each of us as well. The world's teaching is to, 'be good', as if all that matters is how other people will benefit and how other people will see us. If only we were taught that practices like gratitude and forgiveness and compassion have benefits for *us* at least as much as they do for everyone else.

To speak of gratitude implies that there is in fact someone to be grateful to, and as Christians, we all know who that is for us. But if some of our friends are not yet ready to think in those kinds of

terms, then inviting them to 'name things they are glad about' will at least allow them to explore the benefits of gratitude for themselves for now, and the question of *who* they are grateful to will emerge, when they are ready.

Life is a series of tiny  
little miracles.  
*Notice them.*



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# Activities to help us reflect on Gratitude

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of gratitude.*

## Image - tree full of blossom:-

We sometimes find it is helpful to use an image or symbol to help us think about an idea. The image of a tree full of blossom is one we have chosen to use to help us think about gratitude. Use the images on pages 28-34 to facilitate a discussion by encouraging general comments about different pictures. What emotions do we feel when we look at them? The emotion cards (on page 17) might help with this. Encourage people to share their own COVID stories of gratitude.



## Silver Linings:-

Provide paper cut out cloud shapes with a wide silver edge (Page 39). Participants are invited to write on the 'silver lining' the positive things we have experienced in lockdown. Each group shares their 'silver linings' with each other and then hangs them together as a mobile (this can be a tricky activity with the balance etc...)

## What does it mean?

Discuss together what it means to be grateful, or thankful. Is there a difference between being grateful on the inside and grateful on the outside? How does being grateful make us feel? How can we become 'thankful people'?

**Watch** this Video on gratitude <https://movingart.com/gratitude-revealed/>

## Step Outside:-

Go for a group walk in a garden, park or countryside. Intentionally 'consider' the creation around about (See Luke 12:22-34 the 'do not worry' passage where we are encouraged to consider the lilies, ravens etc). To help people to really look at things you could create a sort of scavenger hunt list, inviting people to find the tiniest beautiful thing they can find, the largest, the bluest, the greenest, the brightest, the darkest etc. 'Collect' observations of beauty/nature/surprises/fun that you see or experience. If you can't get outside, do this with pictures, stories



and memories. Share these together. Do some drawing, print out photographs. Create a thankfulness poster to display in a community space where others will be able to see it.

### Listen to Reading Phoenix Choir singing 'What a Wonderful World'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?Fhs&fbclid=IwAR1GyxR0HtOzjyfUTJK1Urcqnekjz6BVMP9Kv3eBTG1KkphsiWfILt5-5nk>

### Tree Full of Blossom:

Each group has the outline of a bare tree (winter) (see pages 51 or 71). Provide blossom shaped pieces of coloured paper to write the good things that came out of lockdown on. These are stuck on the bare tree to clothe it with spring blossom. This activity can be taken further with discussion about long-term positive outcomes from these positive things - that is the fruit that will be formed in our lives as a result - these can be written on fruit shapes - maybe a tree in full leaf could be made for these to hang on. The result can be displayed in a community space for others to see.

### Creating Daily Habits:

Discuss together what daily rhythms of gratitude can we adopt in our lives?

### Suggestions:-

- Three moments a day to pause for a minute and notice.
- At the end of each day, think about what were the 3 best things about the day to be thankful for. Say them out loud; or write a draw them in a thankfulness journal.
- Reminders put up around the house such as photographs or quotes that turn our attention to thankfulness.
- Rhymes or prayers to say in the bathroom or at meals.
- Declarations of Truth to counter fear, loneliness, anxiety etc...

### Thanking others:-

Are there people you are grateful to who you have never thanked or told? Make them a thankyou card and give/send it to them to let them know that you appreciate them. Or is there some other way to show your gratitude?



### Display & Share:-

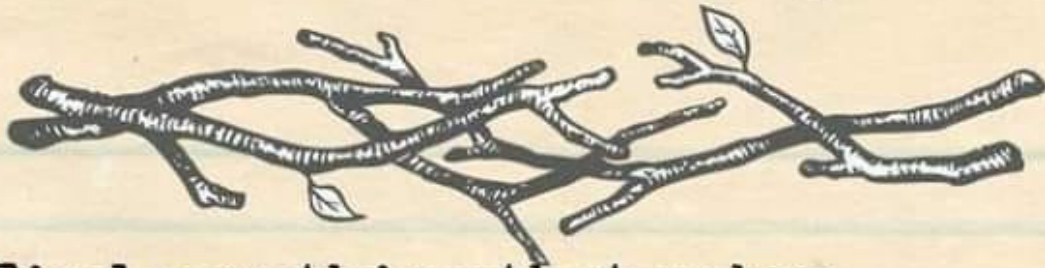
Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, clouds, nature display, cards, painted stones, banner, posters, scrapbooks, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.





You are holding a cup of coffee when someone comes along and bumps into you, making you spill your coffee everywhere. Why did you spill the coffee? You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup. Had there been tea in the cup, you would have spilled tea. The point is whatever is inside the cup, is what will spill out. Therefore, when life comes along and shakes you (which will happen), whatever is inside you will come out. It's easy to fake it, until you get rattled. So, we have to ask ourselves, "What's in my cup?" When life gets tough, what spills out? Joy, gratefulness, peace and humility? Or does anger, bitterness, harsh words and reactions come out? You choose! Today let's work towards filling our cups with gratitude, forgiveness, joy, words of affirmation, kindness, gentleness and love for others.

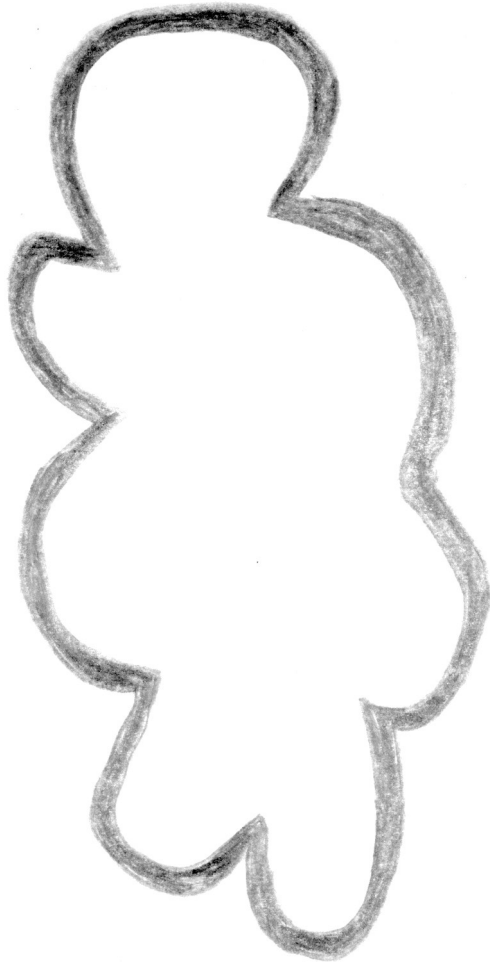
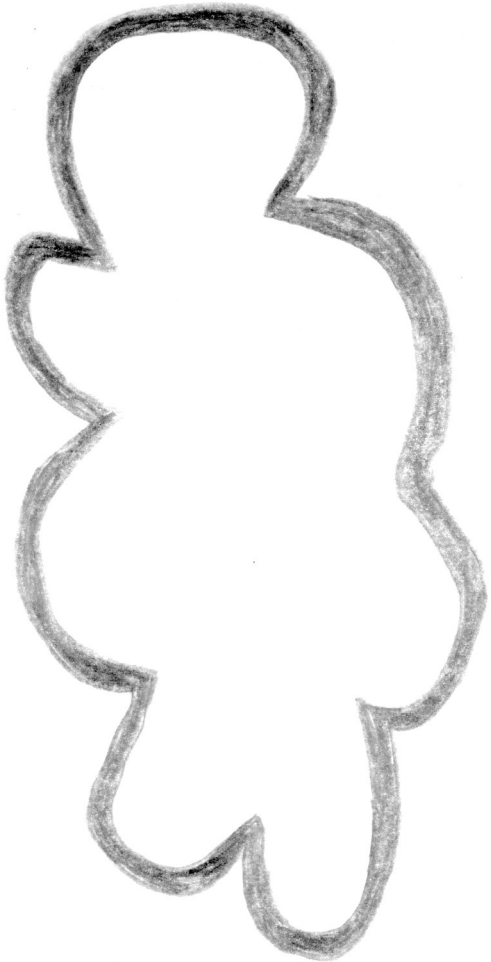
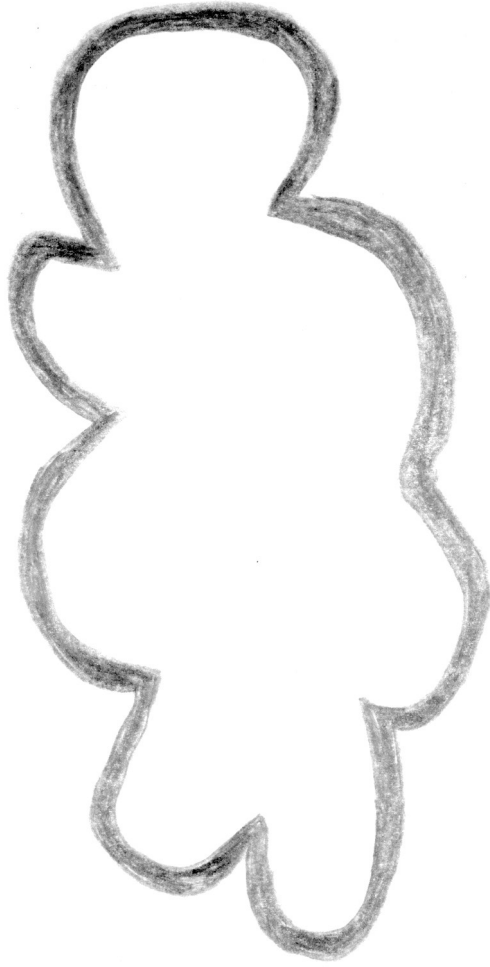
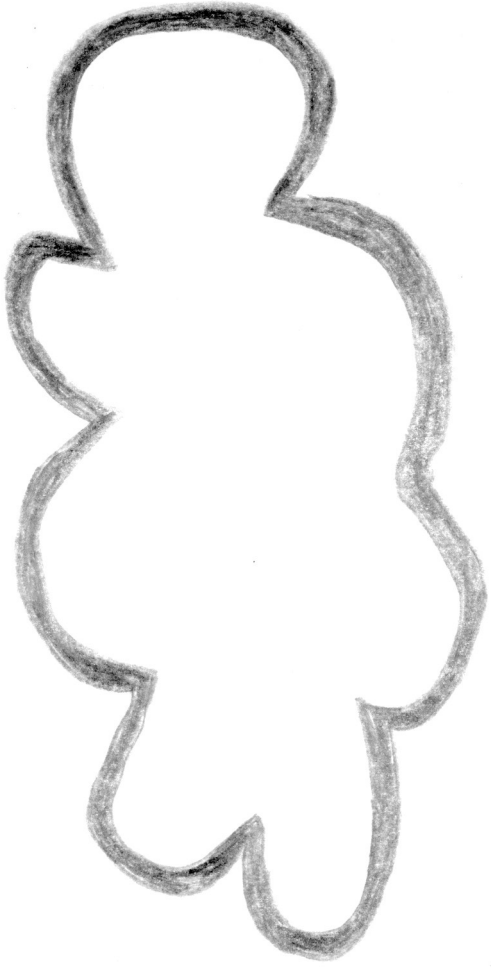
# Gratitude Scavenger Hunt



1. Find something that makes you happy.
2. Something to give someone else to make them smile.
3. Find one thing that you love to smell.
4. Find one thing you enjoy looking at.
5. Find something that's your favorite color.
6. Find something you are thankful for in nature.
7. Find something that you can use to make a gift for someone.
8. Find something that is useful for you.



## Cloud with silver lining templates



# Bible Stories to help us reflect on Gratitude

Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together how these stories connect with our COVID experiences of gratitude

## Listen:-

**Rend Collective** - Counting Every Blessing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7X9d4ubvWH4>

**Jonathan and Melissa Helsler**—Find me thankful, find me grateful by

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVpBKjHmJ8U>

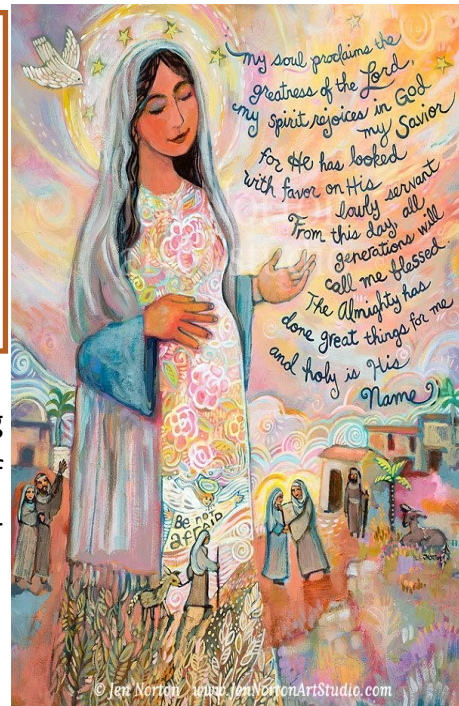
**Luke 1:46-55 Mary's Song.** Considering that the calling God has laid on this young women will begin on a path of shame, misunderstanding and being a social outcast - her outpouring of thanksgiving is extraordinary!

Mary said,

“My heart praises the Lord;  
my soul is glad because of God my Saviour,  
for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!  
From now on all people will call me happy,  
because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.  
His name is holy;  
from one generation to another  
he shows mercy to those who honour him.  
He has stretched out his mighty arm  
and scattered the proud with all their plans.  
He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away with empty hands.  
He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,  
and has come to the help of his servant Israel.  
He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham  
and to all his descendants forever!”

**Luke 17:12-19 The one Samaritan leper** who returned to thank Jesus for his healing. This could lead into discussions about taking ‘things’ for granted. It may link up with the group walk ‘collecting’ observations.

He was going into a village when he was met by ten men suffering from a dreaded skin disease. They stood at a distance and shouted, “Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!”





Jesus saw them and said to them, “Go and let the priests examine you.”

On the way they were made clean. When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself to the ground at Jesus' feet and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. Jesus spoke up, “There were ten who were healed; where are the other nine? Why is this foreigner the only one who came back to give thanks to God?” And Jesus said to him, “Get up and go; your faith has made you well.”



The Psalms are not easy to use in this context because many reflect the world view that evil or bad things are God's judgement - the book of Job deals with this argument - particularly the conclusion when God chastises Job's friends for this viewpoint. Here are some that could be used:

**Psalm 75:1-3**

- Intentional thanksgiving 'We give thanks to you, O God...' A decision.
- Intentional remembering 'We proclaim how great you are and tell of the wonderful things you have done...'
- God's response, 'I judge with fairness... I will keep the earth's foundations firm...' Our source of hope and security.

**Psalm 97:1-7a** A full on Song of Praise and declaration that God is in charge etc...

**Psalm 136:1-26** An interesting psalm of thanksgiving. Each statement of a characteristic or deed is followed

by the refrain, 'his love is eternal'. The group could write their own poem - after a statement of each of their 'silver lining' experiences a mutually agreed refrain could be inserted which will create a poem/song type of rhythm.



thanksgiving'

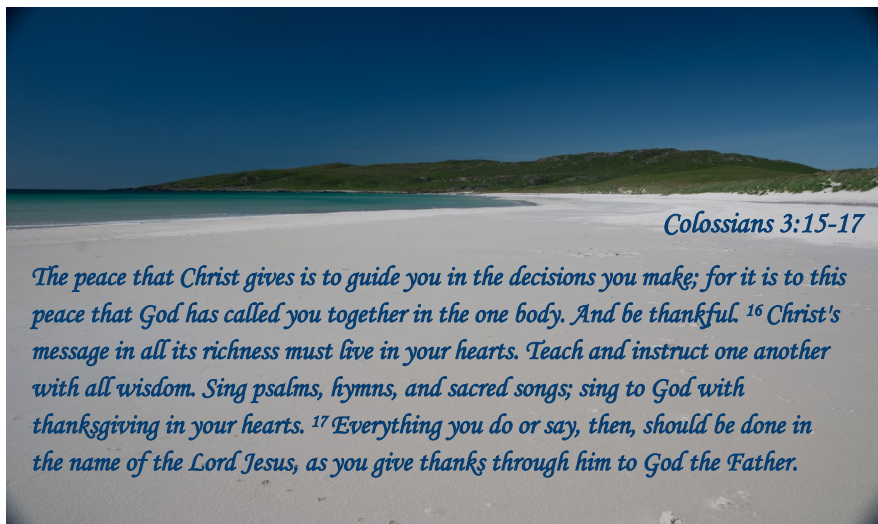
Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him. Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving.

**Colossians 2:6-7** 'Be filled with



**Colossians 3:12-17** 'Be thankful' - An instruction in a list of attitudes and mind-sets to live well for Jesus.

**Hebrews 12:25-29** '... Be thankful then because we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken...' Not an easy passage, but one



*Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**



with an eternal perspective.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** 'Be thankful in all circumstances'.

This phrase is set in a passage of instructions to the church.

**Philippians 4:4-7**. This passage can be dissected into a recipe of seven parts to deal with despair:

1. Rejoice x2;
2. Be yourself (gentle);
3. Recognise the Lord is with you;

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

4. Do not be anxious about anything;
5. Present your requests and petitions about everything to God with thanksgiving;
6. Receive the peace of God as the guardian of your heart;
7. Focus on truth, beauty, purity, admirable and praiseworthy things.

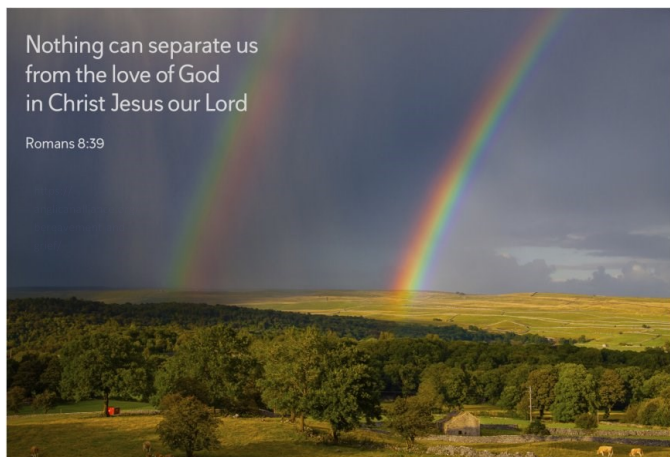
**Romans 8:18, 38-39** A pandemic cannot separate us from the love of God!

**Revelation 21:3-4** An eternal perspective on suffering ...

I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: "Now God's home is with people! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared."

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

Romans 8:39



Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! <sup>2</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, <sup>3</sup>who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup>who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy

» Psalm 103:1-4 «

**Psalm 103:1-13**

Praise the LORD, my soul!  
 All my being, praise his holy name!  
 Praise the LORD, my soul,  
 and do not forget how kind he is.  
 He forgives all my sins  
 and heals all my diseases.  
 He keeps me from the grave  
 and blesses me with love and mercy.  
 He fills my life with good things,  
 so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.

The LORD judges in favour of the oppressed  
 and gives them their rights.

He revealed his plans to Moses  
 and let the people of Israel see his mighty deeds.

The LORD is merciful and loving,  
 slow to become angry and full of constant love.

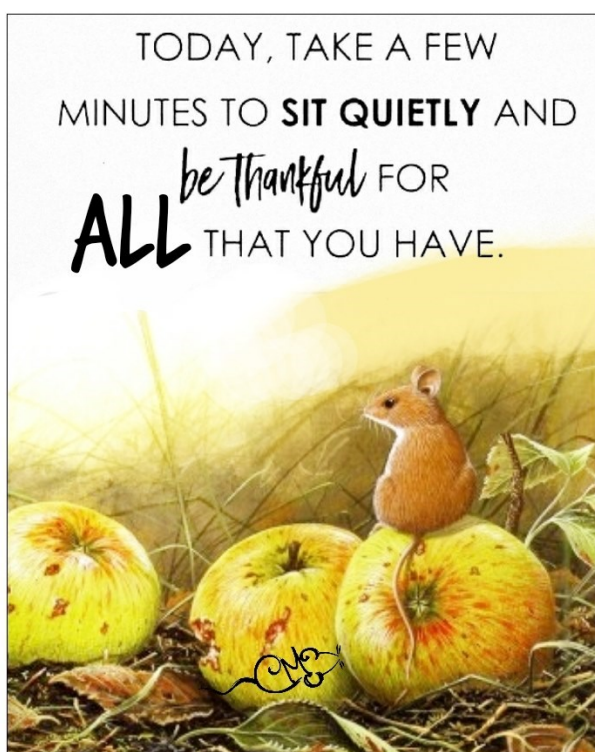
He does not keep on rebuking;  
 he is not angry forever.

He does not punish us as we deserve  
 or repay us according to our sins and wrongs.

As high as the sky is above the earth,  
 so great is his love for those who honour him.

As far as the east is from the west,  
 so far does he remove our sins from us.

As a father is kind to his children,  
 so the LORD is kind to those who honour him.



# Patience

By Dawn Lonsdale

March 2021

An old fashioned word for it is 'forbearance' and it is something we've all needed 'in spades' during the pandemic.

The Google definition is; *'the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious'*. So it's more than waiting, it's about *how* we wait. It might be helpful to think of it as 'Hard waiting', or 'Gracious waiting'. Patience does not mean that we do not suffer; it just means that we manage those feelings without getting too stressed about it, *and* without taking that stress out on others.

Patience is a quiet thing – it does not grab our attention. It is the impatient who make a lot of noise and fuss, who shout and storm and demand. Patience often goes unnoticed.

Come On Inner Peace



I Don't Have All Day

## Disclaimer!

The first thing I have to say is that I am no better at this than anyone else; so I'm offering you some thoughts here but in no way suggesting that I've got this cracked!

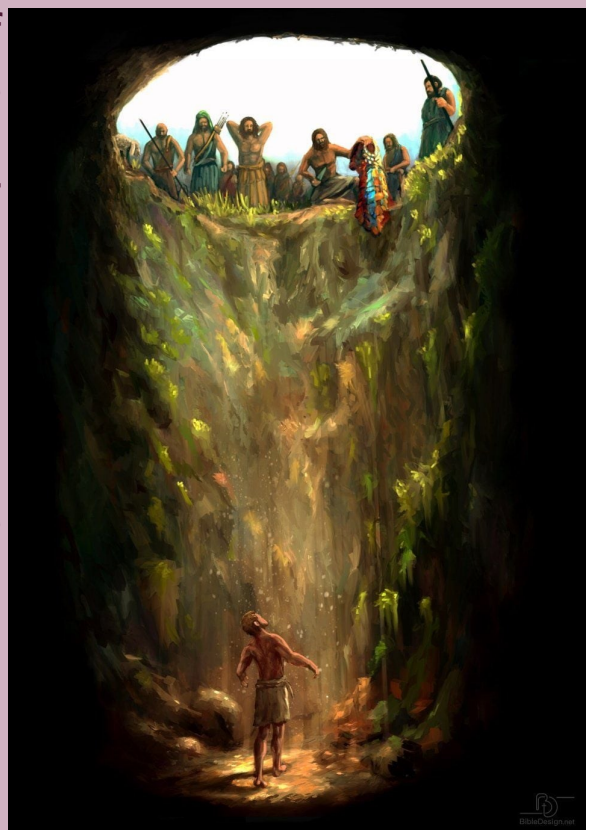


## Patience with circumstances beyond our control.

We've all had to accept that our scope for going where we want to, doing the things we'd like to do and when we'd like to do them has been severely limited during the pandemic. We've all had to put up with either being more alone than we might choose to be or spending more time with particular people than we might generally choose to. We've all had to tolerate the limitations and frustrations of communicating and shopping via technology. We've all had to make do with some sort of online family celebrations and had to work out how to comfort people who we cannot be near.

In our modern world we have become accustomed to having a good deal of control over our material and personal lives. To an extent we have taken certain freedoms for granted and losing them suddenly has come as a bit of a shock.

I am reminded of the story of Joseph; spoiled, privileged, favourite son of Jacob (Genesis 37-50), who rubs his brothers up the wrong way so much that, when they find him alone and far from home they take the opportunity to be rid of him, first by confining him in a deep pit and then by selling him into slavery. In the space of a day Joseph has gone from favourite son to being the property of strangers. All his freedom and agency have been taken away. He has no choice but to wait and see if things will get better. For a while they do, a bit. He performs well as a slave and rises up the servant ranks. But then he falls foul of Potiphar's wayward wife and winds up in prison. Again, he has lost everything; everything except his faith and hope in God.

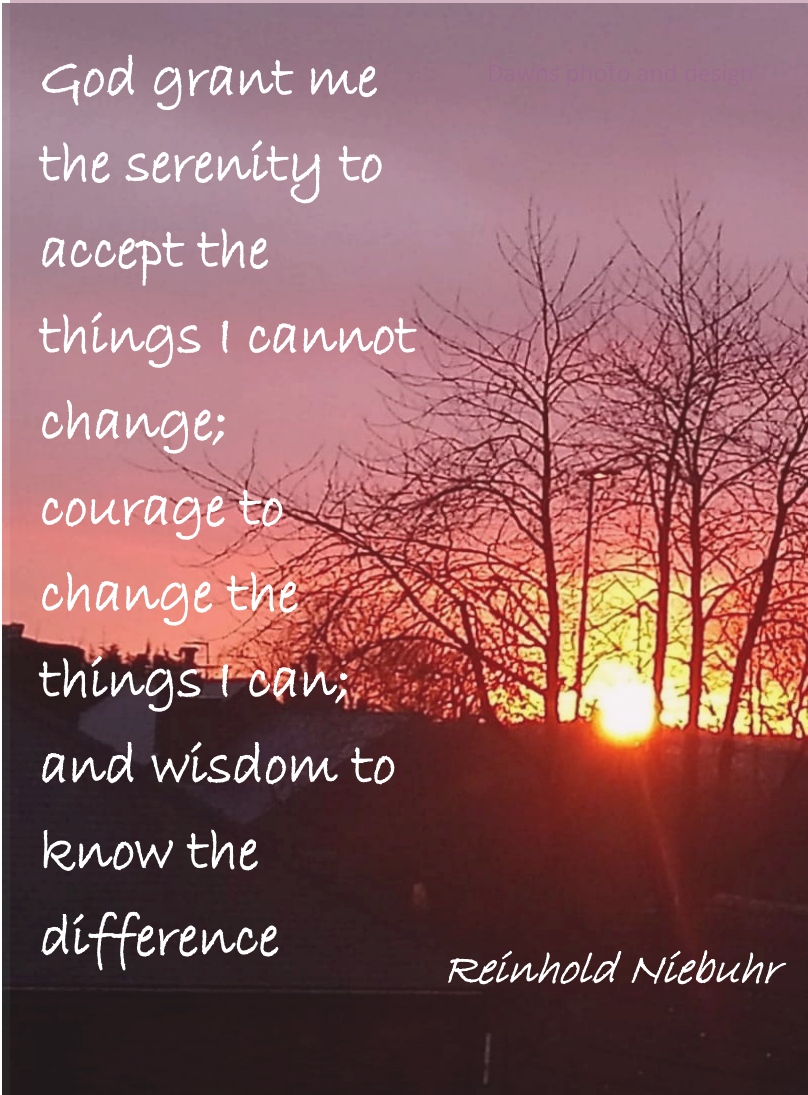


Most of us have not actually been thrown into pits or prison, but we have had a lot of our power to choose taken away from us and we have been, to some extent 'confined' by the circumstances of the

pandemic. And we have had to wait, and wait, and wait; not knowing how long it would be before things got better and with very limited scope for doing anything about it.

Patience is partly about not wasting your own emotional energy on things that are outside your control. But it is not the same as passivity; passivity is just not caring enough to take action. It is possible to care very much about something and still be patient; working away quietly and faithfully for the right result; dealing with disappointments and setbacks without being deterred. Patience takes strength and courage and character. In its own quiet way, it can achieve great things: strengthening people to persist through challenges and setbacks and allowing them to focus on what *is* possible, (however tiny and insignificant that may seem) rather than being drained by frustration at what is not.

You may well have come across Reinhold Niebuhr's well known 'Serenity Prayer'



God grant me  
the serenity to  
accept the  
things I cannot  
change;  
courage to  
change the  
things I can;  
and wisdom to  
know the  
difference

Reinhold Niebuhr

### **Are there limits to patience?**

The key to this is – *the Wisdom to know the difference!* Patience is not always appropriate; sometimes it is right to stand up and shout for justice.

How do we know which response is the right one for any given time and place? How can we recognise the difference between the things we can change, and the things we can't? See the section on discernment (see pages 102–116)



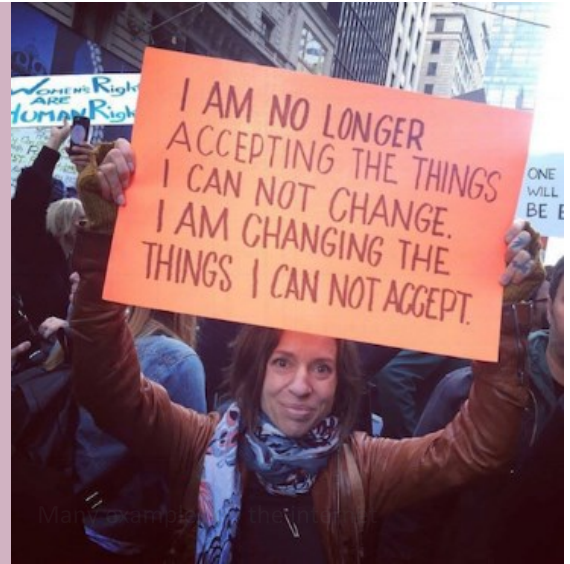
Watch 'The man who planted trees'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYIsIZXCQa4>

## Benefits of Patience.

Patience can bring a number of benefits:

- Patience lowers our stress levels and leads to better mental and physical health
- Patient people are good to be around, they make better friends and neighbours
- Patience enables us to stick with things long enough so that we achieve our goals



Patience is power.  
Patience is not an absence  
of action; rather it is  
"timing" it waits on the  
right time to act, for the  
right principles and in  
the right way.

Fulton J. Sheen

- Patience brings us peace and happiness; we are able to be more content.

Like all traditional virtues, patience is rarely something that comes naturally to us. If we want to get better at it, we have to practice.

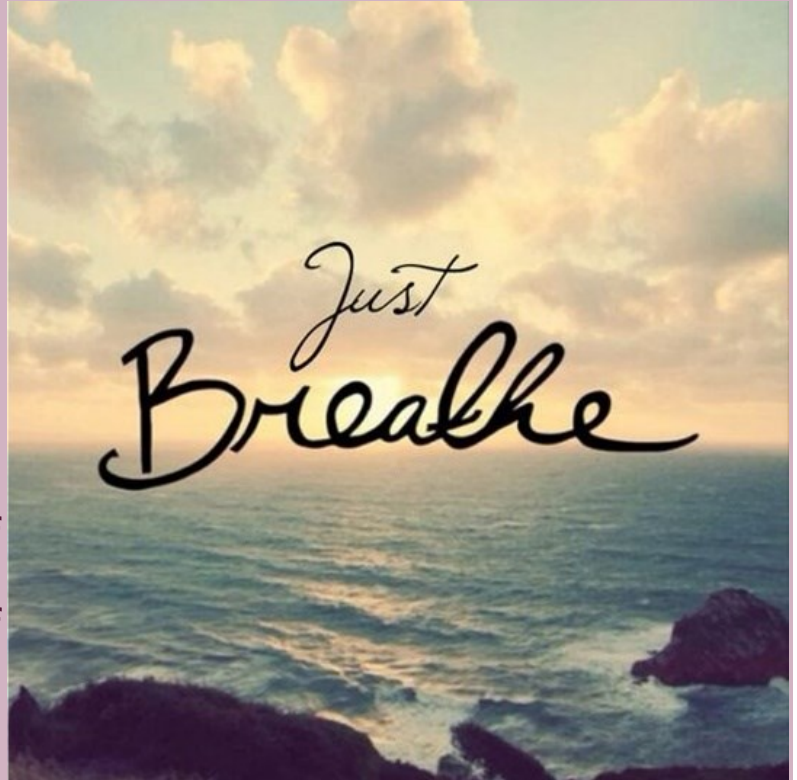
**You can practice patience by:**

- Make yourself wait – just because I want it now doesn't mean that I must have it now. You can actually practice waiting. Start by waiting a little, set yourself some goal to achieve before you take a break, or have a snack, or make a purchase!
- Learn to enjoy waiting; to make the most of it – find something to appreciate while you wait. Look around you, what can you find to enjoy in your surroundings? What can you think about that will give you a lift? Is there something that you can do or learn or



achieve while you wait for the time to be right, or for someone else to be ready or for something to happen?

- Prioritise and manage your time – if your time isn't completely full, if you are not overcommitted, it will be easier to relax and enjoy the moments when you have to wait, or to use that time creatively.
- Make conscious choices about what is important to you, so that you can be focussed in how you use your energy.
- Focus on what is possible, rather than being frustrated by what is not.
- Accept that there are limits – like it or not your time on earth is finite. There will be things you can achieve and things you cannot. When it's done, it's done, and you will have done what you can. Make the most of the moments and the years will take care of themselves.
- Breathe!



## Patience with others.

It can be very hard to treat those who irritate us gently.

Bishop Peter Hall often used to challenge us to think more about people's 'sinned-against-ness', rather than about their sins. We can never fully know how someone else experiences the world. We may think we know but we have not had their life, or their experience and we can never know all of the hidden things that they carry. With the best will in the world we do not know how we would react in their situation. So we are not qualified to judge them.

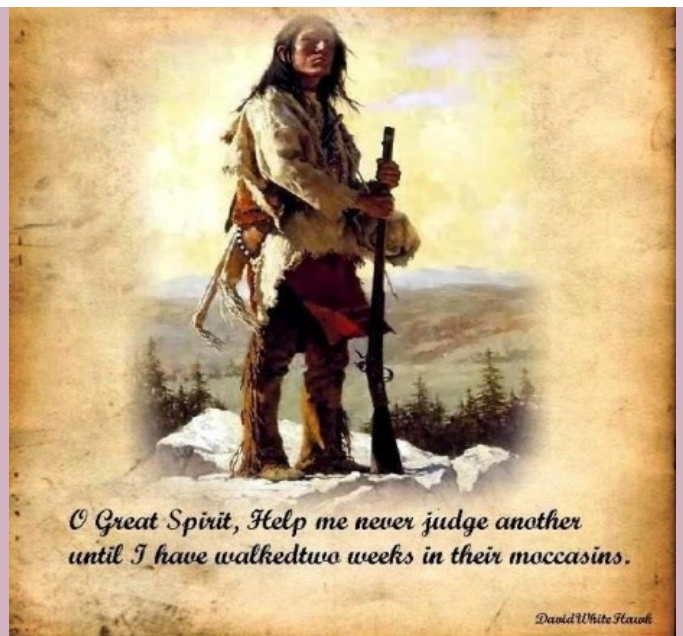


**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
COUNT  
TO 10**

KeepCalmAndPosters.com







# Lastly, be patient with yourself!



References - [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four\\_reasons\\_to\\_cultivate\\_patience](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_reasons_to_cultivate_patience)  
<https://www.inc.com/rhett-power/4-tips-to-help-you-be-a-more-patient-person-science-says-you-will-be-happier.html>

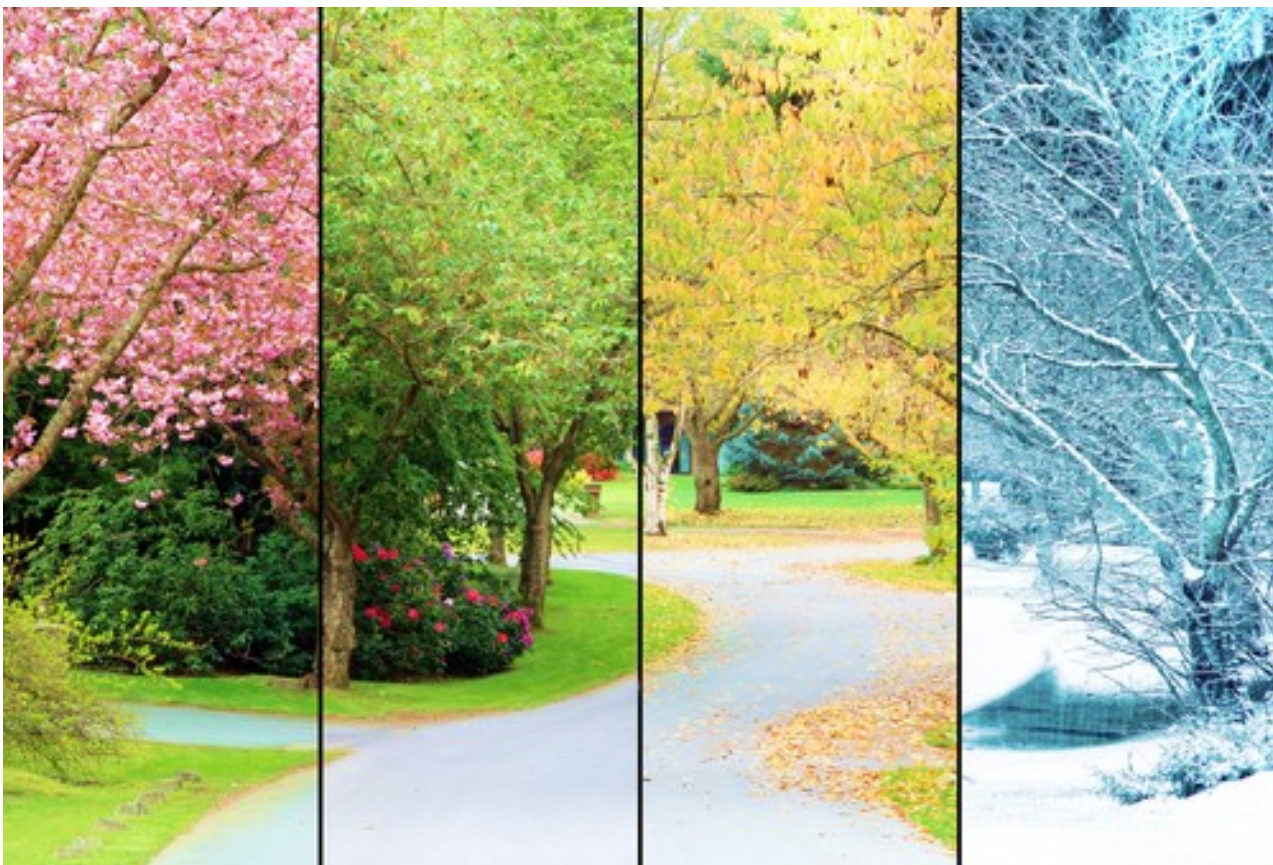


# Activities to help us think about Patience

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of waiting patiently.*

## Image - Seasons:-

We sometimes find it is helpful to use an image or symbol to help us think about an idea. **Seasons** are the natural cycle of waiting; so are birth and life and death. **Pictures:** Photographs which remind us of waiting (on pages 53-54) there's the start of a collection but you can find your own if you prefer. Facilitate a discussion by encouraging general comments about different photos. What have you had to wait for during Covid-19? What has been hardest thing to wait for? What are you still waiting for? What has tried your patience? What emotions do we feel when we look at the photos? The emotion cards (on page 17) might help with this. Encourage people to share their own COVID stories of waiting patiently.



**Plant seeds or bulbs.** Keep a diary of their progress (visible above ground!) Lead into a conversation about when 'waiting' becomes 'patience'.

Or you could use these seed paper flowers

[https://smile.amazon.co.uk/Roamwild-Seeded-Paper-Shapes-Plantable/dp/B07NWXRGVG/ref=sr\\_1\\_6?crid=3PVFGSLL7T6BO&dchild=1&keywords=flower+seed+paper&qid=1612278456&prefix=seed+paper+flowers%2Caps%2C181&sr=8-6](https://smile.amazon.co.uk/Roamwild-Seeded-Paper-Shapes-Plantable/dp/B07NWXRGVG/ref=sr_1_6?crid=3PVFGSLL7T6BO&dchild=1&keywords=flower+seed+paper&qid=1612278456&prefix=seed+paper+flowers%2Caps%2C181&sr=8-6)





## Trees and fruits: -

Enlarge the image of a growing tree (**below**) – show (draw, or cut and stick, or write) the things we have waited for (or are still waiting for) as if they were fruits in the branches, the results of patiently waiting. Waiting can be stressful and anxious or it can be positive and calming. What difference does it make to us if we can wait patiently? Does being impatient change the outcome, or the way we feel?

## Listen: -

Mumford & Sons – I Will Wait, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7KuNLHOA1w>  
from album Babel 2012 (words on page 55)

For the Longest Time—COVID version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpAKcQufacc>

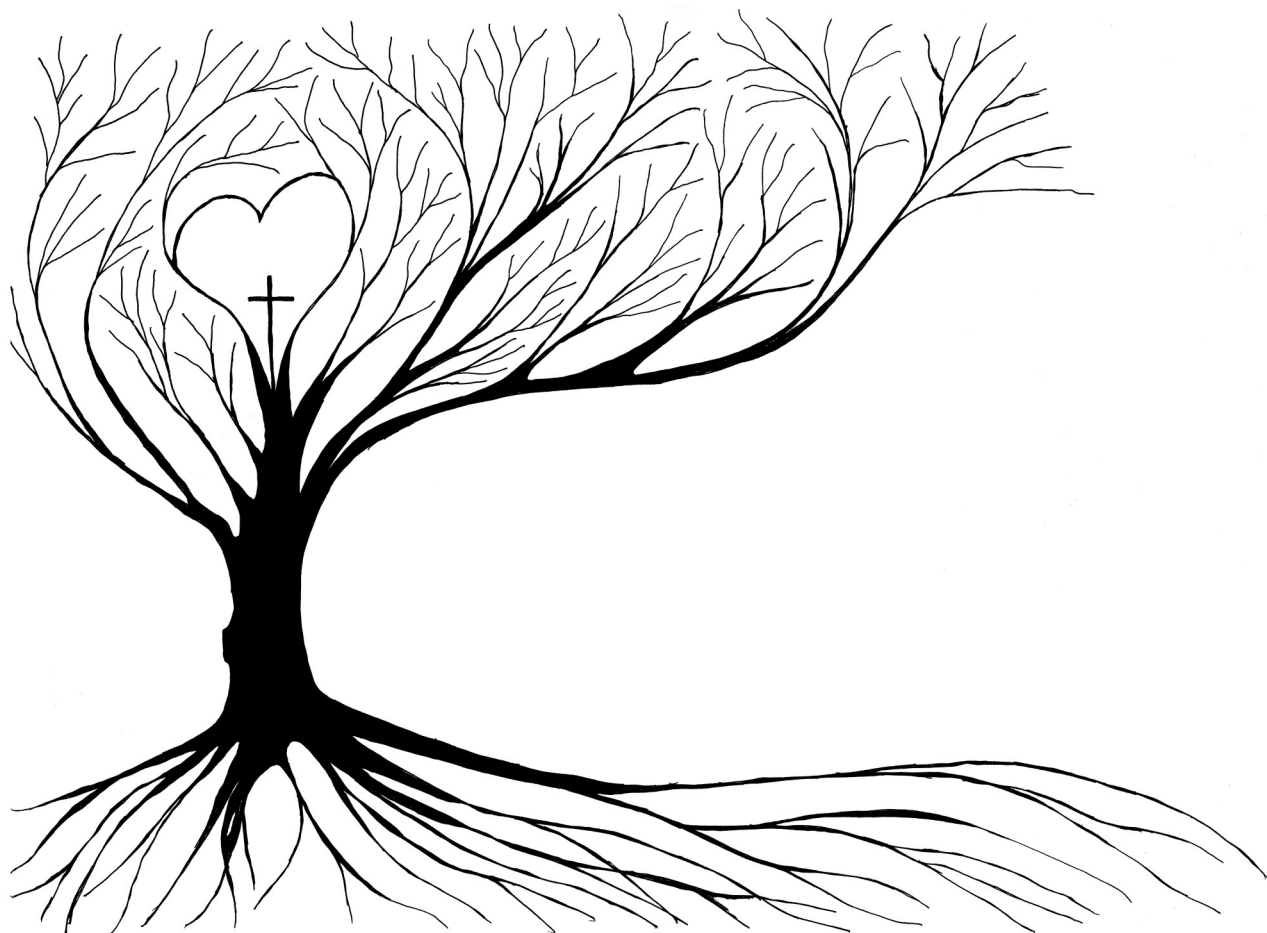
Take That, Patience: [Take That - Patience \(Official Video\) - YouTube](#)

or live: [Take That - Patience \(Live\) - YouTube](#)

## Picture the seasons: -

Invite the group to bring their photographs from 2020 that show the different natural seasons – Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter and even into 2021.

What story do they tell of the seasons of the pandemic? E.g. lockdown emptiness,



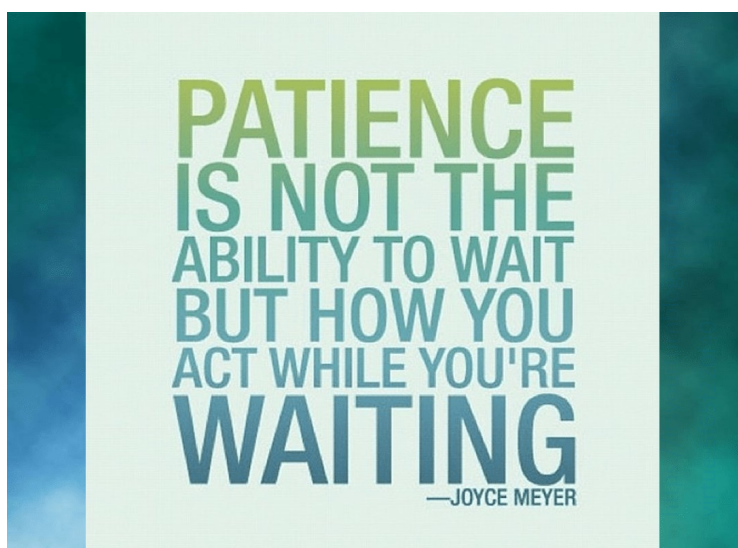
meeting in gardens and parks, when we began to wear masks, when cafes became take-aways etc...

What role has 'patience' had for you as the pandemic has rolled on. What are you waiting for? Are you waiting patiently or are you waiting anxiously or eagerly? How might 'patience' change your experience of waiting?

Listen to 'Look to the day' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMUCjJOiMsM>

### Posters: -

Create posters of ourselves before and during the pandemic; Before: busy, busy, busy – seeing friends, travelling, planning to do stuff, lots of activity and 'stuff' impacting us, bombarding our minds / During: greater silence, stillness, time to think, waiting for our situation to change but with no power to change it etc...



Summarise the good and bad in both.

Add another poster for the future, post-pandemic: What will you try to keep from the enforced waiting and stillness, what will you enjoy returning to?

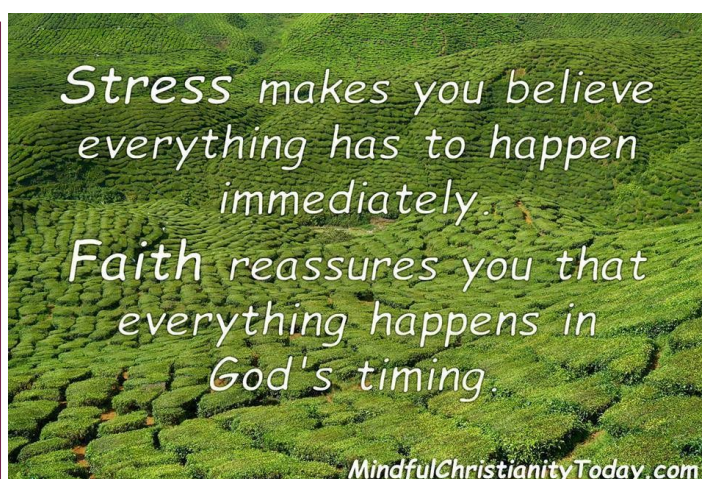
### Link to thankfulness: -

Things waited for that have either happened or are no longer relevant can be posted into a

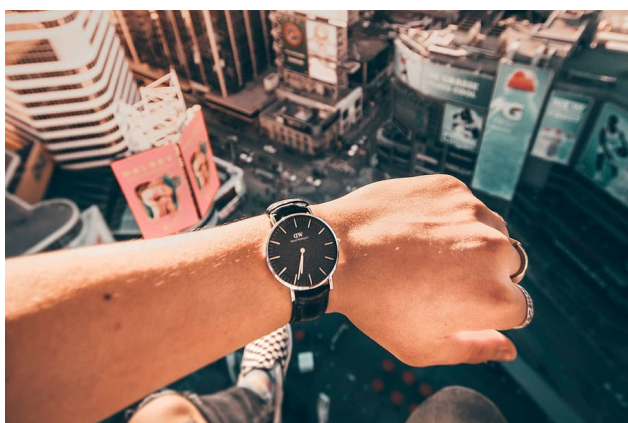
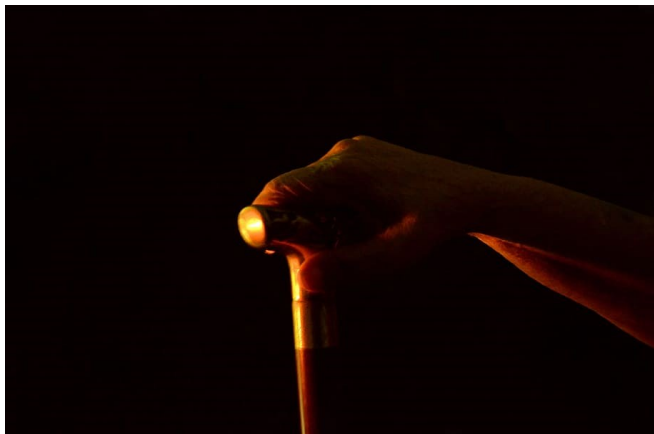
'Thank you' box or put on a 'thank you' poster. Alongside it there can be another box or poster with things still being waited for – around the edge decorate with the things that help you wait patiently.

### Display & Share:-

Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, posters, photo display, plants, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.



# Patience—Resources



# Patience—Resources



## I Will Wait

[Mumford & Sons](#)

Well I came home  
Like a stone  
And I fell heavy into your arms  
These days of dust  
Which we've known  
Will blow away with this new sun

But I'll kneel down wait for now  
And I'll kneel down  
Know my ground

And I will wait, I will wait for you  
And I will wait, I will wait for you

So break my step  
And relent  
Well you forgave and I won't forget  
Know what we've seen  
And him with less  
Now in some way  
Shake the excess

Cause I will wait, I will wait for you  
And I will wait, I will wait for you  
And I will wait, I will wait for you



And I will wait, I will wait for you

Now I'll be bold  
As well as strong  
And use my head alongside my heart  
So tame my flesh  
And fix my eyes  
A tethered mind, freed from the lies

And I'll kneel down  
Wait for now  
I'll kneel down  
Know my ground

Raise my hands  
Paint my spirit gold  
And bow my head  
Keep my heart slow

Cause I will wait, I will wait for you  
And I will wait, I will wait for you  
And I will wait, I will wait for you  
And I will wait, I will wait for you

Songwriters: Dwane Edward James Milton, Dwane Ted

For non-commercial use only.

Data from: [Musixmatch](#)



<https://brienshamp.com/2013/08/12/patience/>

# Bible Stories to help us think about Patience

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together how these stories connect with our own COVID experiences of waiting patiently.*



**Patience:**

**As a Christian characteristic: -**

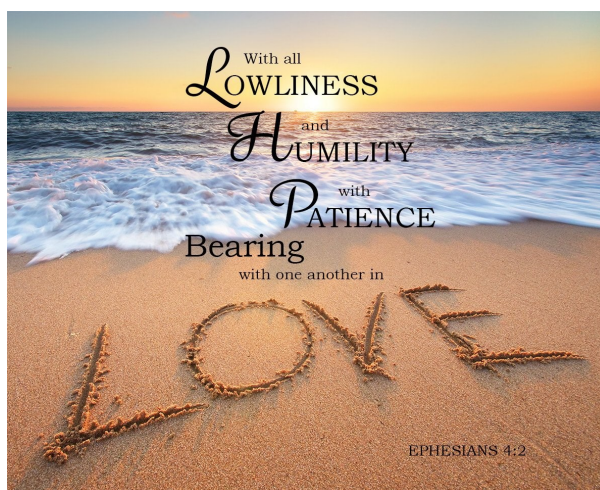
**Galatians 5:22** Patience is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 4:2** Paul's instructions to be humble, gentle and patient.

**1 Thessalonians 5:14** Be patient with everyone.

**Col 3:12-17** Paul instructs Christians to clothe themselves with patience alongside compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness.

You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and



patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the

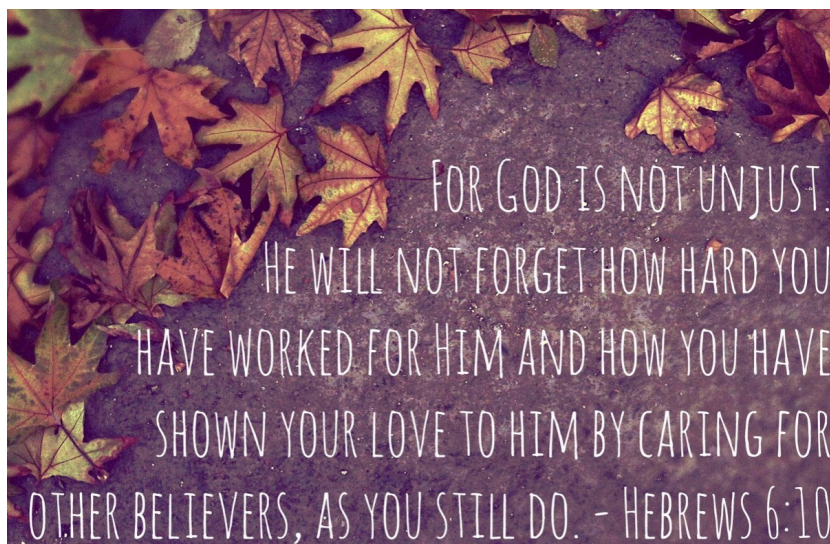
one body. And be thankful. Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or





say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.

**Hebrews 6:11-15** Abraham was patient and received the son he was promised. Our great desire is that each of you keep up your eagerness to the end, so



that the things you hope for will come true. We do not want you to become lazy, but to be like those who believe and are patient, and so receive what God has promised. When God made his promise to Abraham, he made a vow to do what he had promised. Since there was no one greater than himself, he used his own name when he made his vow. He said, “I promise you that I will bless

you and give you many descendants.” Abraham was patient, and so he received what God had promised.



**1 Corinthians 13:4:** The well known passage describing love.

Before looking at the Bible passage the group could make their own list of ‘Love is . . . ’ statements, possibly with pictures. Then we can compare them with the list in I Corinthians. What do the two lists have in common? What are the differences? What do we think?

***In adversity:***

**Colossians 1:9-14** Paul prays for the Colossians to endure everything with patience.

For this reason we have always prayed for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives. Then you will be able to live as the Lord wants and will always do what pleases him. Your lives will produce all kinds of good deeds, and you will grow in your knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. And with joy give thanks to



the Father, who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for his people in the kingdom of light. He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son, by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.



**Romans 12:12:** being patient in troubles, a quality of living for Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 1: 5-8** Sharing in Jesus' sufferings.

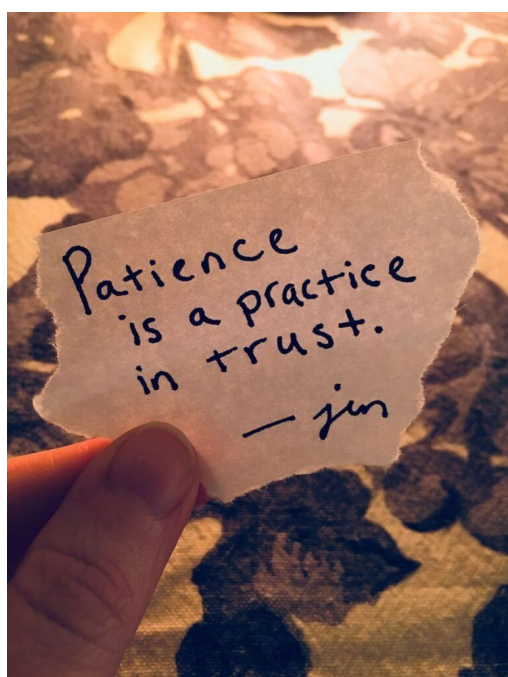
Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in God's great help. If we suffer, it is for your help and salvation; if we are helped, then you too are helped and given the strength to endure with patience the same sufferings that we also

endure. So our hope in you is never shaken; we know that just as you share in our sufferings, you also share in the help we receive. We want to remind you, friends, of the trouble we had in the province of Asia. The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy that we gave up all hope of staying alive

**Revelation 1:9** John's testimony.

I am John, your brother, and as a follower of Jesus I am your partner in patiently enduring the suffering that comes to those who belong to his Kingdom. I was put on the island of Patmos because I had proclaimed God's word and the truth

that Jesus revealed.



**God's patience:**

**1Timothy 1:16** Christ's patience dealing with sinners.

... but God was merciful to me in order that Christ Jesus might show his full patience in dealing with me, the worst of sinners, as an example for all those who would later believe in him and receive eternal life.



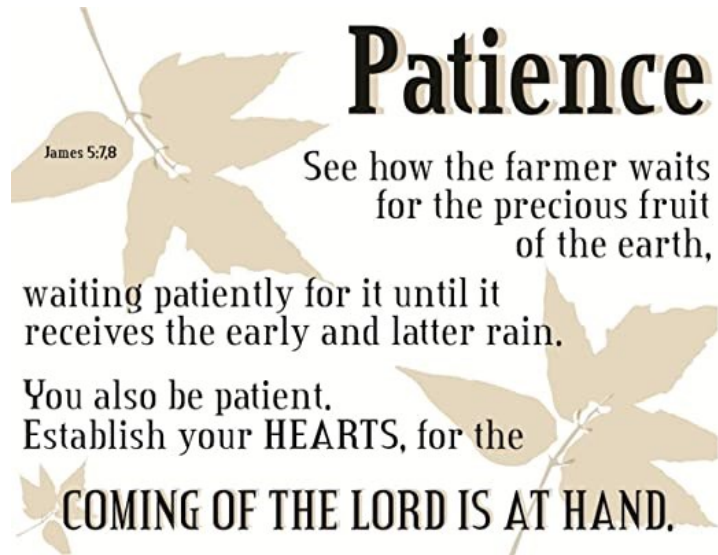
*Anticipating the Lord's return:*

**James 5:7-8.**

**2 Peter 3:8-18** Jesus is described as patient with mankind because he wants everyone to turn to him and be saved. The narrative continues by describing in what manner we (Jesus' disciples) should wait for his return.

But do not forget one thing, my dear friends! There is no difference in the Lord's sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same. The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.

But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish. Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon—the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat. But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home.



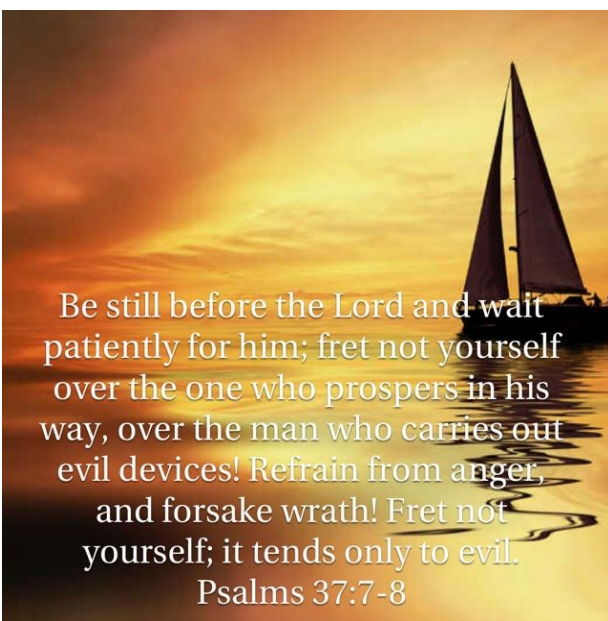
And so, my friends, as you wait for that Day, do your best to be pure and faultless in God's sight and to be at peace with him. Look on our Lord's patience as the opportunity he is giving you to be saved, just as our dear friend Paul wrote to you, using the wisdom that God gave him. <sup>1</sup>This is what he says in all his letters when he writes on the subject. There are some difficult things in his letters which ignorant and unstable people explain



falsely, as they do with other passages of the Scriptures. So they bring on their own destruction. But you, my friends, already know this. Be on your guard, then, so that you will not be led away by the errors of lawless people and fall from your safe position. <sup>1</sup>But continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory, now and forever! Amen.

**Romans 8:18-25** The whole creation groaning in anticipation of the Lord's return and his people as well... we wait with patience.

I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his children. For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was



Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.  
Psalms 37:7-8

the hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free. For it was by hope that we were saved; but if we

see what we hope for, then it is not really hope. For who of us hopes for something we see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

### ***Waiting and waiting patiently:***

**Psalm 37:7** Be patient and wait for the Lord to act.

**Psalm 40:** I waited patiently for the Lord's help...

**Acts 1:1-5** The disciples instructed to 'wait' between Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – probably 1-2 weeks. What did the disciples do? How did they wait?

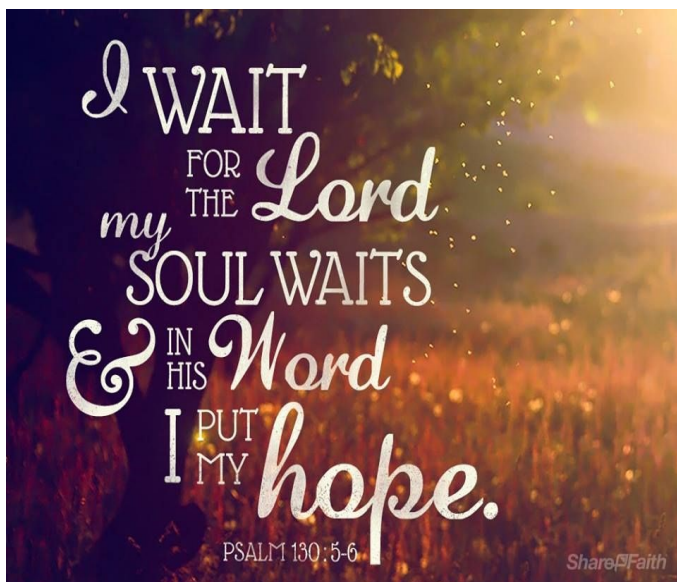
I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught from the time he began his work until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before he was taken up, he



gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles. For forty days after his death he appeared to them many times in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God. And when they came together, he gave them this order: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

This kind of waiting has an expectation based on the trustworthiness of God’s character.

There is ‘waiting *for* God’ and there is ‘waiting *on* God’. The latter is giving him our full focused attention – develop an experience of ‘waiting on God’ using the Lord’s prayer, expanding each phrase to personalise it...



**Psalm 130:5-6** – the idea of waiting eagerly

#### Listen:-

Be still for the presence of the Lord by David J. Evans <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrVJldvllq4>

Be Still my Soul Before the Lord by Bryn Haworth <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkxkha2HFek>

How long, O Lord <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbcE2HRh9rQ>

Martin Smith, Sarah Bird, Waiting Here for You: [Waiting Here For You - Martin Smith - YouTube](#)

Brian and Jenn Johnson, After All These Years: [After All These Years \(Official Lyric Video\) - Brian & Jenn Johnson | After All These Years - YouTube](#)

Bryn Haworth, Be Still My Soul: [Be Still My Soul - YouTube](#)

Patience (Herbert the Snail with Lyrics) – cartoon: [Patience \(Herbert the Snail With Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

Jesus Christ is waiting [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSzEviUc\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSzEviUc_o)

Townend – promise of the ages <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VoQonbeXVo>



# Kindness

By Carolyn  
Gower,  
February  
2021

It is often said that 'Love makes the world go round. But is it really love that can claim that accolade?

Isn't it acts of kindness that makes love tangible?

My husband and I had Covid last year and a number of folk expressed their love to us by dropping off food, vitamin tablets, magazines and flowers. All those gifts were greatly appreciated but more than the gifts, we really valued their kindness - we felt loved!

Kindness is a characteristic – a human quality. Interestingly it is not a characteristic that everyone has to the same degree. Some people seem to be naturally kind-natured and others less so. Why is that?

Rory Kinnear (actor and playwright) gives us an insight. He knew kindness from a young age growing up with his sister Karina who had many additional needs and who required the support of others to get through every day. Karina died of Covid-19 in May 2020. Later that year Rory movingly wrote in her memory,

*"I have realised the privilege of growing up with these things as a norm, as an anchor because Karina required kindness to live. And such was her spirit, her sense of humour, her gentle strength, her singular passion to survive, that what she was given she returned with interest.*

*It was a transaction of effort and reward I was fortunate to witness often.*



*That anchor of kindness has been what many of us have held on to in this year of loss, restriction and renewal, even more so when we have felt its absence... for all she taught me and revealed – it is the anchor of kindness I hope to hold on to tightest for the rest of my life.*<sup>11</sup>

For Rory and Karina kindness was like the very air they breathed. Karina needed kindness to live and as a result, Rory has a deep sense of being grounded in kindness. It is as though kindness defines him as a human being - a mark of being truly human. Hold onto that thought.

During Covid-19 in the UK, there have been reports of a **pandemic of kindness**. In February 2021 the Independent reported a survey of 2000 people conducted by the



Travelodge. This study revealed that *'people had been more friendly to one another in the last year, made more of an effort to stay in touch with their relatives and donated more to food banks and other charitable organisations.*' The survey also found *'that people have been talking to strangers more frequently and surprised friends with gifts.'*

Shakila Ahmed, Travelodge spokesperson, commented: *"One key thing that we are experiencing across our hotels is that kindness is prevailing in these challenging and tumultuous times. Our research also shows that kindness is contagious and has been spreading far and wide across the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic."*<sup>12</sup>

If kindness is a mark of being truly human - are people really becoming more truly human?

Can kindness be 'caught' from others? Is it contagious? Wouldn't it be wonderful if it was – if it was a positive pandemic where the 'r' number is well above 1!!

So, how do we grow kindness?

Kindness did not feature much in my upbringing.



I didn't learn how to be kind as child. As a family we were struggling to handle my mum's mental health issues, so self-preservation was the family's default state.

I can remember when I first began to notice peoples' kindnesses. In particular, I remember a friend's kindness after I had my first child. She left a meal on our doorstep when I returned home from hospital. I remember thinking that that was how to be kind to someone!

Once I had noticed one act of kindness, I began to see people being kind everywhere. I set about learning how to do the same.

I am so grateful to my friend for showing me what kindness looked like and helping me begin a journey learning how to be kinder – how to be more truly human.

For followers of Jesus, Jesus is the only 'truly human person' that has walked the earth because he alone measures up to all the fullness that human beings can be.



In the Gospels we see Jesus being kind in so many ways; for example when he touches the leper (Luke 3:12-13). This man would probably not have experienced the touch of another human since his leprosy was first identified. He was an outcast and his illness feared by society. And yet, Jesus reaches out and touches him.

Even on the cross, despite his





agony, Jesus forgives and welcomes the thief dying alongside him (Luke 23:43).

In his kindness Jesus promises to be with us always through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul, who participated in at least one murder and probably more, experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit's transformative presence in his own life and became 'kind'. He lists kindness as one of the nine facets of the fruit we see in our lives because the Holy Spirit lives in us (Galatians 5:23). Paul recognised that being kind was a mark of becoming more like Jesus, a mark of becoming more truly human.



We may not have been brought up in 'kind environments' through which we learnt to be kind to others. We may not have experienced much kindness or seen examples of how to be kind. But, by dwelling on the example of Jesus and drawing on the power of the Holy Spirit's presence in us, we can be transformed more and more into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We can make our own unique contribution to the pandemic of kindness.

We can build back better.

We can become more truly human - by choosing to be kind.

Throw  
kindness  
around like  
confetti

#### References

1. [Seven months after my sister's death from Covid, her kindness remains my anchor | Coronavirus | The Guardian](#)
2. [People have become kinder during the coronavirus pandemic, study finds | The Independent \(14/02/21\)](#)



# Activities to help us think about Kindness

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of Kindness.*

Reflecting on received kindnesses and suggested responses: -

## Recollections of kindnesses throughout the pandemic.

Think about the folk who went out of the way to help us.

Create a 'star display': Cut out star shapes (page 69). We can stick photos of the people who were kind to us in the middle of the stars. The stars can be hung from a wooden circle to create a mobile or stuck onto a thank you display.



## Create a 'Thank you for your kindness'

**display.** We can decorate blank postcards (page 70) with decorative borders and then write our thank you messages on the cards. Arrange on a display board in a community area.

Design and make '**Thank you**' cards and postcards. Make them available to the community to send to people who have been kind to them.

Create '**Thank you**' posters to express thanks to the community and display them in your windows like the NHS ones.



Call to kindness:-

## Friendship/Contact Tree.

Think about all our relationships: the people we live with, our immediate family, our wider family, our neighbours, our work colleagues, people we meet at the shops, or at appointments.

Each of us can create a 'Friendship/Contact Tree of the people we know and have contact with (template on page 71). We can decorate the trunk and branches – bark or texture



## DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE

NOT BECAUSE OF WHO THEY ARE  
OR WHAT THEY CAN DO IN RETURN,  
BUT BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE.

ENLIGHTENED CONSCIOUSNESS



rubbing maybe. Each person we know and have contact with is represented by a thumb/fingerprint or a cut-out leaf shape (page 72) or leaf that we draw. The names of the contacts are written on or below the leaf shapes.

### How kind am I?

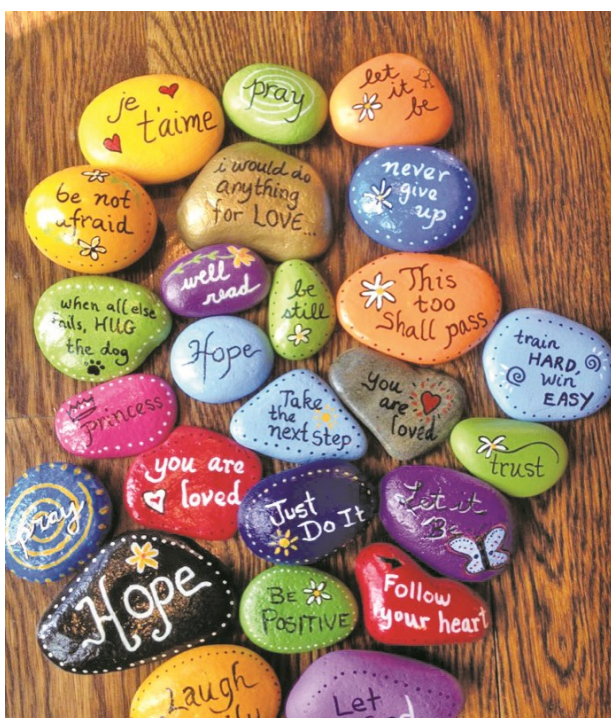
Begin thinking about how we show kindness to all the different people we have put on our Friendship Trees. What small things could we do to show kindness more often or more intentionally? (These can be very small e.g. saying thank you, smiling, complementing them on things they do well, making them a cup of tea/coffee;

buying them a small gift like a bar of chocolate...

### Taking kindness out into the community:

As a group make a list of the kinds of things we could do as a group or individually to bless people in our neighbourhood – neighbours, local shops, hairdressers, nurseries, schools, police etc...

Decide which community kindness activities we will do before we meet again (maybe in 2s and 3s - restrictions permitting!) Encourage each other to have a go! (Think about the different 'love languages': words of affirmation; touch; gifts; acts of service; quality time - page 73)



### Possible examples:

Write letters or send cards. Other ideas could be: bake for someone; donate to a charity; volunteer; smile; visit someone; shop for someone; take a gift to someone; make cards or paper flowers to give, knit, crochet, sew, items for others, baby-sit or childcare; do some mending or gardening; clean cars; make a phone call; etc... (lockdown restrictions permitting).

**Random Acts of Kindness:** Share any experience of this that people may have. Little acts of service to bless others



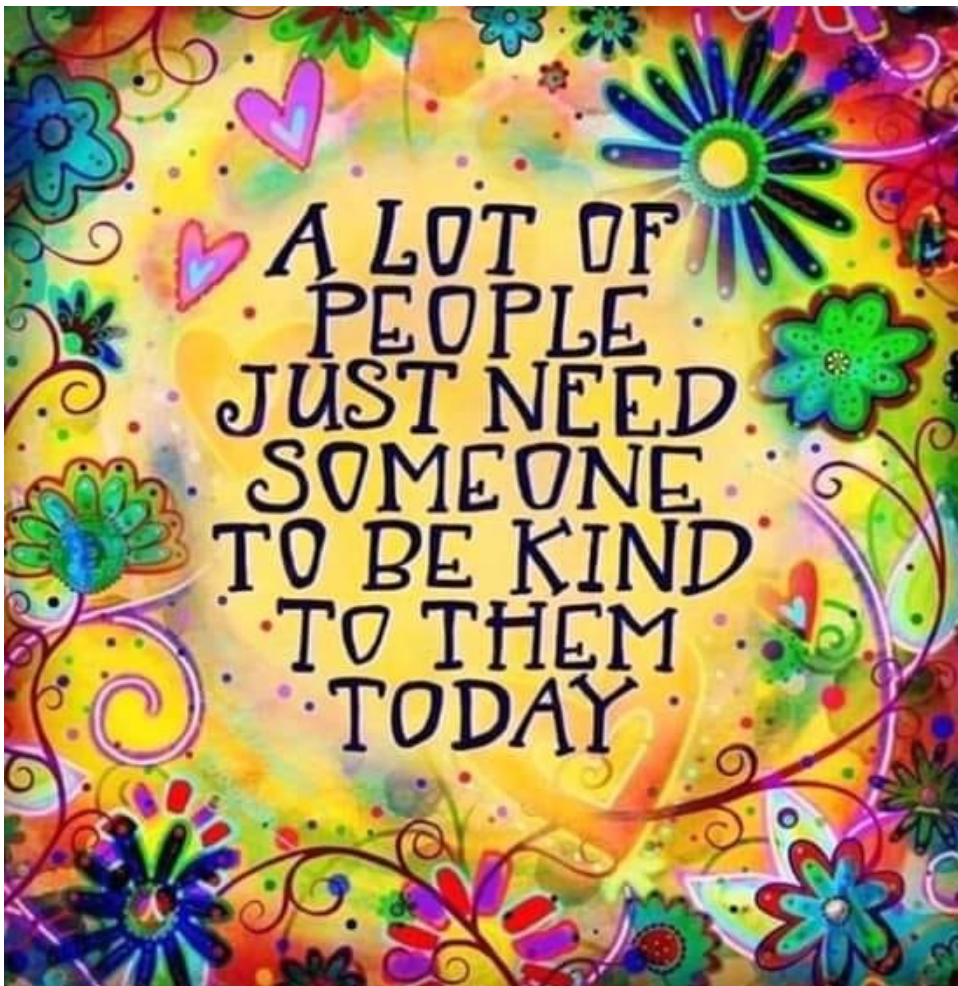
(website [www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org)).

A similar initiative has been running for several years during Lent:

[www.40acts.org.uk](http://www.40acts.org.uk)

### Listen:

- Count on Me by Bruno Mars from the album Du Whops – Hooligans (about friends being there for each other. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msl2fl3h59I>)
- You've Got a Friend in Me by Randy Newman from the film Toy Story. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIYOJ\\_hSs0o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIYOJ_hSs0o)
- Stand Up by Sugarland on the album The Incredible Machine (about standing up and using your voice). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84YIUBCtHCA>
- Lean on Me by Bill Withers from his Greatest Hits [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nx\\_D0VTHBag](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nx_D0VTHBag)
- or by The Glee cast from the Lean on Me album by the Glee cast. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR6sQDkK6nY>
- Be Kind by The Dailys <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmkwzOkdz-U>

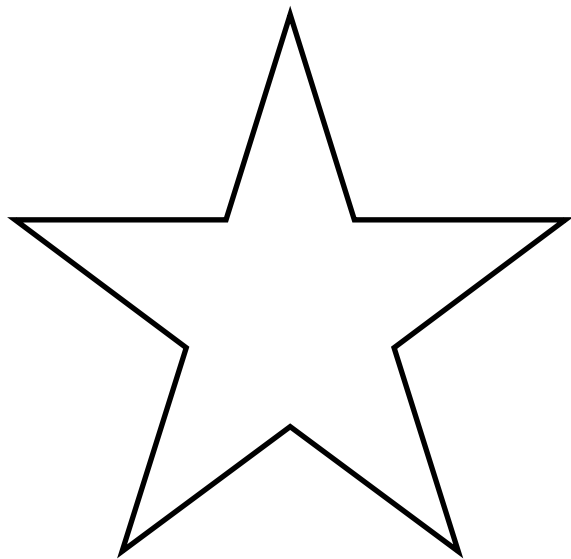
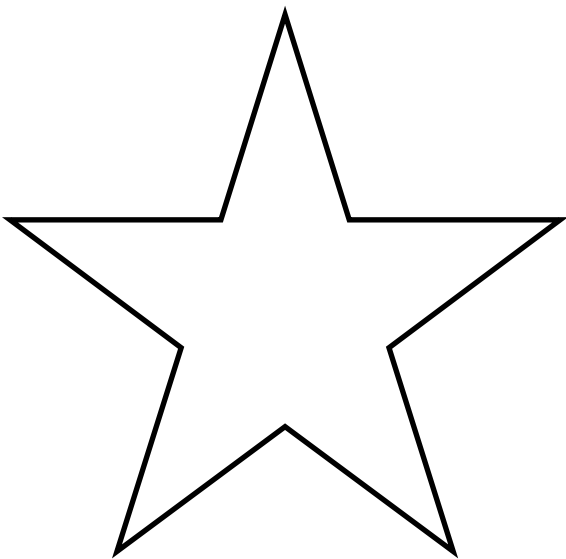
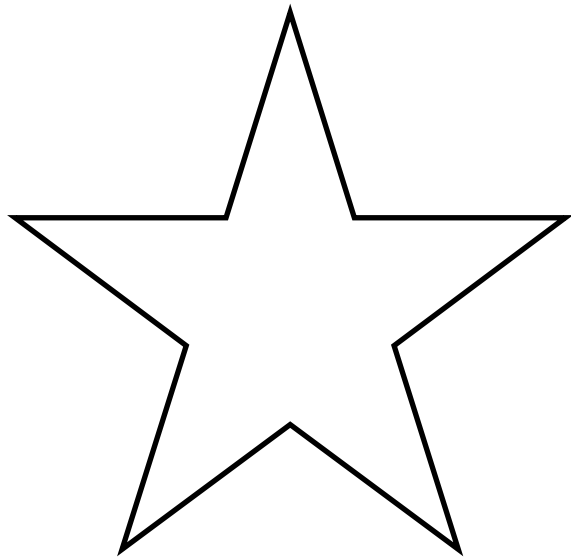
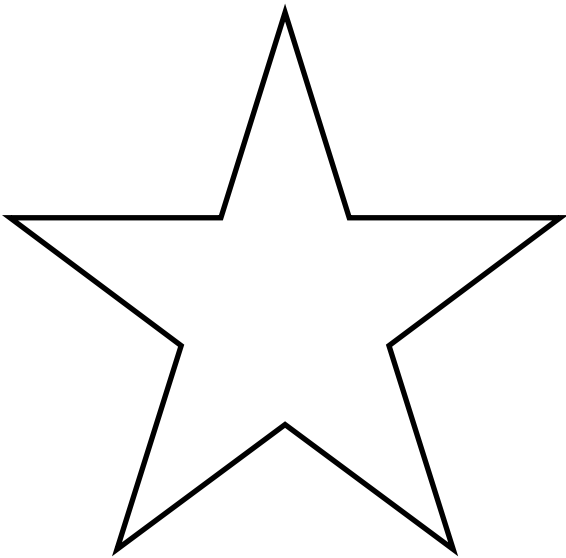
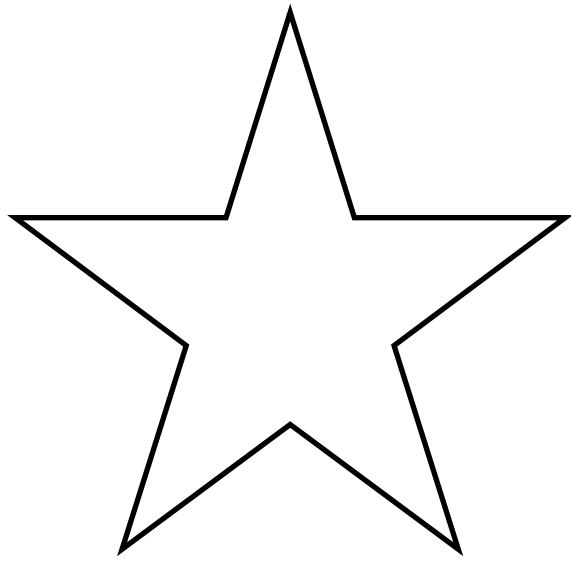
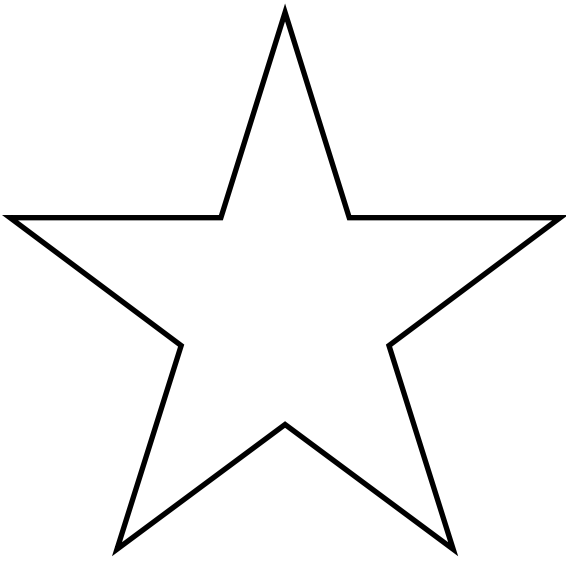


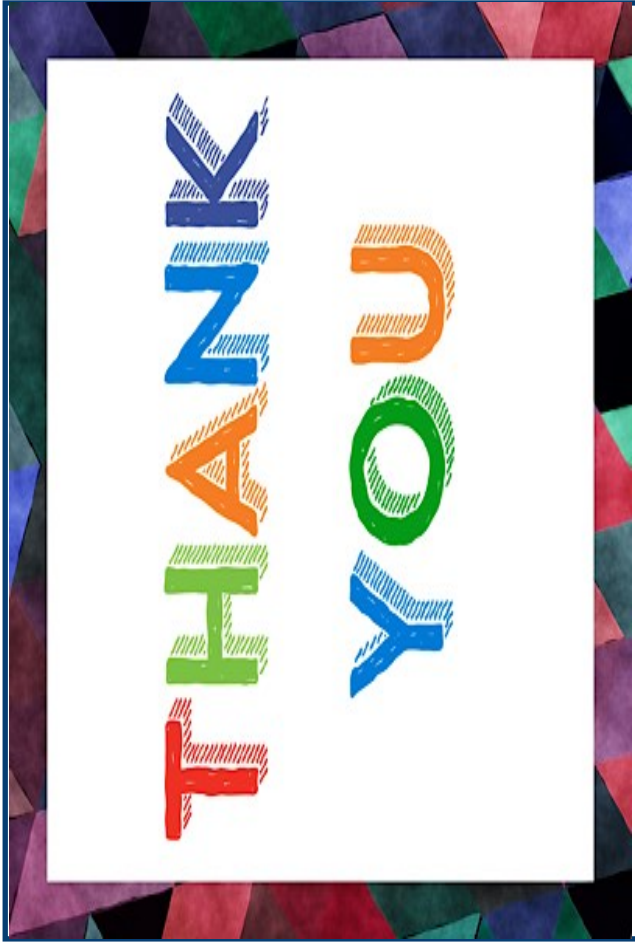
### Display & Share:-

Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, posters, photo display, plants, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.



Star templates for Recollections of kindnesses activity on page66

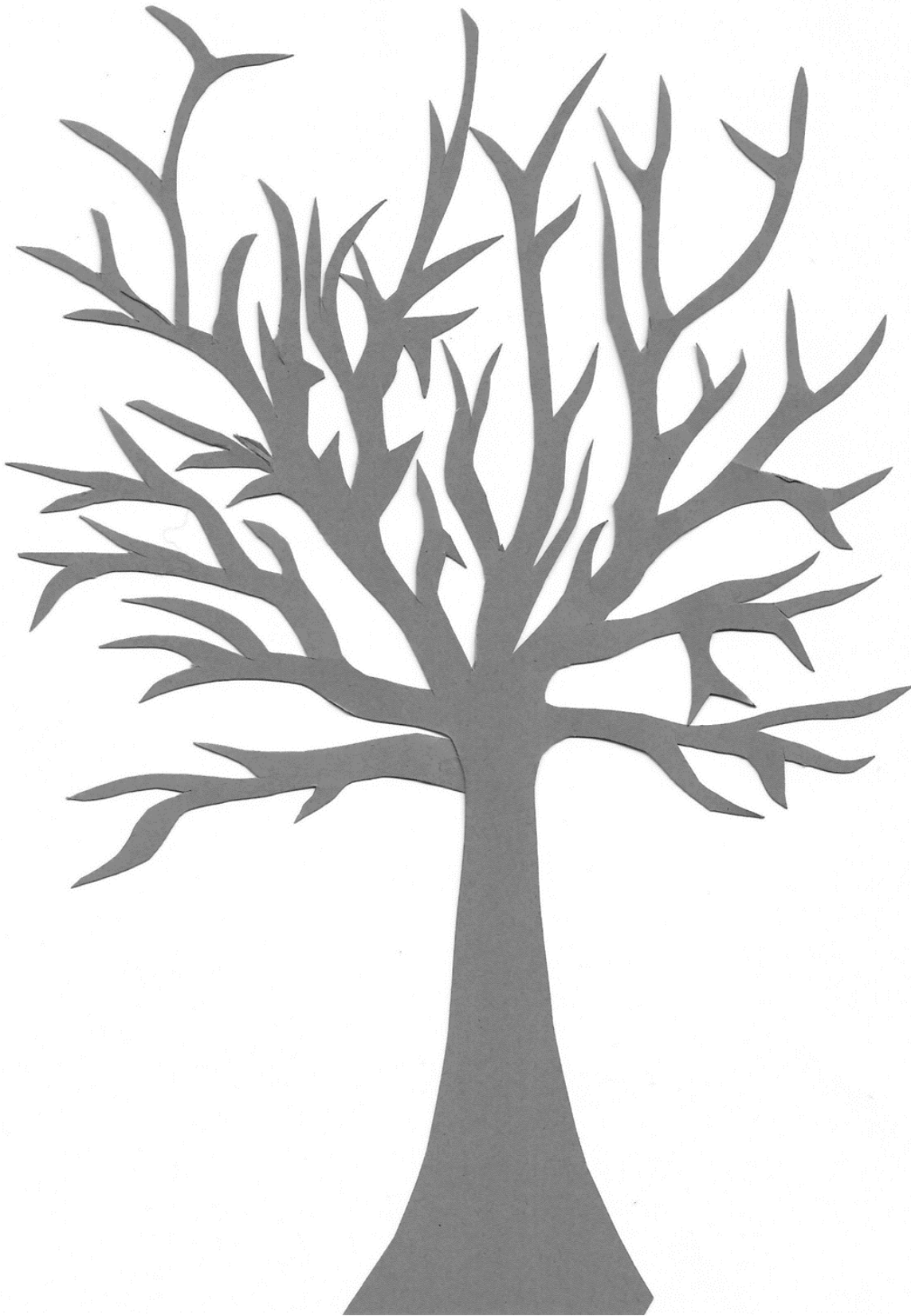




# Kindness—Resources



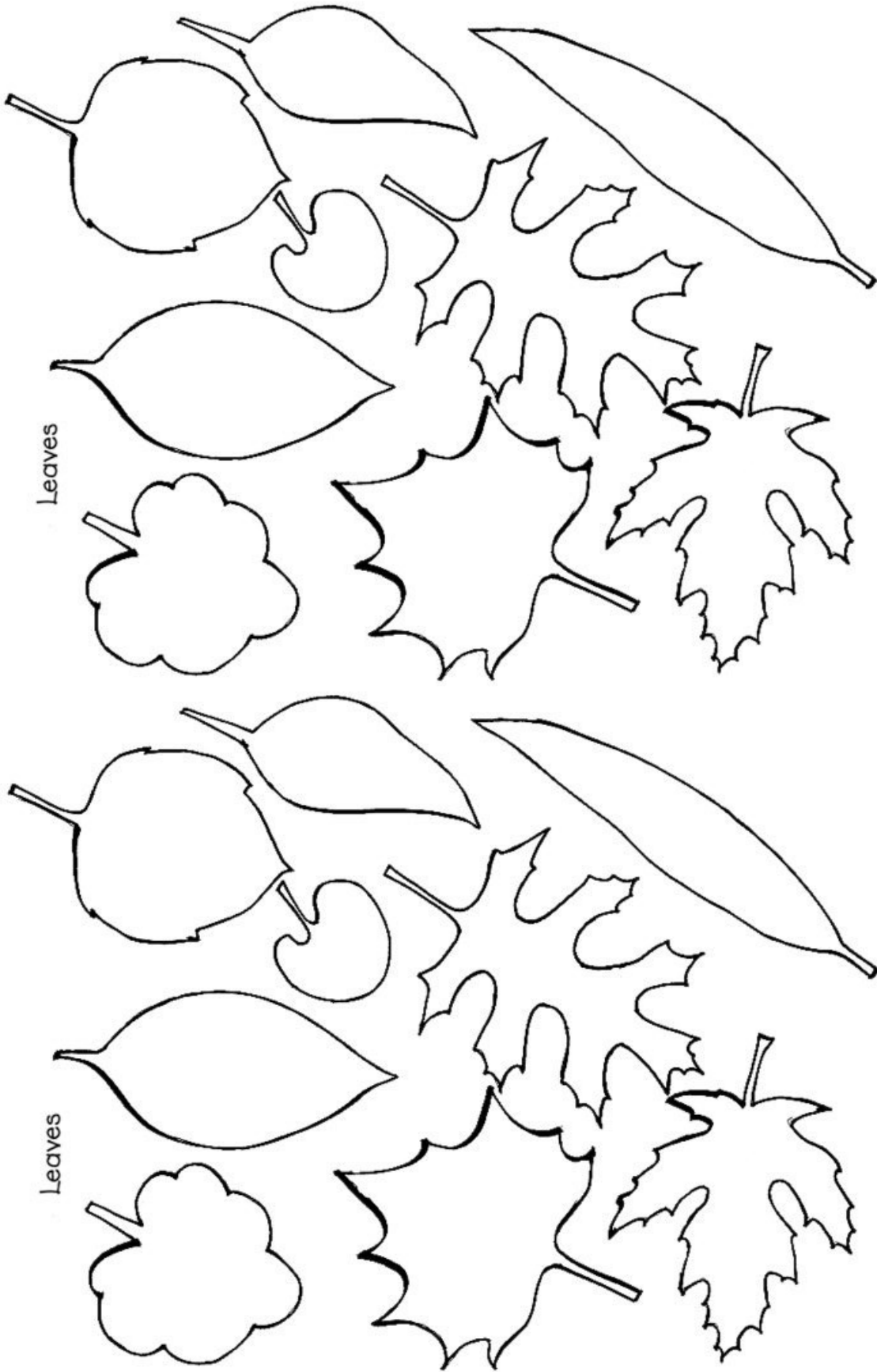
Enlarge this tree template for Friendship/Contact Tree activity on page 66



This will work best if you can enlarge it to A3 or A2. if you can't do that you might need to just invite people to draw leaves rather than using the ones on the next page.



Leaf templates for Friendship/Contact Tree activity on page 66





The 5 Love Languages are a way of thinking about how we receive and give love, not just in romantic relationships but also more generally. You can find out more about them here: -

<https://www.5lovelanguages.com/>

**Affirmation:** Your coffee is delicious.

**Acts of Service:** I made you coffee.

**Receiving Gifts:** Here's a coffee.

**Quality Time:** Let's go get a coffee.

**Physical Touch:** Let me hold you like a coffee.



# Bible Stories to help us think about Kindness

*Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of Kindness.*

*N.B. The word used for kindness in the original languages of the Bible is translated in different ways by different versions e.g. kindness, mercy, compassion, charity or love seem to be interchangeable between different versions or translations.*

**The story of Ruth:** Ruth's kindness to Naomi; Boaz' kindness to Ruth. Through the



kindness of Ruth and Boaz Naomi moves from despair to happiness, emptiness to fullness and destitution to security and hope.

Use the whole story from the Graphic Bible or a cartoon type strip telling of the story. A number of video versions are available - this is just one

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhBAd3kCy9g)

[v=MhBAd3kCy9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhBAd3kCy9g) (you can stop it at 3 minutes, 28 seconds). Select a version that is most

appropriate and accessible for *your* group.

Alternatively, create a kinetic telling of the story\* with members of the group taking up the roles – (Elimelech; Naomi; Marlon (optional); Chilian (optional); Orpah; Ruth; Townsfolk; Field workers and their boss; Boaz; Elimelech's relative; town leaders). Write an abridged version of the Bible text for folk to act out as the story is read (or there is a script here <https://www.commonword.ca/SelectDownloadFormat/82/15355?button=Download> but you may still want to shorten it)

Follow the pattern for a **Kinetic Bible Study**\*; as follows: -

Identify the characters (see list above)

Each group member chooses a character (miss out the optional ones if the group is small)

Read the story aloud while each character acts out their role *silently*

Staying in character group members respond to the following questions:

- Who am I? Where am I? What do I want?
- What surprises you?
- What is there of brokenness for you?
- What is there of kindness for you?



e. What is there to celebrate?

Group members as themselves. What do I believe? What will I do?

*\*Please contact the Unlock office if you would like more detailed guidance on this approach.*

### ***The Parable of the Good Samaritan.***

The word 'kindness' does not feature in the story but it is told to demonstrate how to 'love' one's neighbour. I suggest that the key driver for the Samaritan man is compassion and kindness. The attitudes of the other passers-by were unkind!

### **Luke 10:25-37**

A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to receive eternal life?"

Jesus answered him, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?"

The man answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind"; and 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'" "You are right," Jesus replied; "do this and you will live."

But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"

Jesus answered, "There was once a

man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side. In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he told the innkeeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.'"

And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour toward the man attacked by the robbers?"

The teacher of the Law answered, "The one who was kind to him."

Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."





This story could be told by acting out the parable section in the same way as suggested above for the story of Ruth – there are only 4 people, plus the robbers and an innkeeper.

The story could be used as a way into discussions about people’s experiences of kindness during the pandemic, or as a way to begin to think how to express kindness to one’s community.

You can explore questions such as - who has been a ‘Good Samaritan’ for

you? When have you helped someone who *no one else was prepared to help?*

**Kindness – one of God’s characteristics:**

**Galatians 5:22** Kindness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (see illustration on page 56).

**Titus 3:2-7 God’s kindness and love in salvation.**

Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude toward everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. We spent our lives in malice and envy; others hated us and we hated them. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed, he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who

gives us new birth and new life by washing us. God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.



**Hosea 11:3-4**

Yet I was the one who taught Israel to



walk.

I took my people up in my arms,  
but they did not acknowledge that I took care  
of them.

I drew them to me with affection and love. I  
picked them up and held them to my cheek; I  
bent down to them and fed them.



**Kindness – a characteristic of Jesus’ followers:**

**Luke 6:27-36**

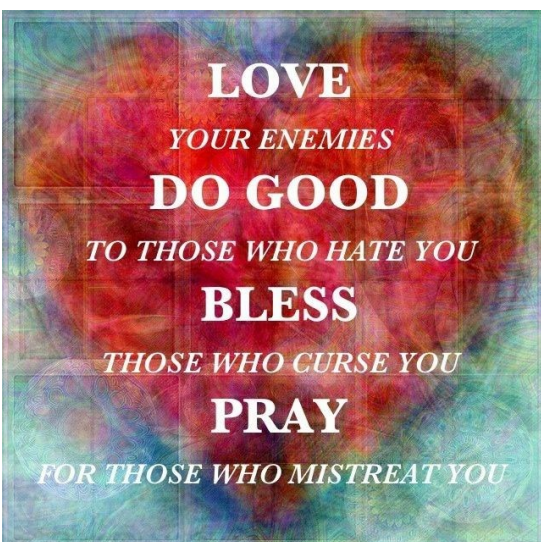
“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you.



“If you love only the people who love you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners love those who love

them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners do that! And if you lend only to those from whom you hope to get it back, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount! No! Love your enemies and do

good to them; lend and expect nothing back. You will then have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.



**1 Corinthians 13:4-8a** Part of Paul’s description of love. Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not



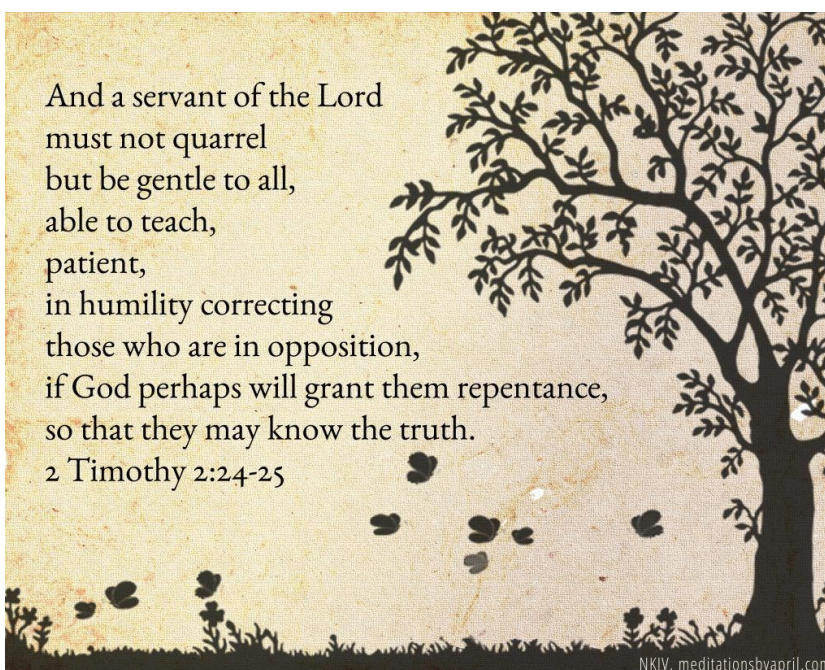


**LOVE**  
 is patient **LOVE IS KIND**  
 it does not envy it does not boast  
**it is not proud**  
**LOVE IS NOT RUDE** IT IS NOT **SELF SEEKING**  
**IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED**  
 it keeps no record of wrongs.  
 love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the **TRUTH**  
**it always** trusts hopes perseveres  
 Love never fails.  
 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8

keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail. Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass.

**2 Corinthians 6:6-7**

By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God's servants—by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, by our message of truth, and by the power of God. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves.



# Hope

By Dawn

Lonsdale

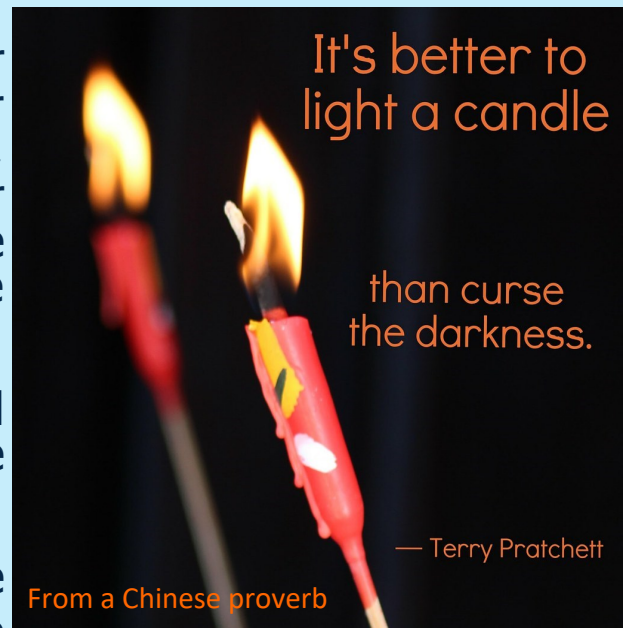
March 2021

It's hard to see why we would ever do anything at all without hope.

Hope is an essential aspect of our humanity. It is as vital to us as the air we breathe. Without it we die; spiritually, emotionally, passively, or actively; one way or another, we cease to be, or at least, to be ourselves.

Having no hope is an emotional emergency that requires immediate attention if we are to recover.

We simply *must* have hope, we cannot do without it. We must nurture it, we must practice it and we must give it to one another, always, but especially when times are tough.



Remember, the only thing more contagious than a virus is hope.

WILLIAM MCRAVEN

becomingminimalist

Hope has pulled us bodily through the pandemic. Hope for a vaccine, hope for a treatment, hope for better daily numbers, hope for leaders we can trust, hope for a time when we can be together again, hope, hope, hope! Soon, soon, soon!

The Wikipedia **definition** is: that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."





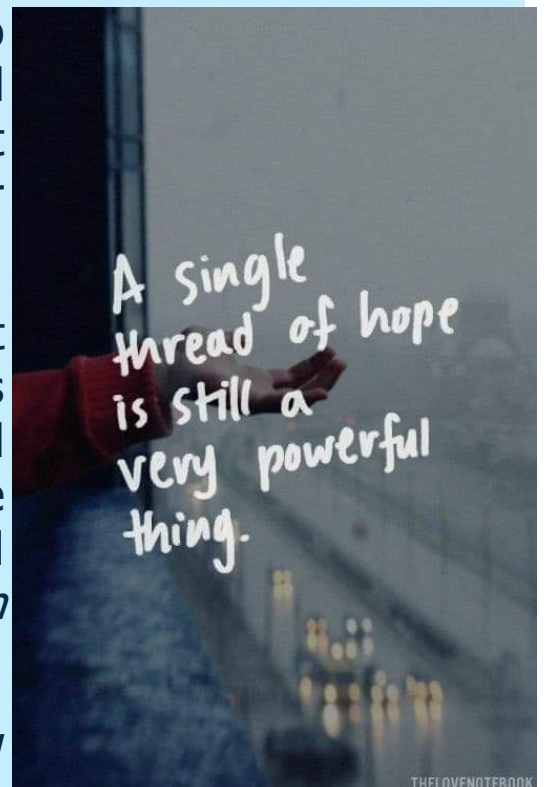
Hope is the belief things will work out, especially when it seems otherwise. It helps us stay calm and peaceful when we face difficulties. Hope believes we will get through it. Hope remembers the times we made it through. Hope teams with faith and believes in the impossible.

Hope is associated with many positive outcomes, including greater happiness, better

academic achievement and even lowered risk of death. It's a necessary ingredient for getting through tough times, of course, but also for meeting everyday goals.

### About Hope

- ◇ We can give Hope to others and still have it for ourselves.
- ◇ *Believing* that something is possible can sometimes be what actually *makes it* possible.
- ◇ Hope comes partly from being able to think about the bigger picture. Instead of focussing on something that is not going right we are able to look wider and see what else might work instead.
- ◇ Hope is not just optimistic fantasy that takes no account of reality. It includes a balance between positivity and realism. Something may be more difficult than we expect but it may still be possible, so let's see what we *can* achieve.



◇ You'll never know

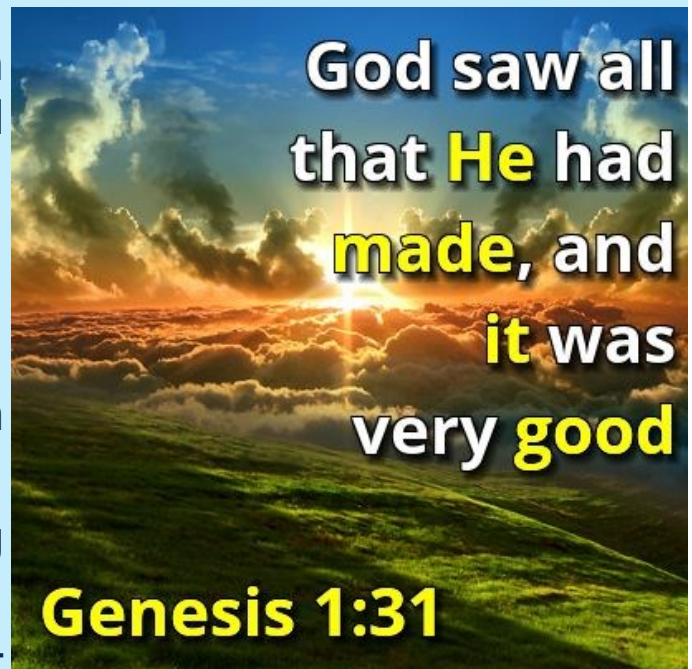


unless you try – hope gives us the courage to aim for our goals.

- ◇ The lack of certainty about a good outcome is not a reason not to try.
- ◇ If we can't do it this way then we'll try another way, and another, and another.

### Hope: -

- ◇ Gets us through
- ◇ Gives us something to hang on to
- ◇ Enables us to keep on keeping on
- ◇ Is always there if you look for it



### Where does hope come from?

- ◇ From inside us; practice and self-discipline, determination, past experience, perspective.
- ◇ From faith. From trust in a good, faithful loving God.
- ◇ From a belief in the essential goodness of humanity and the world.
- ◇ From a belief in ourselves and one another and what we can achieve together.
- ◇ From the natural world. The sun always rises, the spring always comes.

### Hope in the Bible

In the **Bible hope** is the confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness. Christian hope focusses on what Christ has done for us and what that means. Because of Christ's life and death and resurrection, we have hope; hope that we are connected with God, hope that we are redeemed, hope that there is more holding us



together than we can really see or know.

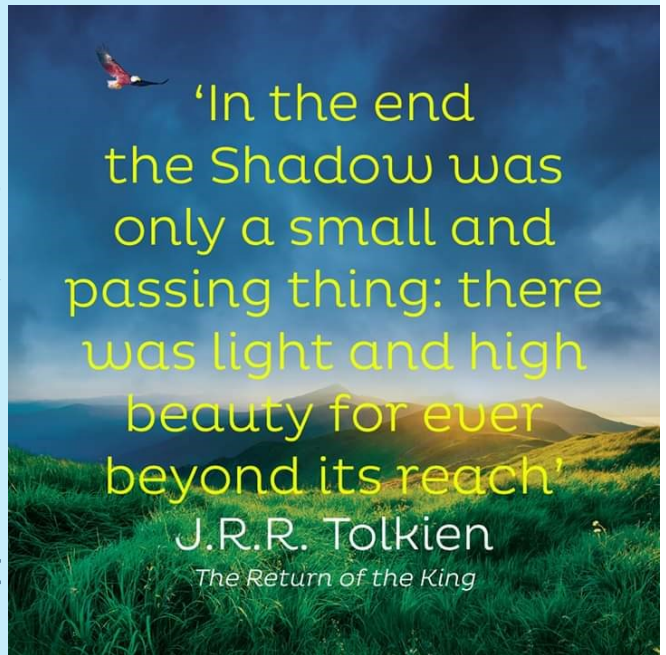
And Christian hope can also be rooted in a belief that God's creation, and therefore human beings as part of it, are ultimately good.

### **But what about disappointment?**

The benefits of hope are not dependent on our hopes being fulfilled. Disappointment will happen. If it doesn't we were not challenging ourselves. But disappointment is just a reason to look for new hope. Hope is effective at keeping us going, whether or not it is fulfilled.

Responding to setbacks with hope depends on practice and resilience and determination. For most people hope doesn't just happen; the possibility of it is hard wired within us but ultimately we do it because we make ourselves do it.

And you know, maybe prayer!



#### **References: -**

TEDx <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXpKIGi5DFg>

<https://hopegrows.net/news/why-is-hope-so-important>

<https://medium.com/the-mission/why-the-power-of-hope-overcomes-all-obstacles-adabff43f0d1>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhMI2-aEvWM> only watch to 3.42.

# Activities to help us reflect on Hope

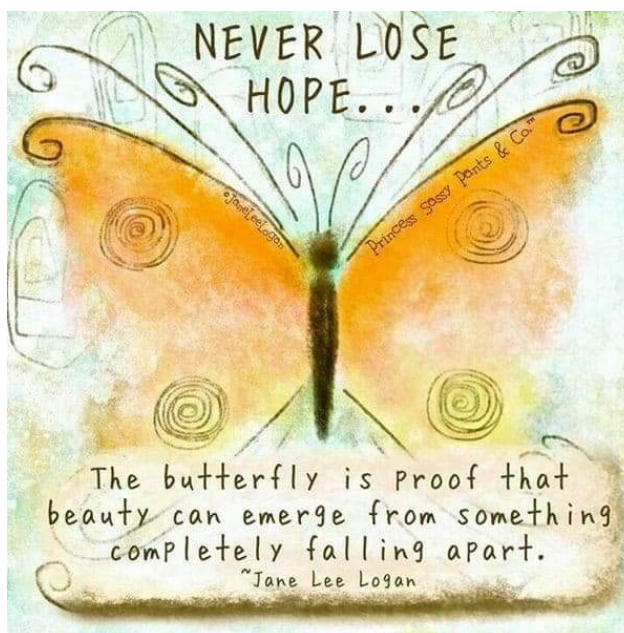
Select whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of hope.

## What is hope.

What does hope mean to each of us?

Look at the 'hope' quotes on page 81. Which do you agree with? Take turns to tell your group.

Encourage people to suggest their definition of 'hope'. Compare with the Wikipedia definition: "Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: 'expect with confidence' and 'to cherish a desire with anticipation.'"



**Dreams and hopes:** Looking back / looking at now / looking forward.

Looking back: think back to when you were a child. What did you hope for? Would you describe that as a hope or a dream? Play a game with your group. Take it in turns to finish this sentence, "When I was a child I wanted to..." When everyone has had a go, think about what happened to your childhood dream. How does that reflection make you feel?

Looking at now: After more than a year of living with Covid-19 and various limitations to life – Think of one thing you have valued over this time and one thing you have found very difficult.

Looking at the future: What gives you hope? What are your concerns?

*This activity could easily be done on a display board with everyone posting their responses with post-it notes.*

Thinking especially about the time living with Covid-19. What have you found gives you hope. Look at the various images (page 86 - 88) – which three images help you feel more hopeful. Why?

What have you found that gets in the way or robs us of hope – select words from the

hope



word cards on the table (page 89).

### Listen or Singalong: -

Choose your favourite songs and sing along to them

<https://www.pastemagazine.com/music/hope/songs-about-hope/>

<https://spinditty.com/playlists/10-Best-Songs-of-Hope-for-Humanity-and-a-Better-World>

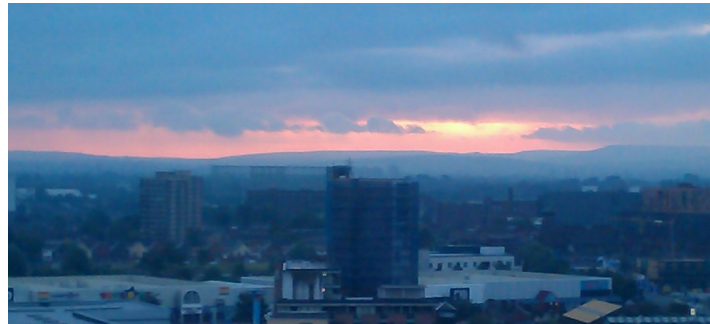
<https://blog.gigsandtours.com/2020/04/30-songs-for-hope-inspiration-and-a-better-world/>

**What am I? Half empty or half full?** Create a game – the participants work in pairs. One of the pair is given a full glass of water and their partner an empty one. The aim is for each person to end up with a glass half full of water. Which couple manages it best? (measure to decide) They are the winners! Create a poster of half empty/half full – look at the quotes from famous people (page 92 - 93) – Who do you identify with most – Write your definition of hope as a quote and add it to the poster.

### Activities to generate hope:

#### Sunrise:-

Start the day by watching the sun rise. Check out the time it will rise (<https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/uk>) and set your alarm to be up in time to be at your viewing spot before the sun appears above



the horizon. Sit quietly. How do you feel? What are you thinking? Watch ... (Please note, there is no need to go far to do this, you can see the sunrise from a city rooftop or a dingy backstreet, just as well as you can in stunning countryside!)

When you get home make a suncatcher (instructions on page 90 - 91)

#### Outside:-

Go for a walk in a garden, park or the countryside. Pause often to look carefully all around you and up high too. Smell the air. Listen to all the sounds. What do you see, smell and hear? How do those things make you feel? Do you notice anything that gives you hope?

### Listen: -

**Dire Straits—why Worry?** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03uXQiz6eY>



#### Be generous:-

Do a kind thing for someone else: bake for them, write them a card, give them a call, send them a message . . . . .



## Get creative:-

Use some **rainbow scratch cards** and scrapers. Scratch the black surface off the card to create pictures showing the rainbow colours underneath.

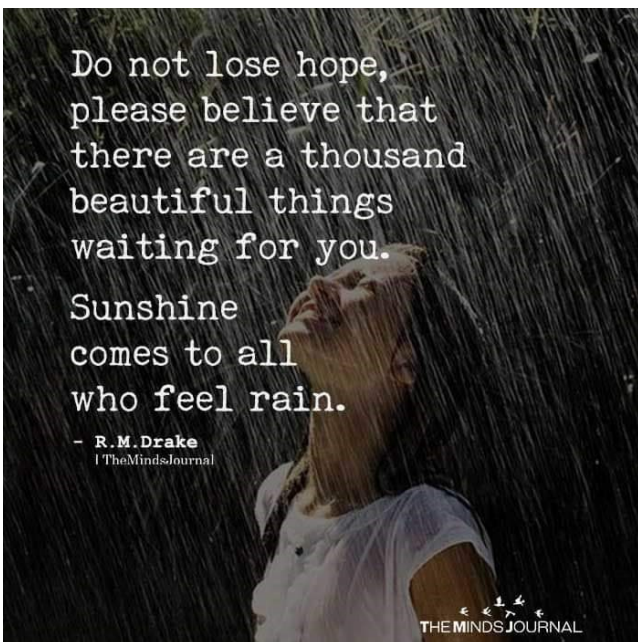


**Make pictures** of things you are hoping for. Reflect on what new possibilities we might find hidden under darkness.

String selections of **beads** together to make bracelets etc. Dark beads can be included to represent the dark times and then light or shiny/sparkly beads to represent hope for a brighter future and God's comfort and love.

Make pictures using shades of dark and light **glitter** (if you can face the prospect of the clearing up!)

Use dark and light **fabric scraps** to make light and dark patchwork. Work together to make a cushion cover, a table cloth or a wall hanging for your meeting space to remind you what you have been thinking about together. It doesn't have to be slick, or large!

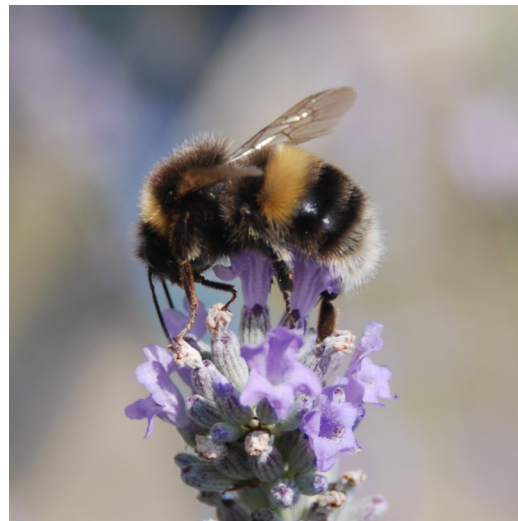


## Display & Share:-

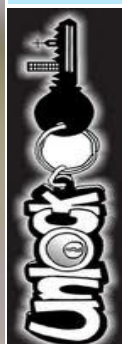
Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, posters, photo display, plants, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.



## Resource 1 Hope pictures



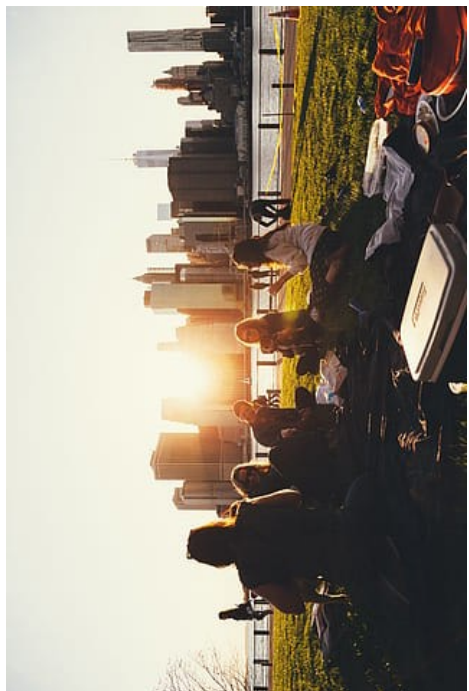
# Hope—Resources



# Hope—Resources



# Hope—Resources





Being alone	Not seeing friends	Not seeing family	Not being able to choose what I do each day	The shops being closed
Anxiety	Fear	Not being able to work	Worrying about buying food	Worrying about the bills
Fear of loved ones getting ill	Fear of losing my job	Not seeing anyone	My social clubs and groups being closed	Not being able to hug family and friends
Not seeing my grandchildren	Not being able to travel	Not sharing meals	Not being able to go out for a coffee	Not being able to go on a bus or train



## Making a Sun-Catcher—instructions

You will need:

- 2 pieces of sticky-back-plastic
- 4 strips of black card
- Coloured tissue paper
- A surface you can stick tape to
- Sticky tape
- A glue stick
- Scissors
- A hole punch
- Ribbon, thread, wool or string

### What to do:

1. Tear your tissue paper into small pieces:



2. Make a circle of sticky tape so that it sticks down and up:



3. Stick your circle of sticky tape to your surface.

This will be under one corner of your sticky-back-plastic. Repeat for each corner:



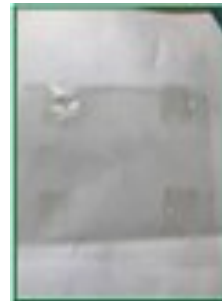
4. Take one of the pieces of sticky-back-plastic.

Peel back one corner of it (just a small bit).

Then, with the backing paper upwards and the plastic side downwards, stick the whole piece onto your four circles of sticky tape:



5. Peel the backing off the sticky-back-plastic.



6. Stick your small pieces of tissue paper to the sticky-back-plastic. Its okay for them to overlap:



7. Take your second piece of sticky-back-plastic. Peel the backing off:





8. Carefully place the sticky-back-plastic (sticky side down) onto your mosaic of colour, so that it matches the one on the bottom.



9. Now to make a border for your suncatcher:

Take the four strips of black card. Decide how they best fit around the edge of your plastic suncatcher. You need a piece of card on both sides of the sticky-back-plastic (like the bread in a sandwich). Cut the card to fit the sides and glue them onto the edges of the suncatcher - a matching piece on each side of the plastic.



10. Your suncatcher is complete.

To finish it off: make two holes with the hole-punch, add thread, ribbon, string or wool and hang it up in a window to catch the light!



## The Blessing by Kari Jobe & Cody Carnes

The Lord bless you and keep you  
Make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious to you

The Lord turn His face toward you  
And give you peace

The Lord bless you and keep you  
Make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious to you

The Lord turn His face toward you  
And give you peace

### Bridge 1:

May His favour be upon you  
And a thousand generations  
And your family and your children  
And their children, and their children  
May His favour be upon you  
And a thousand generations  
And your family and your children  
And their children, and their children

### **The Story Behind The Blessing**

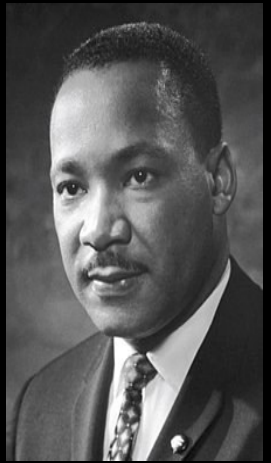
According to [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blessing),

*Initially, "The Blessing" was released as a music video on Elevation Worship's YouTube channel in early March 2020, with Kari Jobe and Cody Carnes leading the song in a worship service at Elevation Church's Ballantyne campus on March 1. Jobe & Carnes had written the song together with Steven Furtick and Chris Brown in a writing session on Thursday, February 27, 2020, at Elevation prior to leading it at Elevation's Sunday service on March 1, 2020. The song became popular on YouTube, leading to the release of the live audio recording on March 20, 2020, to other platforms. The song's music video had garnered over 3 million views on YouTube at the time of its release. "The Blessing" was serviced to Christian radio stations on May 1, 2020.*



## Resource 3 Hope Quotes

*'Everything that is done in the world is done by hope'*



*"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour*



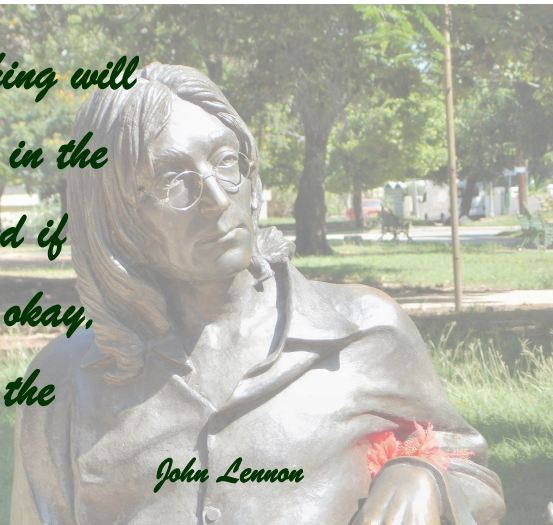
*of their skin, but by the content of their character."*



*There is always hope*

*Everything will be okay in the end; and if it's not okay, it's not the end.*

*John Lennon*



*Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is to not stop questioning.*

*- Albert Einstein*

[brainquotes.org](http://brainquotes.org)

Hope Quotes



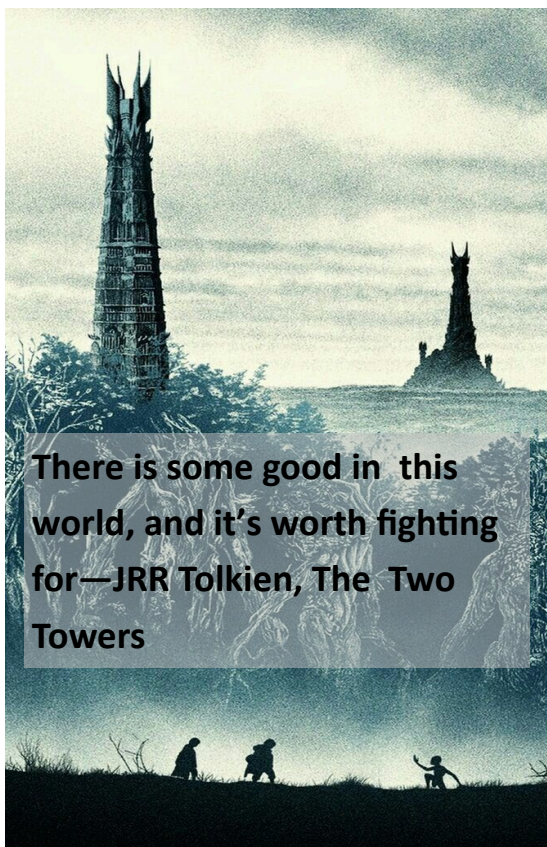
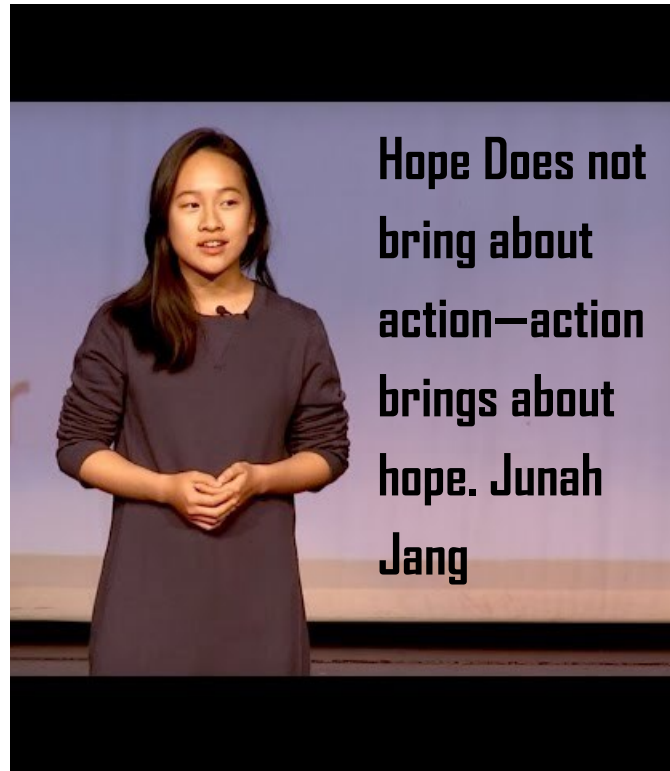
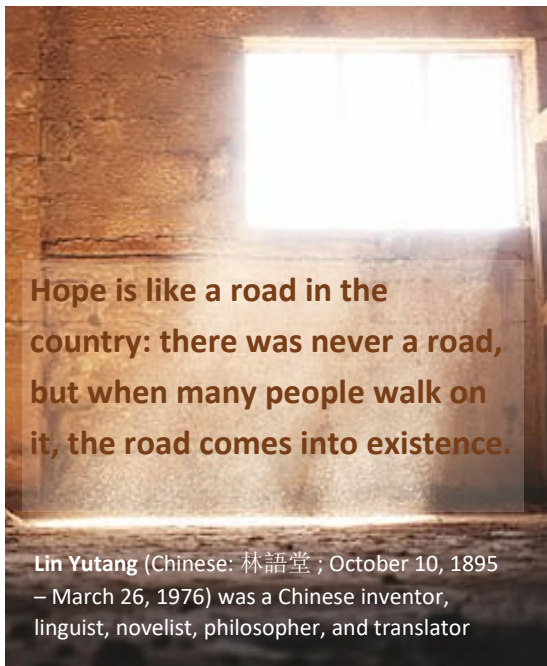
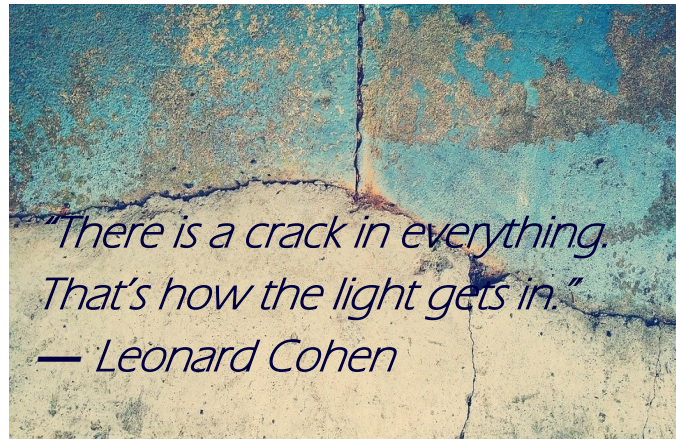
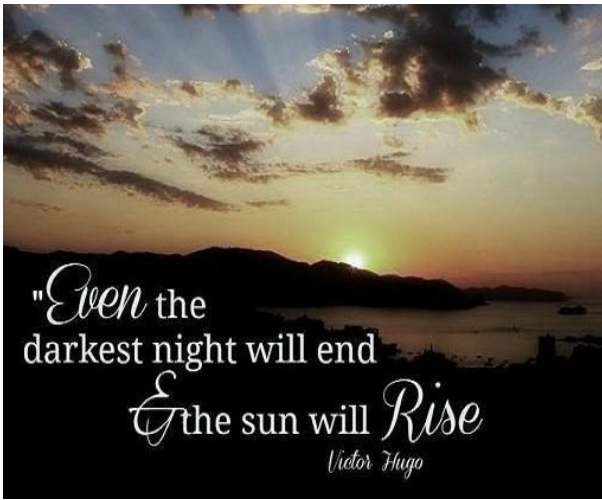
*Eleanor Roosevelt*

*The future belongs to those that believe in the beauty of their dreams*

*Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.*

*Desmond Tutu*





Don't Lose  
Hope. When  
the Sun Goes  
Down, The  
Stars Come  
Out.

 BizwareMagic.com

*“Hope is  
like a  
bird that  
senses the  
dawn and  
carefully  
starts to  
sing while  
it is still  
dark.”*

- Unknown Author -

 love lives on.com

HOPE IS THE  
ONLY THING  
STRONGER  
THAN FEAR

*Hope*

IS THE ABILITY TO HEAR  
THE MELODY OF THE FUTURE.

*Faith*

IS THE COURAGE  
TO DANCE TO IT TODAY.



“Hope” is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all.

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

—EMILY DICKINSON



## Bible Stories to help us think about Hope

Select whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of hope.

### Listen:

- In Christ alone my hope is found: Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16KYvflc2bE>
- Living Hope by Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w>
- Never Walk Alone by Rend Collective <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCRELKW8gaY>
- The Blessing by Kari Jobe & Cody Carnes Elevation Worship 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZ55mDL7dA0>
- Hillsong Worship, In Control - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOIZxBzvNmW>
- Hope wins <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1EuWjA6hy4>
- Just One Touch From the King - Godfrey Birtill <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6k8-Zju4wk>

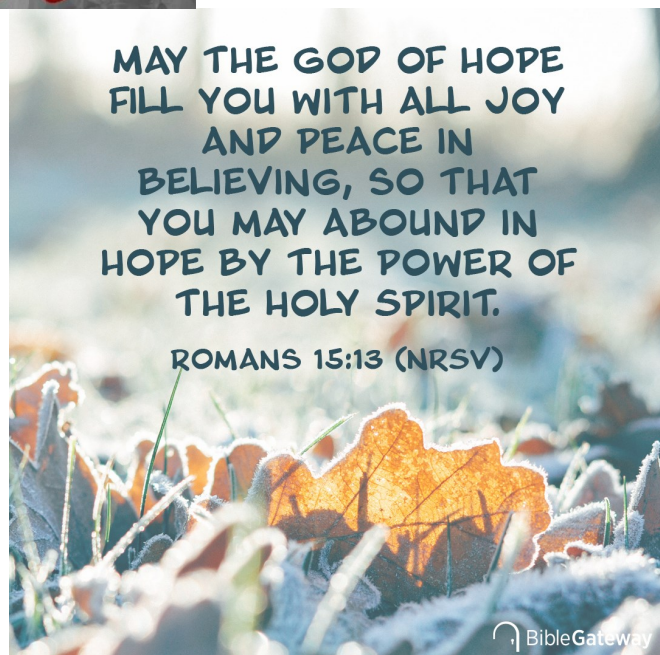


**1 Corinthians 13:13** Hope is identified in Paul’s theology as one of the three key elements of the Christian life. This thinking is portrayed all the way through his letter to the Roman church. His frequent references to hope (Romans 5:1-5; Romans 8:14-25 & 26-39) culminate in this wish prayer:

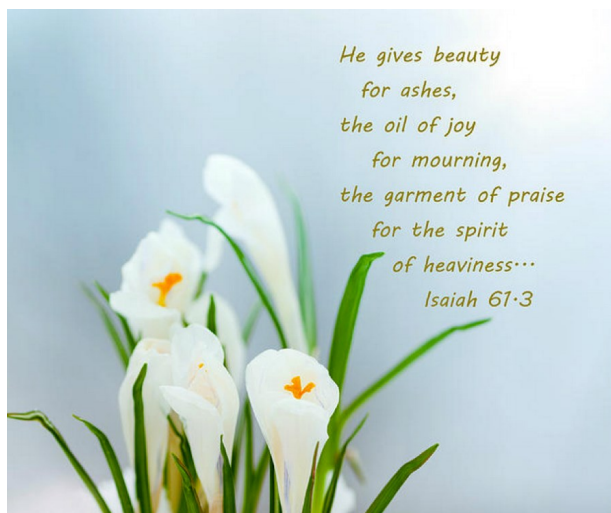
**Romans 15:13** May God, the

source of hope (in other translations this reads, ‘May the God of hope...’) fill you with all joy and peace by means of your faith in him, so that your hope will continue to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This prayer has been used by many churches as a blessing over the 2020 Christmas season. It can be adapted to make a banner.







*He gives beauty  
for ashes,  
the oil of joy  
for mourning,  
the garment of praise  
for the spirit  
of heaviness...  
Isaiah 61:3*

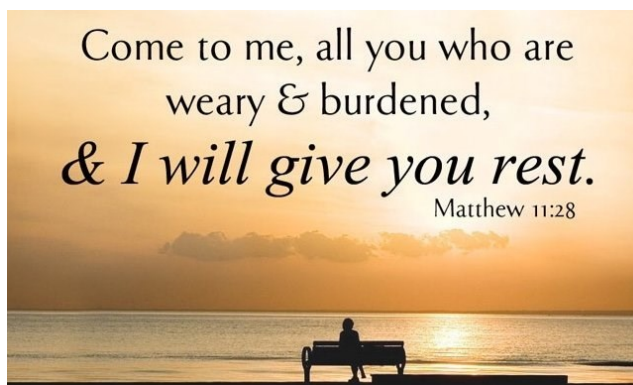
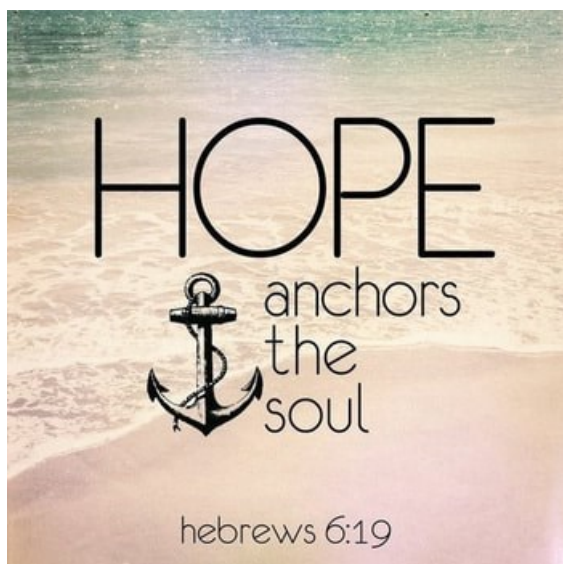
## Isaiah 40:28-31

Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The LORD is the everlasting God; he created all the world. He never grows tired or weary. No one understands his thoughts. He strengthens those who are weak and tired. Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted. But those who trust (other translations read hope) in the LORD for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings

like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.

This Isaiah 40 passage dovetails well with Jesus' invitation in [Matthew 11:28](#)

[Hebrews 6:18-19](#) The imagery of hope as an anchor for our lives.



There are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie. So we who have found safety with him are greatly encouraged to hold firmly to the hope placed before us. We have this hope as an anchor for our lives. It is safe and sure, and goes through the curtain of the heavenly temple into the inner sanctuary.

## Hope Stories in the New Testament:

The most poignant of these are those of the disciples around the resurrection and the waiting time before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (stories of the early church may also be useful):

[Luke 24:1-12](#) - Luke's account of the resurrection discovery by the women and Peter and running to the tomb

Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, so they went in; but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They stood there puzzled about this, when suddenly two men in bright shining clothes stood by them. Full of fear, the women bowed down to the ground, as the men said to them, "Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here; he has



Psalm 130:7



*Israel, trust in the LORD,  
because his love is  
constant and he is  
always willing to save*

been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and three days later rise to life.’”

Then the women remembered his words, returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven disciples and all the rest. The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; they and the other women with them told these things to the apostles. But the apostles thought that what the women said was nonsense, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; he bent down and saw the grave cloths but nothing else. Then he went back home amazed at what had happened

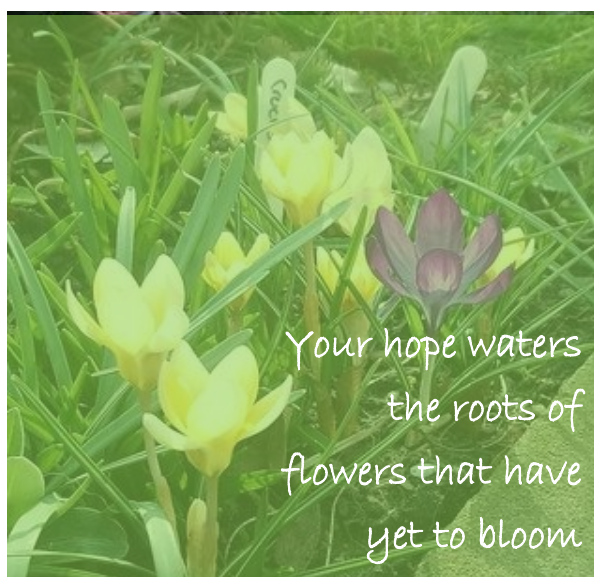
**Luke 24:13-35** - The story of the 2 men on the road to Emmaus, dejected and downhearted whose hope was fully restored by the meeting of Jesus on the road .

On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. Jesus said to them, “What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?” They stood still, with sad faces. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered. “This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in

everything he said and did. Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified. And we had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the tomb, but could not find his body. They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him.”



*Your hope waters  
the roots of  
flowers that have  
yet to bloom*



Then Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the

writings of all the prophets.

As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther; but they held him back, saying, “Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark.” So he went in to stay with them. He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, “Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the



others and saying, “The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!”

The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized the Lord when he broke the bread.

**John 21:1-14** - The fishing story in John when Jesus appears to the disciples who had returned to what they had always done before they met Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish .

After this, Jesus appeared once more to his disciples at Lake Tiberias. This is how it happened. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael (the one from Cana in Galilee), the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples of Jesus were all together. Simon Peter said to the others, “I am going fishing.”

“We will come with you,” they told him. So they went out in a boat, but all that night they did not catch a thing. As the sun was rising, Jesus stood at the water's edge, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then he asked them, “Young men, haven't you caught anything?”

“Not a thing,” they answered.

He said to them, “Throw your net out on the right side of the boat, and you will catch some.” So they threw the net out and could not pull it back in, because they had caught so many fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken his clothes off) and jumped



into the water. The other disciples came to shore in the boat, pulling the net full of fish. They were not very far from land, about a hundred yards away. When they stepped ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish on it and some bread. Then Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”

Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore full of big fish, a hundred and fifty-three in all; even though there were so many, still the net did not tear. Jesus said to them, “Come and eat.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. So Jesus went over, took the bread, and gave it to them; he did the same with the fish.

*She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.*



Luke 8:44

This, then, was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from death.

There are other stories of individuals who had faith:

**Luke 8:40** - Jairus who fell at Jesus’ feet pleading for healing for his daughter. But he had to wait and his hope and trust was really tested because of -

**Luke 8:44** - The bleeding woman who thought that if she just touched Jesus’ cloak she might be healed. (Jesus stopped the crowd, held up everything

to prioritise and give his full attention to this desperate, ostracised, women over Jairus the synagogue ruler.) See Page 114 for full Bible text

*The Song by Godfrey Birtle, [Just One Touch from the King](#) (link above) would work well with this story.*

**Luke 15:11-24** - The Parable of the Lost Son (Loving Father) could also be turned around to focus on hope – the limited hope of the Son when he came to his senses having lost everything – and the extravagant fulfilment of his wildest hopes when he did return home.



Jesus went on to say, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger one said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the property now.’ So the man divided his property between his two sons. After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that country, and



he was left without a thing. So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. At last he came to his senses and said, ‘All my father’s hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers.’” So he got up and started back to his father .

“He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. ‘Father,’ the son said, ‘I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.’ But the father called to his servants. ‘Hurry!’ he said. ‘Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’ And so the feasting began.

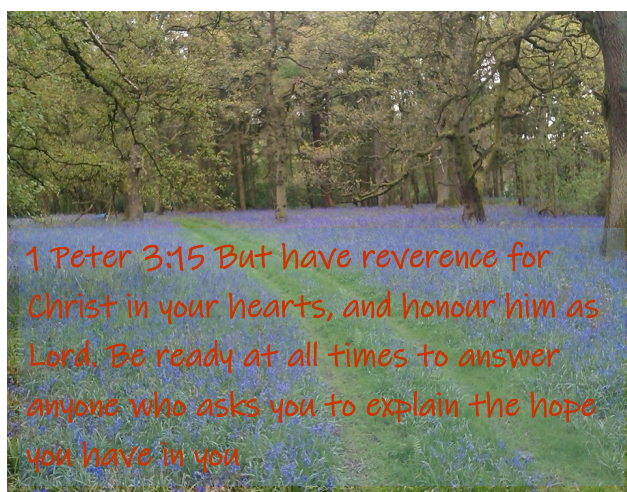
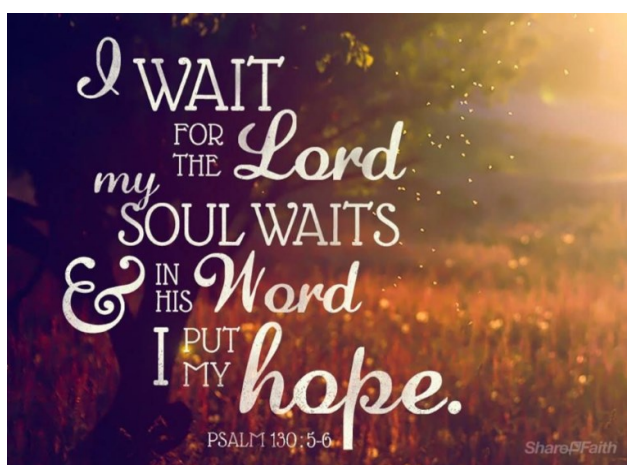
For more activities related to this Bible story see Unlock resource pack ‘Unlocking the Prodigal’ <http://unlock-urban.org.uk/documents/unlockingtheprodigalHeanorpopversion.pdf>

Perhaps even the story of Zacchaeus has an element of hope in it. After all, what was he hoping to see?

### Luke 19:1-10.

Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, “Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.”

Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, “This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!” Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.” Jesus said to him, “Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”



# Discernment

By Sue Sheriff  
October 2020

## What are we talking about?

I've been asked to say a few words about discernment. So I'd better start by explaining what I think discernment is about. In its broadest form it is about deciding what is right and wrong, what's good or evil. What I'm thinking of specifically at the moment is discerning God's will in our lives, in our situation at any particular time and how we can work out what it is that God wants for us.

When I was a teenager I joined a fairly lively evangelical church which meant we were really into reading the bible, and when it came to discernment (knowing what

to do) we would pray a lot, we would read the bible, and then they used to say there were different elements that we needed to sort of get in line and that would help us discern or understand God's will.

So for instance they encouraged us to ask questions such as "Is it scriptural?" God wouldn't ask us to do anything that was contrary to what he taught in the bible, so if it goes against God's teaching it probably isn't God's will. Another question would be "Is it legal?" and "Is it moral?" so again God would be very unlikely to ask us to break the law or to do something that is generally considered to be not right in the world that we live



Paris France city street map art

Michael Thompsett — used with permission.



in although, hold on, I will qualify all these things a bit later. Another question would be "Is it possible?" Again God is the God of the impossible and God can supply money, and other needs, but there are some things that are just beyond possibility. So for instance there is very little chance of me flying to mars or becoming queen of England. Another question would be "Is it sensible?" If you were a single mum with 5 children under the age of 10, it would be very unlikely that God would ask you to go to the back of beyond as a mission partner. And another question would be "What about those people you turn to for advice?" "What do they think about?" "Does it make sense?" "Do they agree" "What are they saying to you?" And we were taught that if you could sort of pray a lot and line those things up pretty



much in order then you would have a good idea what it was that God was saying to you.

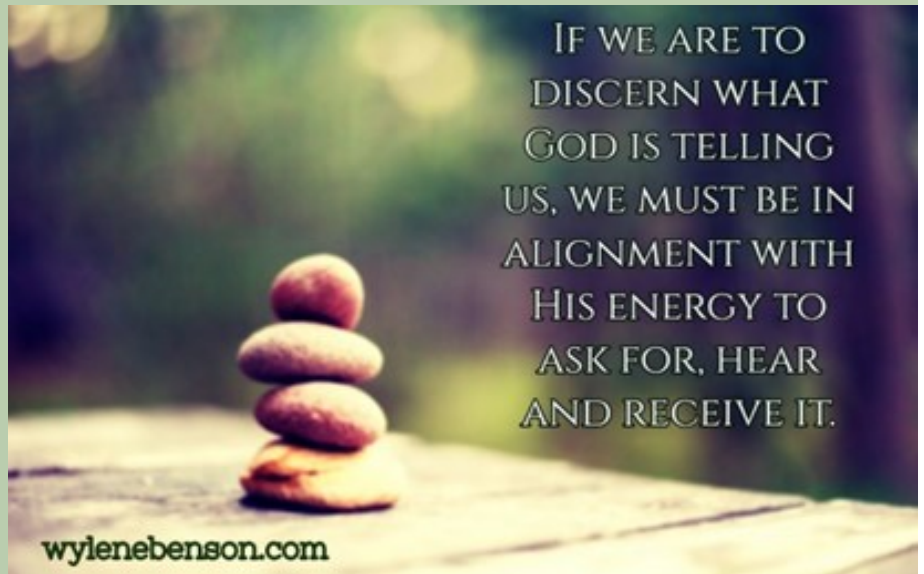
For it seemed good  
to the Holy Spirit and to us  
to lay upon you no greater burden  
than these necessary things.

Acts 15:28

## A Grown-up Approach



Since those early days I probably still hold on to those basic thoughts but I've also relaxed a little bit. Maybe I've come to learn that God will often excite us and surprise us with things that we couldn't have expected or come to understand. There's a passage in Acts chapter 15 that I really like and it's the verse particularly that says "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit". Paul and Barnabas had been talking to the Gentiles, the new Christians, the new believers, and He'd been saying "You don't need to do all the old rules" but others had come along, the Pharisees, and said "Ah yes but you've got to be circumcised, you've got to do this and you've got to do that". So they went back to Jerusalem to Peter, the apostles, the elders and they talked about it and Peter and James and some of the other elders sent a letter back saying do you know what, actually you don't have to stick to all those rules. If you just keep these basic ones and he uses the phrase as part of that letter "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit". And I guess that's a big thing for me now in discerning, working out what



God's will is, and what the way forward is. That if it seems good to





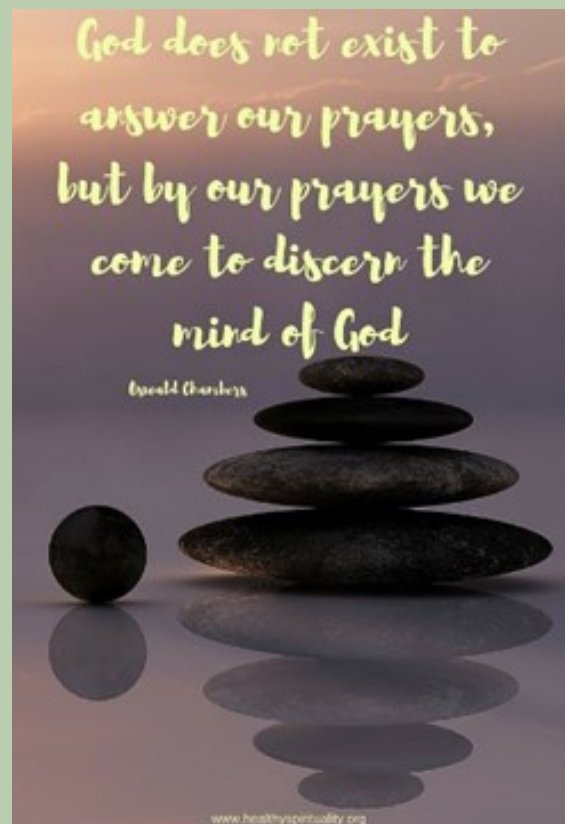
me and the Holy Spirit, if I've got that gut feeling that says it's right, and it still kind of ticks those other boxes, then that's the thing that really leads me in discerning God's will.

## How does it work?

So how does discernment work in our current situation? How do we work out what's right or wrong? What's God's will? What is it that God's calling us to? First of all I'd say to you as someone using this material, there's a good chance that if you can do something you already are. Now I say "if you can", just remember not everybody can at the moment (especially during a global pandemic!), and that's OK. And also just because you can doesn't mean you should. There could be a whole load of possibilities. You could be working 24/7 if you wanted to but that doesn't mean it's a sensible thing to do. But this is why we look for discernment, to work out what God is saying to us as we move forward.

We're sort of passing through that knee jerk reaction and realising that we are in this (COVID in this instance) for the long haul, we need to work out what that means.

I think one of the things that can come in quite handy at this point is using the whole Unlock learning cycle (see page 118) because it starts with people's everyday stories. The first thing you need to do is know your people, know their situations, know



what's happening in your local area. What are their needs? There'll be some that are really clear and obvious and there might be some that are more subtle. There'll be some needs that lots of people are already meeting and maybe what you need to do is partner up with them. There may be things that have gone unnoticed, individuals who are slipping through the net and perhaps it's those for whom God is calling you to do something.

So, first of all, know your people, the people you're called to serve, your situation, your context, and come to understand what people's stories are. Then, know your God. I know I said earlier that we need to sort of measure things against the Bible. The Bible can be used in lots of ways to make certain things seem right and certain things seem wrong, and sometime it is used well and sometimes badly. But Jesus said the first commandment is this **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength, and then love your neighbour as much as you love yourself."** And I think they are pretty good guiding principles about

what's biblical.

So, first of all, feel that love for the people that you're serving. And then think about how God met people's needs. One of the stories that came to mind was the woman at the well, and do you know, all she needed

was somebody to talk to. She had to go to the well at a completely different time to everyone else because she wasn't quite accepted. She was a religious woman, she was an intelligent



woman. You can hear both those things in the conversation, but she didn't do too well in relationships and so she ended up as an outcast. But first of all Jesus appealed to her for something. There was something that she could give to Him and then Jesus gave her something back. He gave her conversation, He gave her honesty, He spent time with her, and she just couldn't wait to go and tell others and to bring them back. Perhaps we need to give people time. Jesus



did it a lot. Look at Zacchaeus, another person who was very lonely. Of course, in his context, Jesus said "right, get down from that tree, cause I'm coming to your house today." Now we can't do that no matter

how much we want to because it's not in the COVID rules. So what about the rules? I said earlier "is it biblical? is it legal? and is it moral?" Now sometimes those two things aren't exactly the same any more, and we do have to work things out. But I remember many years ago being in Peru. There were some documents that were needed, and the system at the time was you paid bribes, if you wanted paperwork you paid bribes. And the Christian mission partners who were working there at the time weren't happy to do this because it wasn't legal, and yet on the other hand if they didn't buy in to that whole system then they didn't get the paperwork they needed.

At the moment, life's difficult. There are rules and regulations that sometimes stop us doing the things that we want to do. And you're going to have to work that one out to a certain



extent for yourself. How do we balance these things up? Are there other ways round our circumstance?

When Jesus was on the cross and He looked down at Mary and John who were both at the foot of the cross, He said to John "here's your mother" and to Mary "mother, here's your son" and from that day John took her into his house. She became part of His bubble. It was one of the ways round the situation at the time, and in some ways maybe that's part of our way round, that we form bubbles so that we can care for certain individuals' needs. I don't know, you're going to have to work a lot of this out yourself. And again we're going to have to go back to that verse that says "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us". And we're going to have to pray things through. We're going to have to work out some of these dilemmas, and we're going to have to look forward to the future.

The one thing I would say to end with is just remember that God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. "His ways are so much higher" it says, "as high as the heavens are above the earth". So pray, and ask Him to show you, because He will delight and surprise you time after time. Don't necessarily look for things that

FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT  
YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER  
ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS,  
SAITH THE LORD. FOR AS  
THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER  
THAN THE EARTH, SO ARE MY  
WAYS HIGHER THAN YOUR  
WAYS, AND MY THOUGHTS  
THAN YOUR THOUGHTS.

ISAIAH 55:8,9

are going to give you an MBE at the end of this, but look for those things that are going to make a difference in people's lives. Perhaps we can bring a bit of Jesus into people's situation just by showing our love and care.



# Activities to help us reflect on Discernment

*Select whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of discernment.*

## What does Discernment mean?

Discernment is a big 'churchy' word. Explore what it means. It's how we decide what's best. In mapping terms it is about finding our way. Other words that might be used in the same way are wisdom, understanding, insight. Synonyms for discernment can be found here <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/discernment> but *be picky*; some are more helpful than others!

### Image - map and compass:-

We sometimes find it is helpful to use an image or symbol to help us think about an idea. We have chosen map making as a way to explore the idea of discernment? Think of it in terms of finding our way. You've



heard the phrase "uncharted territory" maybe even in relation to COVID. Let's see if we can start to "chart" the territory? What are the landmarks? What are the dangers? Where be there dragons?! What would a compass, pointing north look like, metaphorically? Use the images on pages 15

- 16 to help spark a discussion.

### Maps that help us tell stories: -

On page 112 you will find maps of the 100 acre wood (Christopher Robin); and of Bilbo's journey (The Hobbit). You could use these, or another map of a fictional place, or an ordinance survey map of anywhere, or you could use a map of your local area (perhaps even comparing old and new local maps) - these could all be used as a way to share and shape stories and dreams; if we were in *that* map space: Where would we go? How would we find our way? What would we do or

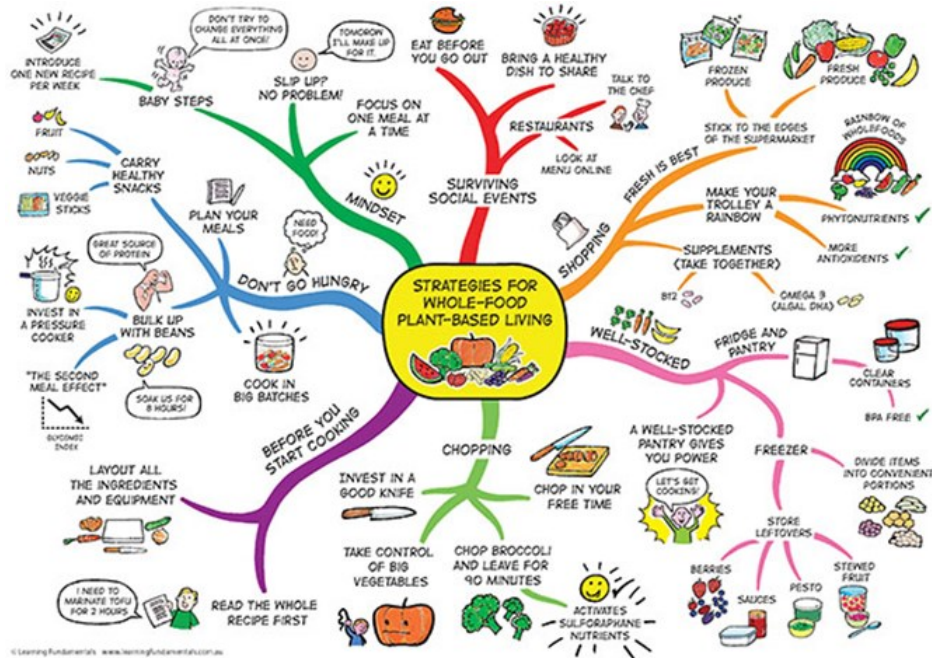


find? Where would we want to get to? What would the obstacles/dangers be? If you have used local maps you are already connecting these explorations to the real world. If you have used maps from fiction as a way in, then you can move to a local map and start to ask the same questions in a real world context. How is this story map like our real place?

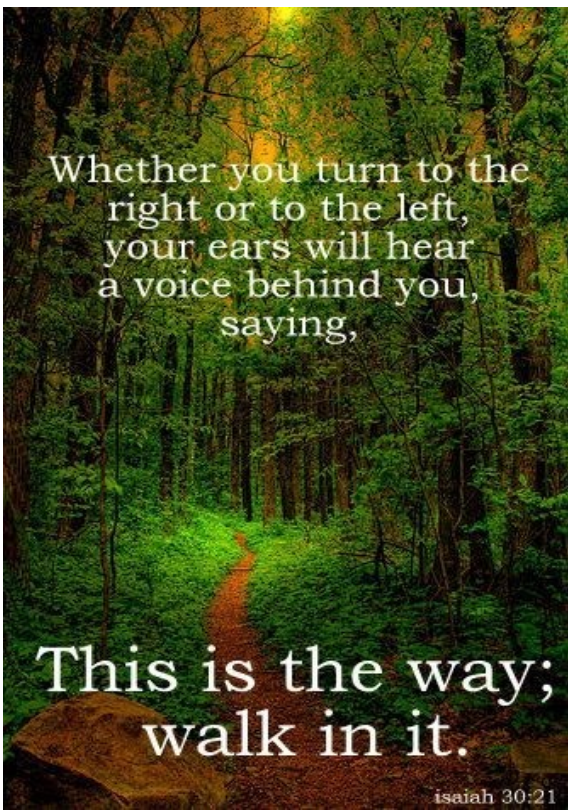
All the time the key question is, 'How do we work out which way to go?'

**Make an Ideas Map:**

This is an example. It's best if your group work together to make it's own, (if that's not possible it can be done by individuals). This is a



really useful exercise in lots of different contexts. It is a simple way of organising quite complex ideas into a visual format that often allows us to see connections and patterns that are much less obvious in a written, linear format. It can helpfully be used to discern a way forward, maybe thinking about 2021 as a year *with* the virus but *without* the surprise of an unknown virus and unknown government-imposed lifestyle; a year when we can have strategies, plans, rhythms, patterns of behaviour that empower us. Maybe the central topic of such an ideas map could be: **2021 - living it well.**



**Explore these ideas using the COVID Timeline** on pages 6 (remember, poster size versions are available on request from the Unlock office)

- We will know the pandemic is over when... - this identifies the things we miss, and hope for...





- What we'd like to take forward from the pandemic - good outcomes
- What new things to keep and focus on - thought processes, lifestyle choices, what we want to invest our time and energy in going forward.
- What to leave behind - identifies the changes we are prepared to make now; the things we are willing to let go of.
- What we have discovered about ourselves - what makes me fearful; what makes me joyful; inner strength and resources I now know I have; how I react to rules; how I deal with anxiety, loneliness etc...

- What we have discovered about other people - maybe our preconceptions about individuals or groups of people have been challenged?
- What we have discovered about God - have I tuned in to God at all? If so how? Has it changed?

Look for patterns in the responses. Where do we see Change? Challenge? Growth? New Learning? Help each other recognise the positives while honestly acknowledging pain and loss.

Remember that the key question is, 'How do we find our way?'

Another useful question could be, 'What have I become passionate about, or more passionate about?'

### Listen :-

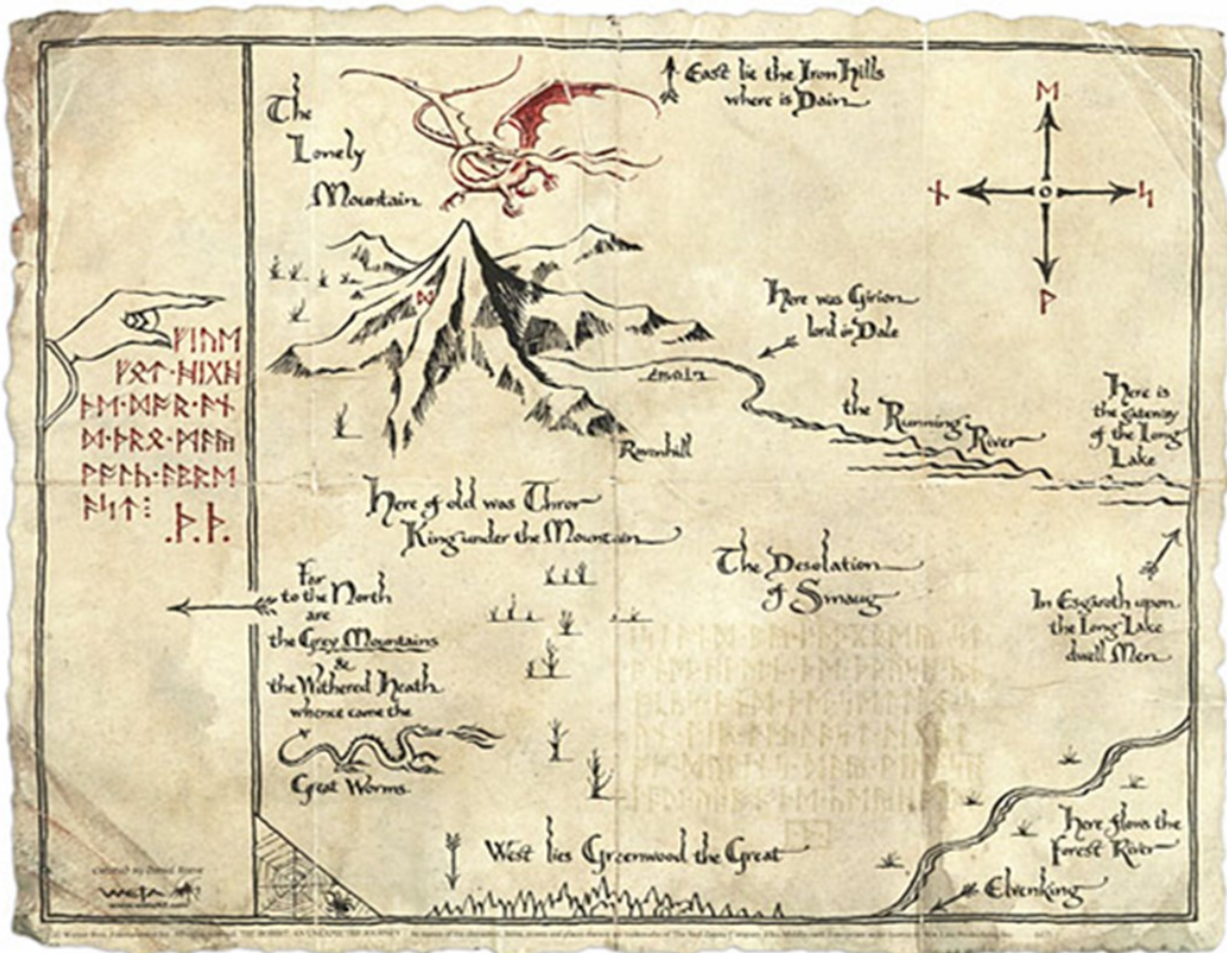
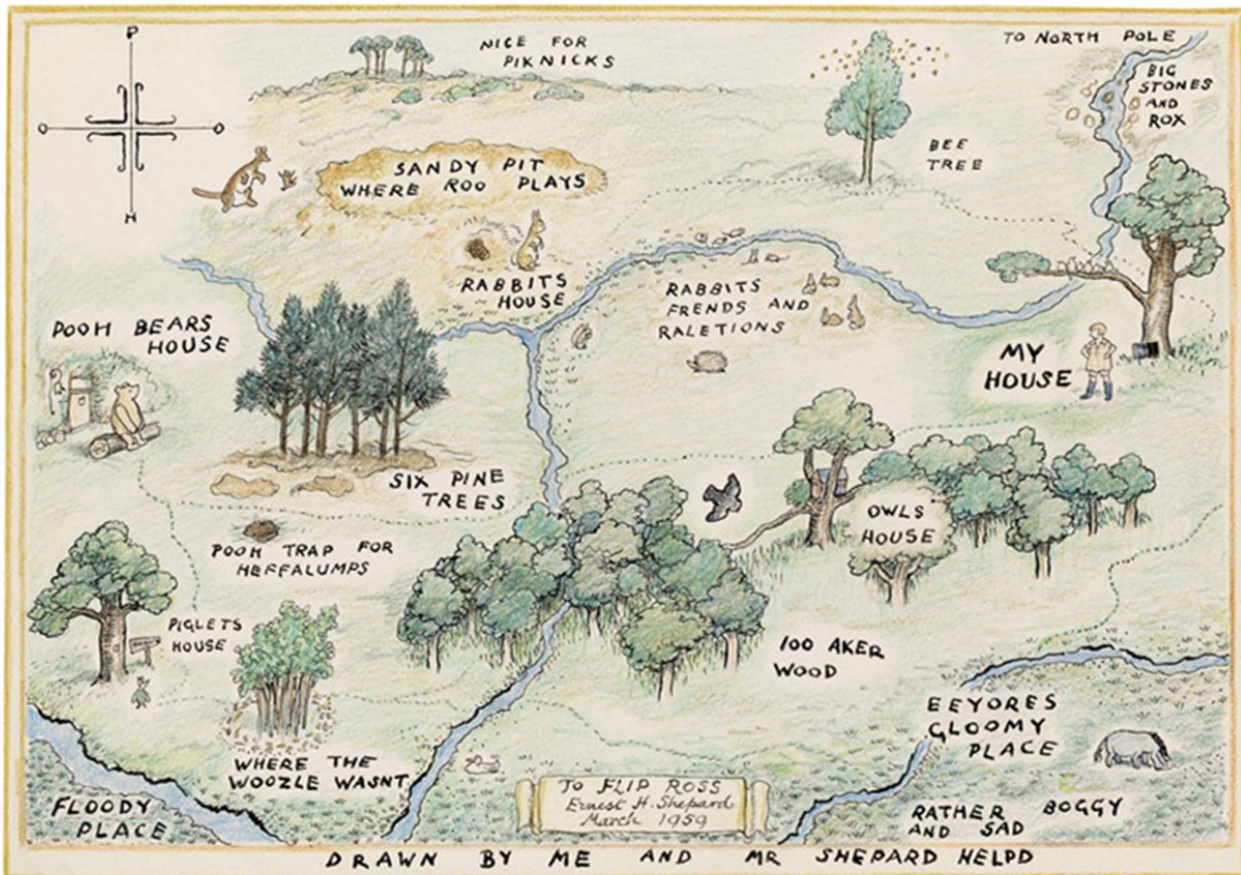
True North—Rend Collective - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwh27nFnVIU>

We know the way from Moana - [Moana - We Know The Way \(1080p - 4k\) \[English\] - YouTube](#)

### Display & Share:-

Find ways to display your work in a community space; ideas maps, posters, scrapbooks, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.

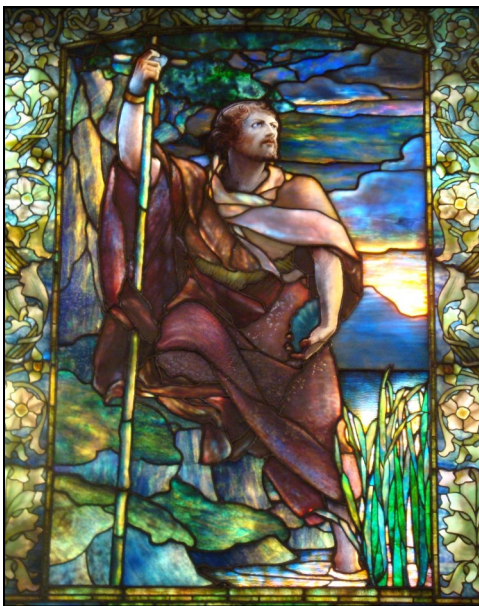






# Bible Stories to help us reflect on Discernment

Select whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of discernment.



## Activity based on the Story of John the Baptist:

Using extracts from **Luke 1; 3, 7, 9 (Matt 9, 11, 14 / Mark 1, 6)** . Tell the story of John's life and use it together to create a 'wellbeing' graph. Time travels along the x axis and wellbeing is up and down the y axis. E.g. His birth starts off as a high on wellbeing (angels, greatly desired child etc); Adult life in the desert - perhaps just below zero on the wellbeing; Lots of people coming to listen to him - well above zero; Baptising Jesus would be another high, capture and imprisonment, a low...

etc... The purpose of this is to show the ups and downs in his life - to create an emotion map. We can use it as a template for our own emotion map of just the last year or even our whole life!

**Below is a selection of stories of people whose lives were abruptly interrupted by Jesus and their future transformed.**



**The woman at the well John 4.** Both Jesus and the woman made choices and broke the social rules in this story. Jesus confronted her (when she approached, social norms at the time would suggest that he should have retired from the well); she carried on regardless of a strange man being at the well; they both engaged with each other in discussion/debate etc... We are told that when the disciples return from their shopping trip they

are 'shocked' to find Jesus talking with a woman. Jesus broke lots of 'social norms/barriers' in this story.

## Zaccheus Luke 19:1-10.

Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So





he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, “Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.”

Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, “This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!”

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.”

Jesus said to him, “Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

The Bible tells us how Zacchaeus’ life changed completely; it was never the same again; and that change affected many other people too.

### The woman who touched Jesus’ cloak



#### Luke 8:42b - 48.

As Jesus went along, the people were crowding him from every side. Among them was a woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years; she had spent all she had on doctors, but no one had been able to cure her. She came up in the crowd behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak, and her bleeding stopped at once. Jesus asked, “Who touched me?”

Everyone denied it, and Peter said, “Master, the people are all around you and crowding in on you.”

But Jesus said, “Someone touched me, for I knew it when power went out of me.” The woman saw that she had been found out, so she came trembling and threw herself at Jesus’ feet. There in front of everybody, she told him why she had touched him and how she had been healed at once. Jesus said to her, “My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.”

This woman had been in social lockdown for 12 years. Her decision that day changed her world.



**Mary and Martha Luke 10:38-42**

As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a



woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!”

The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be

taken away from her.”

***We have to make choices. How do we come to understand what matters most?***

**The boy healed of a demon Luke 9:38-42.**

A man shouted from the crowd, “Teacher! I beg you, look at my son—my only son! A spirit attacks him with a sudden shout and throws him into a fit, so that he foams at the mouth; it keeps on hurting him and will hardly let him go! I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't.”

Jesus answered, “How unbelieving and wrong you people are! How long must I stay with you? How long do I have to put up with you?” Then he said to the man, “Bring your son here.”

As the boy was coming, the demon knocked him to the ground and threw him into a fit. Jesus gave a command to the evil spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.



**The raising of Lazarus John 11:1-46.—**

How did Jesus know when to stay and when to go ...?

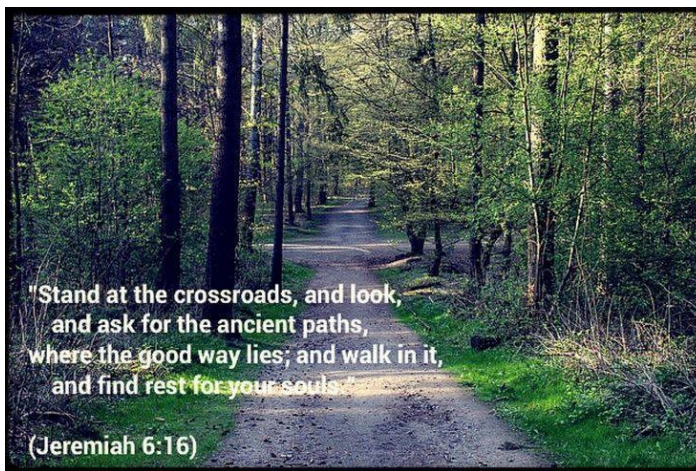
**Isaiah 55: 6-13**

Turn to the LORD and pray to him, now that he is near.  
 Let the wicked leave their way of life and change their way of thinking.  
 Let them turn to the LORD, our God; he is merciful and quick to forgive.  
 “My thoughts,” says the LORD, “are not like yours,  
 and my ways are different from yours.  
 As high as the heavens are above the earth,  
 so high are my ways and thoughts above yours.

“My word is like the snow and the rain that come down from the sky to water

the earth.  
 They make the crops grow and provide seed for planting and food to eat.  
 So also will be the word that I speak—  
 it will not fail to do what I plan for it; it will do everything I send it to do.

“You will leave Babylon with joy; you will be led out of the city in peace.  
 The mountains and hills will burst into singing,  
 and the trees will shout for joy.  
 Cypress trees will grow where now there are briers;  
 myrtle trees will come up in place of thorns.  
 This will be a sign that will last forever,  
 a reminder of what I, the LORD, have done.”



- Listen to -**
- Rend Collective, My Lighthouse: [Rend Collective - My Lighthouse \(Official Video\) - YouTube](#)
  - Rend Collective, I will never walk alone: [Rend Collective - Never Walk Alone \(Lyrics And Chords\) - YouTube](#)
  - Rob Halligan, I Can't Make You Walk: [Rob halligan I can't make you walk - YouTube](#)
  - Paul McCartney, Find My Way (Dec 18, 2020) [Paul McCartney - Find My Way \(Official Music Video\) - YouTube](#)
  - The Croods Music Video – Shine Your Way: [The Croods Music Video ~ Shine Your Way - YouTube](#)
  - Wisdom’s table - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hm6SQ1nmXP1>
  - Enya – So I Could Find My Way: [Enya - So I Could Find My Way \(Official Video\) - YouTube](#)



## Let the Dance Begin . . . Soon

We now miss out on so much  
the graduation of a granddaughter,  
the wedding of a niece,  
the Final Four,  
the beginning of Baseball,  
the great Easter liturgy,  
the day by day interaction on the street.

The virus has imposed a huge silence among us.

It is a silence that evokes loneliness,  
and domestic violence,  
and job loss,  
and the end of life in the bars, and on the beach, and in the  
street.

We wait; we may wait in despair, or at least in deep disappointment.

But we may also wait differently:

we wait in confident faith;  
we wait in eager longing.  
we wait on the Lord.

We wait for the future and against despair,

because we know that you, the God of life, will defeat the force  
of death.

We know that the Friday execution could not defeat the life lived  
by Jesus

nor the life lived by his faithful people.

As we wait, we practice our next moves for the coming dance;

it is only a little while . . . “yet a little while”;

we will *walk* the long march of obedience;

we will *run* the race of discipleship;

we will *soar* like eagles into God’s good future of neighborliness.

We know that you will overcome the silence

because the silence . . . no more than the darkness . . .

can overcome the Lord of Life. Amen.

**Unlock**, by various names, has been around since 1972, trying to help (mainly) urban Christians to understand and share their faith appropriately. Our life experience matters; our stories; our joys and sorrows. The Bible has plenty to say, more than we'll ever know, about our lives, if we know how to read it and apply it - if we know how to **UNLOCK** it!

Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies, based on a reflective learning cycle which is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way (see below). We usually work with people outside of church who may be interested in finding out a bit more about faith but perhaps are not attracted to the formal methods of learning often associated with church life. Our approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. It has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners. Many churches have activities that draw in members of their surrounding community but then struggle with how to move on from those relationships into exploring faith, especially in urban environments where anything formal might be treated with suspicion. Unlock's approach can help with that.

There are many free resources on the Unlock website [www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources](http://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources) designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular

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## The Unlock Learning Cycle

### Unlocking real life

#### stories of urban people

Start with the group telling stories from their real life experience.

### Releasing life changing skills and confidence

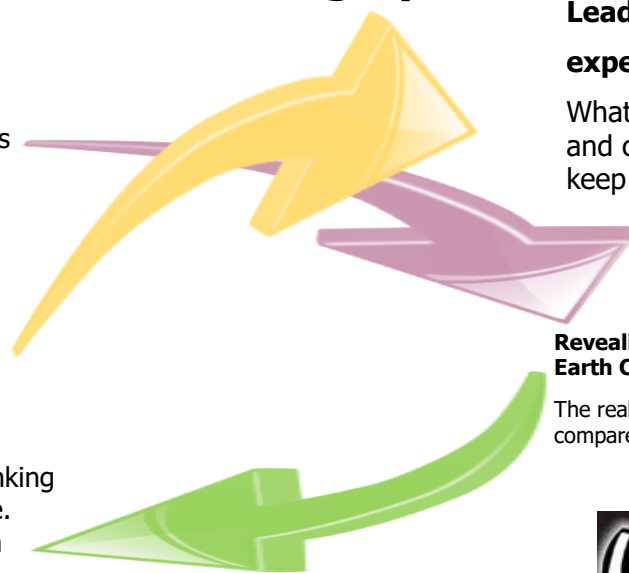
Change happens as a result of linking real life experience with the Bible. This change often leads to action among others.

### Leading to more experience

What we learn now is learnt for life and changes us. We also learn to keep reflecting!

### Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

The real life stories are connected to and compared with similar situations in the Bible.



## 10 principles of Training used by Unlock in its work

1. Pay attention to the local, regional and cultural factors that influence people's lives
2. Develop the ability to help other people tell their stories.
3. Take a genuine interest and enjoyment in LISTENING to other people's stories.
4. AFFIRM and ENCOURAGE people so that they can be confident enough to formulate their own questions, and not to impose our own answers on other people's questions.
5. Be PATIENT and WAIT for people to see the gaps in their own knowledge.
6. Believe that people can make sense of the Bible and their own experience, and make the connection between the two; and that God by his spirit will lead people to truth and action.
7. Encourage working together in groups where each person's contribution is valued, and where diversity of opinion is accepted and tolerated.
8. Be aware of what is going on in and between people in such groups.
9. Work with a group so that it can come to its own conclusions and decide on its own actions.
10. Value everyone as a 'Treasure –chest of information and experience'; seeing our task as one of giving people the keys to undo their treasures.

### And some Dos and Don'ts

#### Do: -

- Know and use each person's name
- Accept whatever is offered and encourage further contributions
- Encourage everyone to have a go
- Find non threatening questions to enable people to join in
- Build trust between group members
- Try to work with groups of between 5 and 15 people
- Create an environment where each member has confidence to contribute
- Encourage and enable people to draw on their own experience as a primary learning tool
- Help the group to work together
- Make it clear that you value each person's opinion enough to want them to say what they think
- Gather information about what is already known and shared in a group before introducing new information



- Ask questions like, 'What do you think?' 'What would you like to change?', 'How are you going to change it?', 'What's the best thing about . . .?', 'What's the worst thing about . . .?'
- Encourage participants to consider where their information has come from and how their views have been formed.
- Create experiences for the group to reflect on, you can use film, drama, pictures, paintings, or photographs, cartoons, music, creative activities, community experiences.
- Stress the vastness of the data which the group already possesses.
- Give chances for people to respond, question, discuss.
- Introduce new information (including the Bible) in manageable chunks
- Expect change
- Help the group apply the Word to the here and now. 'What has this got to do with me? With us?'
- Work at presenting in the language of the group.
- Be creative
- Adapt published material to the needs of the group
- Write or make your own material
- Create flexible programmes that can adjust to group needs as they emerge
- Seek the group's agreement for the programme, allow them to modify it as necessary
- Listen attentively

#### **Don't: -**

- Use religious language, jargon, or clichés
- Use middle class illustrations, examples, case studies
- Assume a familiarity with the bible
- Tell people what they should do, think, believe; don't say, 'This is how it is.'
- Put people on the spot, or in the spotlight
- Make assumptions about people's lifestyles and domestic arrangements
- Don't ask questions with 'right' or 'wrong' answers or that rely on knowledge, rather than experience
- Make value judgements about people who think and learn differently to you and your friends
- Assume that everyone can read – or that no one can
- Lecture, give out handouts, issue book lists.





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