

WOMEN InTouch

JUNE | 2015 | VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 2

Refreshing the soul

SPIRITUAL WEARINESS

ALSO INSIDE:

EMPOWERED TO CHANGE THE WORLD

THANK YOU, MR WESLEY

HOW TO PRAY WHEN YOU REALLY DON'T FEEL LIKE IT

STARTING A LIFE GROUP

team talk

FROM THE DESK OF THE TERRITORIAL PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Grace-filled lives? We sing and talk a lot about grace, but when it comes to giving grace to others we often fall short. This is an area we all struggle with.

How do we react when we are betrayed? When someone is telling lies about us? This happened to me and I was angry. But I knew that I would eventually come face-to-face with the person and I needed to forgive them. And I have forgiven them. That does not mean that I agree with what was said and done, but it releases me to get on with my life and not hold on to any grudges or resentment.

What kind of gracious attitudes should we strive for? I want to suggest that, as women of God, we need to consider the following:

- I forgive anyone who has hurt me, I let go of bitterness and resentment and I live freely;
- I refuse to listen to gossip and criticism and I choose to speak words of life;
- I stop complaining and I choose to see the best in every day;
- I see people through God's eyes, made in his image, and see the very best in them;
- I turn negatives into positives, making the best of every situation;
- I show the same grace to others that God has shown to me;
- I encourage, build up, and don't tear down;
- I look after myself, and am then able to give my best to others;
- I am unselfish and leave any thought of entitlement behind, recognising the blessing of God in my life;
- I give without expecting anything in return;
- I listen with the desire to really understand;
- I choose hope and a future, rather than despair;
- I rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep;
- I celebrate the success and achievement of others;
- I walk with Jesus;
- I am obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit;
- I always keep Jesus at the centre of my life – my identity is in him.

What if we really trusted God – by his grace – to help us act on three of these statements consistently over the next month? What if we discussed this with a couple of close friends and we each committed to pray and encourage each other with putting these three things into action?

Scripture, as recorded in Colossians 3:12–15 (*The Voice*) confirms that we need to live grace-filled lives.

“Since you are all set apart by God, made holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a *holy way of life*: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Put up with one another. Forgive. Pardon any offences against one another, as the Lord has pardoned you, because you should act in kind. But above all these, put on love! Love is the perfect tie to bind these together. Let your hearts fall under the rule of the Anointed's peace (the peace you were called to as one body), and be thankful.”

With God's grace we can do it.



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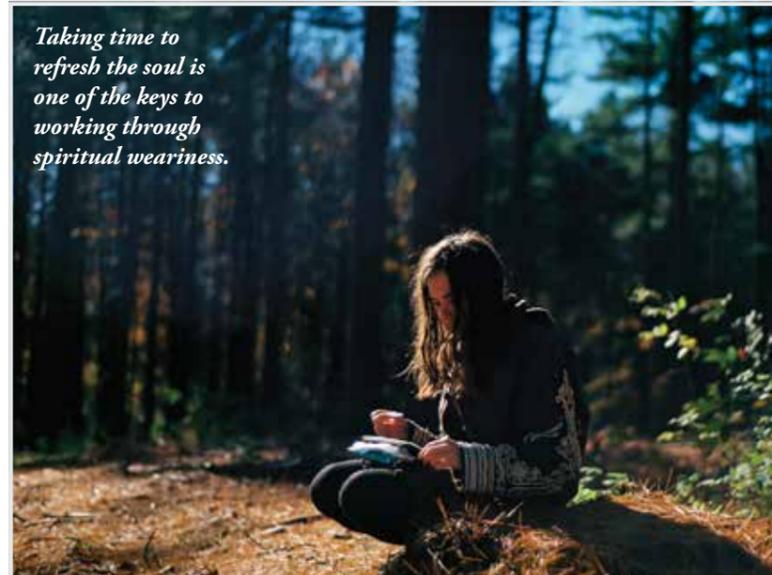
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*Taking time to
refresh the soul is
one of the keys to
working through
spiritual weariness.*



about this issue

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me”
(Psalm 51:12).

David, Elijah and others close to God throughout the Bible, experienced times of spiritual weariness – times when they felt distant from God, worn out, discouraged, or in need of spiritual renewal and rejuvenation.

Jesus, himself, took time out to rest and meet with God, renewing the strength he needed to continue his world-changing ministry.

All of us, as human beings, experience times of spiritual weariness in our Christian walk. In this issue of *Women in Touch* we look at spiritual weariness – some reasons behind it, some ways to work through it, and some of its symptoms including feelings of disconnect, indifference, unforgiveness, or a desire to simply withdraw from all those around us, including God.

Facing roadblocks in our prayer lives can also be a symptom, or result, of spiritual weariness. Perhaps we feel that our prayers are not being heard and that there is a stony silence from heaven. Or perhaps we just can't, or don't want, to pray at all and we're too stressed or exhausted to even care.

In her article on how to pray when you don't feel like praying, author Bonnie Gray shares some insights on working through this difficult time by treating prayer as an intimate conversation where we open our souls to God, rather than a spiritual transaction to make us feel better.

Katherine Mills also reflects on the dark nights of the soul that spiritual weariness can bring, encouraging readers to search out, and hold on to, God's promises of total understanding, compassion and strength.

In other articles, Captain Gen Peterson takes a look at gender inequality and violence against women through the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at well. Gen clearly shows how God sees and values women, especially those rejected and abused by society.

Dana Townsend also looks at the Sabbath – a concept often overlooked in our busy modern society. Through personal examples, Dana shares the importance of physical, spiritual and emotional rest in maintaining good health and vibrancy in all aspects of life.

To conclude our issue on spiritual weariness, Heart Songs offers comfort and encouragement from Psalm 34, showing how close God is to those of us who are weary, broken-hearted and burned out.

I hope you enjoy this issue and can find a personal message of help, hope and encouragement within its pages.

Simone Worthing
Editor

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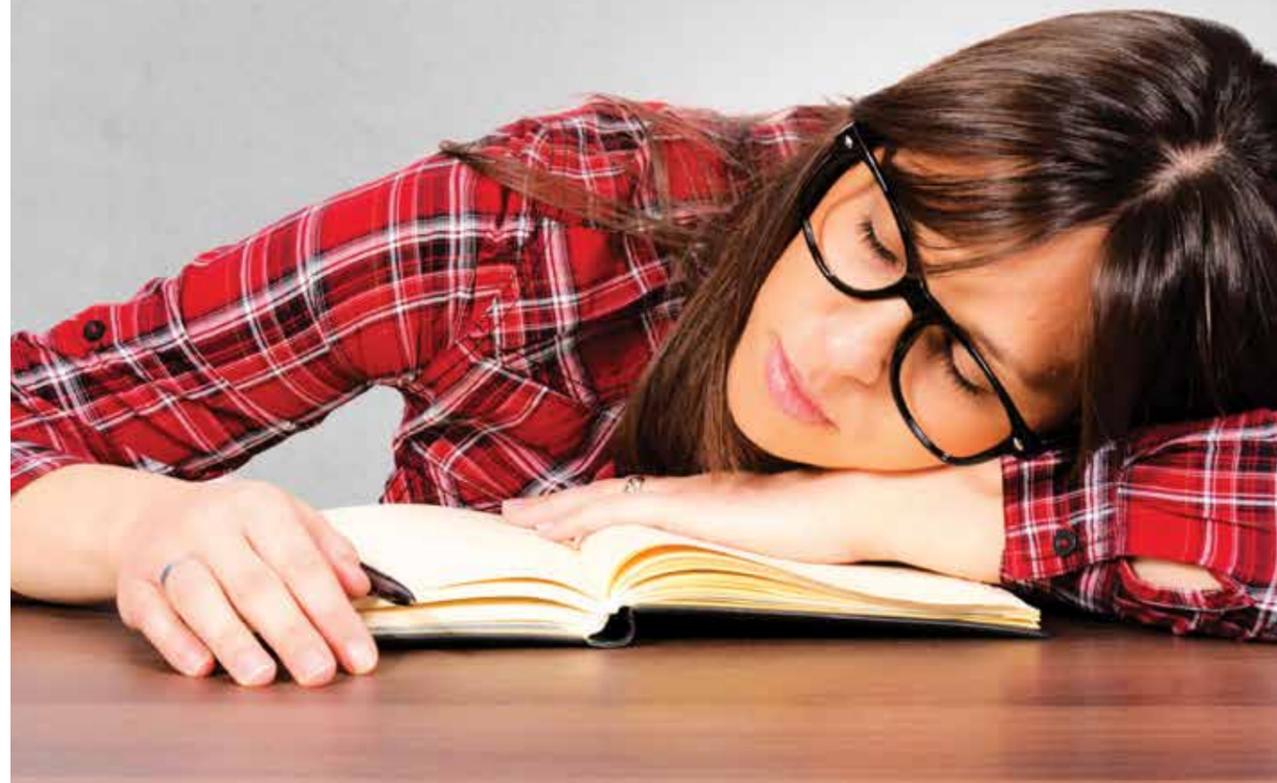
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HEART SONGS

I have had enough!

SPIRITUAL WEARINESS IS COMMON TO US ALL. THERE ARE WAYS, HOWEVER, TO COMBAT THIS WEARINESS, FOCUSING ON MAINTAINING A DEEP CONNECTION WITH CHRIST

words Major Jo-Anne Brown



“I have had enough! “I’m finished. Please end my life here and now” (1 Kings 19: 4, *The Voice*).

Saying this he lay down and slept.

These are Elijah’s words – they could easily be my words or your words, our words. Feeling like we want to die might (or might not) be going too far, but anyone who has been involved in ministry for any length of time has probably felt this way: “I have had enough. I’m finished”.

For Elijah, it was understandable. He had predicted a three-year drought, lived with the consequences of that, had just dramatically battled against 850 idolatrous prophets and literally seen fire fall from heaven. His life was threatened by an evil and powerful woman and he had fled into the desert. He was exhausted, afraid and alone – he had had enough and just wanted to die. Instead, he fell asleep, then was fed by an angel and led on a much longer journey into the desert (1 Kings 17-19).

Our experiences in ministry may not seem as dramatic as Elijah’s (I have never seen fire fall from heaven!) but we, too, can experience such weariness. Sometimes it’s hard to tell if it is mental, physical or spiritual weariness – we just feel that we have had enough!

DEALING WITH WEARINESS

Elijah’s experience gives us some idea how to deal with this kind of weariness.

Firstly, he needed to stop. We are not always good at recognising the limitations of our bodies or our inner selves. Sometimes, (dare I say?) we forget that we are not God Almighty.

One Easter, flicking through the TV channels, I came across *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and left it there for a moment. The scene was Jesus, walking among a group of people who, with arms outstretched, were demanding more and more of him. It reminded me that Jesus didn’t heal every person in Israel at that time; he didn’t give in to the expectations that people tried to put on him; and sometimes he simply withdrew. In other words – he stopped. Perhaps this is one of the most helpful (and challenging) disciplines for our spiritual lives. We need to recognise when it is time to stop.

TIME TO WITHDRAW

Secondly, like Jesus, Elijah withdrew – actually, he ran for his life. Sometimes we need to do this too: simply put ourselves in a “quiet” place, whatever that looks like for us. Here, we can rant and rave – otherwise known as debriefing. Get it out of our system. Tell it like it is.

At times it feels like we have been giving and giving and no-one is noticing or even supporting us. It feels unfair and we think we are alone. If we hold this inside ourselves it can easily turn to bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness.

We tend to point at others, at what they are or are not doing and we can become judgmental. It’s better to get this out of our system and tell God exactly how we feel. He can cope with that.

Often in the telling, we realise it isn’t quite as bad as we thought. Sometimes it is – and that can help us realise that perhaps we need to make some changes.

During this time of withdrawal it is also good to rest, to sleep and to eat something nourishing. The tendency for many of us, when we are living on the go, is to eat on the go.

We don’t always choose the most nourishing option when there is something quicker and tastier at hand, and this will contribute to our weariness. Good food and good sleep are far more necessary and beneficial than we often realise.

ENCOUNTERING GOD

There is more to Elijah’s story than simply the practical ways of dealing with such weariness. Rest and nourishing food are essential, but God knew that Elijah needed more than that. He led him even deeper into the desert, to the place of encounter (1 Kings 19:8-9). Here, God gave Elijah another opportunity to express his feelings.

After listening to him, God didn’t try to comfort or soothe Elijah in words. He gave him a fresh encounter with himself, the living God! God met with Elijah, right where he was – and then called him back into ministry (1 Kings 19:15).

Elijah was able to go back because he had rested, eaten, and met with God. He continued to minister in powerful ways after his fresh encounter with a powerful God.

Paul wrote: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

DWELLING IN CHRIST

Paul is another man who well knew what it was to be weary – *and* shipwrecked, whipped, stoned and imprisoned. One wonders how often he felt he had “had enough!” We need to learn not only how to deal with this weariness when we experience it, but also how to avoid getting to the point where we feel so worn out we just want to lie down and die.

Paul shows us this. His secret and his strength were in his relationship with Christ: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

As we learn to dwell in Christ and allow him to dwell in us (John 15:5), we learn to keep step with him, to listen to him and to do only what *he* requires of us.

Dwelling in Christ means maintaining that deep inner connection, that intimacy, so that our ministry arises out of our connection with him.

We are more able to discern when we should say yes and when we should say no.

We have a greater desire to spend time with him, nourishing our souls and spirits.

As we live in him and keep step with his spirit we will be guarding ourselves, body, mind and spirit, from becoming worn out and we can continue to serve the one who has called us.

Hope for the long haul

SPIRITUAL WEARINESS CAN BE DEEP, SOUL-SEARING AND ALL-ENCOMPASSING. FOCUSING ON SOME LONG-TERM RESPONSES CAN BRING SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND RENEWAL

words Major Vicki Clarke



The realisation can often come unexpectedly. The night was entitled “Lest we have Forgotten – a musical soiree with epicurean delights, a degustation of music and food”. We sang hymns and listened to the songs sung by the veteran members of the songsters – lest we forgot the message of these great songs.

The words spoke to me one song after the other: “The well is deep and I require a draught of the water of life” – *The Well is Deep* General Albert Orsborn (1886-1967), Salvation Army Songbook 351; “When we reach the end of our hoarded resources our Father’s full giving is only begun” – *He Giveth More Grace*, by Annie J Flint; “Don’t think because you’ve failed him he despairs; For he gives to those who ask His grace for every task” – From the musical *Hosea* by Generals John Gowans and John Larsson.

I had to stop and let God minister to me. Indeed, I needed to find that refreshing water of life.

We can reach a point called spiritual weariness when there is too much out-go and not enough in-come. For me, that night and those words were my in-come – I was recharged and ready to go.

Sometimes in life our weariness gets too great and it will take longer than one night in God’s presence for his provision to come to us.

To be weary is to be exhausted in strength, endurance, vigour or freshness, according to Webster’s Dictionary. Have you ever felt that way?

SPIRITUAL DESERT

Often you don’t know how you ended up so weary, but you know you are – there just doesn’t seem any energy left for the next event. The disciplines of your devotional life have become dry or tedious; you can’t seem to pray like you want to; or maybe you think God just isn’t listening to you. Going to worship each week also becomes more of a chore than a joyous experience.

We sometimes blame God for what has happened in our lives and how we have suffered. We simply can’t reason why the wicked are prospering and their lives are going well, and me, the committed Christ follower, is experiencing such pain and suffering.

The following ideas may be useful to help overcome your spiritual weariness:

- On a very practical level, find physical rest and nourishment – bring about that healthy balance to your life again.
- Sometimes we need to realise that the Sabbath Day every seventh day is still needed in the 21st century! Writer and speaker Parker Palmer said: “Self-care is never a selfish act – it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch” Parker, P, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, Jossey-Bass 2000pp 30-31; cited in *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Scazzero, P, 2006, p35.
- Don’t do unnecessary things. Look at your to-do list for the day and determine what you can achieve. What is essential and important; what is energising, what is fun?
- Stay connected to family and friends. Proverbs 11:25b says: “Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed”. We were made to be in family, and that includes your church family.
- Examine your life and confess any sin. Acts 3:19-20 says: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord”. Spiritual weariness is not a sin; it is a response to life’s events and pressures. Sometimes the actions that result from our weariness are not very Christ-like.
- Allow God to re-energise and re-vitalise your spiritual walk. Make a decision, without any guilt feelings, to start afresh with God. Psalm 23:3 says: “He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honour to his name” (*New Living Translation*).
- Read a verse of Scripture and meditate on it. Don’t set yourself up to read three chapters each day when you can only concentrate a little. Over time, God will increase your ability to concentrate and he may also give you a renewed desire to read his Word, but don’t put additional pressure on yourself.
- Tell God you love him. It is sometimes helpful to reflect on the names of God during these times, allowing the name and attribute described to feed your soul.
- Remember you are weary, so allow this process to take the necessary time for restoration to happen.
- Know what brings you joy – then do it! The song writer wasn’t wrong when he suggested we count our blessings. Be thankful for three things each day – write them down – thank God for them.
- Seek prayer support from those you trust – friends who journey with you in life, members of your life group or your corps officer.
- Remind yourself that this season of life will pass. Jesus said that he came to give you life abundant so don’t settle for anything less!

One size does *not* fit all!

words Major Wendy Watts

“I feel so ashamed,” Jessica said, as tears rolled down her face. “When I lead worship, I feel like such a fraud. What would people think if they knew that what I talk about on Sunday is not how I feel about God the rest of the week? I try to do my devotions and pray but it just doesn’t do it for me anymore. My friends immerse themselves in journaling but that doesn’t work for me either. The only time I feel close to God is when I’m at the beach.”

Jessica’s tears were sincere and desperate. She wanted to be authentic so that who she appeared to be on Sunday was who she really was Monday to Saturday. She wanted that passion, zeal and desire for time with God like she once had. Instead she was spiritually tired, dry and weary.

Jessica’s story isn’t unique. While the details of her life will be different, the experience of spiritual weariness may resonate deep within your soul. Spiritual weariness leaves you feeling dissatisfied, impatient and dry.

SPIRITUAL RELIEF

The antidote to spiritual weariness is as varied as each individual. It may come as no surprise that relief for our spiritual weariness may be intrinsically linked to our individuality.

There has recently been an increased interest in the variety of ways people naturally love and connect with God. Author Gary Thomas refers to this as our spiritual temperament. He has identified nine spiritual temperaments:

- Activist – loving God through confrontation with evil.
- Ascetic – loving God through solitude and simplicity.
- Caregiver – loving God through serving others.

- Contemplative – loving God through adoration.
- Enthusiast – loving God through mystery and celebration.
- Intellectual – loving God through the mind.
- Naturalist – loving God through experiencing him outdoors.
- Sensate – loving God through the senses.
- Traditionalist – loving God through ritual and symbol.

(Thomas, Gary L, *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul’s Path to God*, Nashville: Zondervan, Kindle Edition, 2007.)

The liberating thing is that no one spiritual temperament is better than another. The body of Christ needs all temperaments.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

To help grow through times of spiritual weariness, many people find it beneficial to engage in spiritual disciplines. These are exercises or practices that help us open ourselves up to God.

Below are some suggestions on which discipline may be more suitable for a particular spiritual temperament. These are more fully detailed in Adele Calhoun’s book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005).

- Activists – may feel closer to God when engaging in the disciplines of justice or care of the earth.
- Ascetics – enjoys extended periods of stillness through disciplines of simplicity and silence.
- Caregivers – are energised through hospitality and service.
- Contemplatives – would find contemplative prayer reinvigorating.

- Enthusiast – can connect with God through the discipline of celebration.
- Intellectuals – enjoy studying God’s Word at a deeper level through the discipline of Bible Study.
- Naturalists – may feel their heart stir as they read God’s Word in the outdoors and engage in meditation.
- Sensates – enjoys using their senses, such as reading the Bible while listening to music; or drawing in their journal.
- Traditionalists – feel alive through practices, such as a fixed hour of prayer.

Jessica discovered that her spiritual temperament preference was naturalist. She felt liberated as she read her Bible outdoors and prayed while walking along the beach. She didn’t cram any more into her day, she just did it differently.

Engaging in your spiritual temperament may just be what you need to renew that passion, zeal and desire to be with God.

FURTHER READING

- Barton, Ruth Haley, *Sacred Rhythms, Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, Downers Grove, IVP Books, 2006.
- Perrine, Myra, *What’s Your God Language?: Connecting with God through Your Unique Spiritual Temperament*, Saltriver Tyndale Publishers USA, Kindle Edition, 2007.
- Thompson, Marjorie J, *Soul Feast, An invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Mr Wesley and Me

THANK YOU, MR WESLEY

LIEUTENANT NICOLA POORE CONCLUDES HER SERIES ON WESLEYAN CONCEPTS IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE, WITH THIS FEATURE THANKING MR WESLEY FOR HIS THEOLOGY THAT BEGINS, AND ENDS, IN LOVE

Why all the fuss about Mr Wesley? As Salvationists, we cannot escape our Wesleyan Methodist roots; nor would we want to. In reflecting on Wesley’s youth, General William Booth observed: “To me there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet”.

Wesley’s theology begins and ends with love. Perfect love. The apostle John states: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). Love is always our starting point, our primary interpretive lens, through which we make sense of the Scriptures and our lives. As an endpoint, too, having reflected and wrestled with the Scriptures, we return to the love of God. Wesleyans are delightfully caught in the gravity of God’s love.

We affirm that God is love. We understand that God so loved the whole world – that is, the entire created order – that he gave his only son. We wholeheartedly embrace the notion that the love of Christ, albeit Christ’s love or our love for Christ, compels us and motivates our activity.

Grand Wesleyan themes such as Christian perfection or universal atonement are the inevitable outworking of a theological foundation of love. We ought to thank God for Mr Wesley.

But does it really matter whether or not we know our Wesleyan heritage? Yes, I believe so. It matters because people need to know that salvation is available to all. It matters because people need to know that they can live with assurance of their salvation. It matters because people need to know that it is entirely possible to be made holy in this life. Each of these threads and more are woven into the DNA of The Salvation Army. We are custodians of a marvellous heritage.

WESLEYAN VOICE

Having said that, we are faced with significant challenges in preserving our Wesleyan voice. Wesleyan scholar David McEwan put it well in a paper on just this subject entitled “Denominational Identity in a World of Theological Indifferentism”. It is not so much the threat of religious pluralism, as our own indifference, or perhaps ignorance, towards our theological compass that is most alarming.

There is, of course, a way forward that is not so far removed from the plight of the Wesleys in the 18th century. While John Wesley is commonly referred to as the “Founder of Methodism”, the Methodist revival in England was greatly fuelled by the creative contribution of John’s younger brother, Charles. Many a noble theme expounded by John was lovingly crafted into poetry and set to

music by Charles Wesley. Hymn 419 in The Salvation Army Song Book is a good example:

*Come, Saviour, come and make me whole,
Entirely all my sins remove;
To perfect health restore my soul,
To perfect holiness and love.*

The hymns of Charles Wesley were critical in converting and discipling the predominantly illiterate, working-class masses of the Methodist revival. In a very real way, the first Methodists *were* what they sang. Shouldn’t that be the case for us, too?

Consider this a shout-out to all songwriters, poets, actors, filmmakers, artists, graphic designers, teachers, preachers and more! Let’s re-present the glorious themes and treasures of our God-given heritage in ways that are meaningful and accessible in our day. Ours is a voice that needs to be heard. Thank you, Mr Wesley.



Lieutenant Nicola Poore
Hawkesbury City
Corps Officer

HOW TO PRAY

even when you don't feel like it

BONNIE GRAY SHARES A FEW WAYS TO CONNECT WITH GOD WHEN YOU'RE FEELING OVERWHELMED, STRESSED OR JUST BURNT OUT

I didn't know that I was hiding. I've always been good at praying. Or so I thought. My dad left when I was seven. I've always looked to God as my Father, my provider. What I didn't realise is that God wants to be more than just my provider.

God longs to be my soul's confidante – deep where I feel lonely, where I struggle to receive and make space for me.

Loneliness is something I usually cover up by getting things done. It looks good because I'm well rewarded for checking boxes and being productive. Even in ministry.

But at the end of the day, even though I've accomplished a lot, I don't feel like I've fully lived. Because what I really want, I didn't make space for: to be known. I did not nurture my soul with God.

I find it easier to take care of others and get things done for God, rather than be vulnerable with my needs.

But God is showing me prayer is an intimate soul conversation to be loved and known, rather than a spiritual transaction to be made better.

Praying touches the part of me that is in process, uncertain, full of questions and doubts.

That is why praying is hard to do. And when I don't know how to pray, it makes me feel ashamed.

Jesus understands and says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Although this is Scripture, in our Christian culture, our desert prayer times are often met with well-meaning encouragement like, "Relationship with God isn't a feeling".

Although partially true, this can dehumanise our connection with God. The Psalmist reminds us there are no easy answers. "For he knows what we are made of; he knows our frame is frail, and he remembers we came from dust" (Psalm 103:14, *The Voice*).

Sometimes, it takes more faith to tell God we don't know how to pray, rather than praying for faith to pray like we used to.

This is how I began praying new intimate prayers. As I did, I uncovered a few soulful ways to pray when you don't know how:

WHEN YOU'RE OVERWHELMED, WHISPER HIS NAME.

Remember receiving a first love note? It didn't have to be long. Yet your heart felt *known* seeing your handwritten name. It kept you company in the daily grind. Whisper his name and listen for his echoes return in the quiet. God names the stars and he whispers your name.

"He heals the broken-hearted ... he determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name" (Psalm 147:3-5).

WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE WORDS TO PRAY, REST KNOWING JESUS IS PRAYING FOR YOU.

Your silence will not drive Jesus away. Nothing can separate you from his love. Not even your unrest. He'll never get tired of you. Sometimes, the greatest prayer we can experience is God's complete understanding and compassion. His presence.

"Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died ... is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34).

WHEN YOU ARE TOO STRESSED TO PRAY, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

We are a generation who doesn't know how to express our souls to God, even though we drive ourselves to exhaustion, doing for Jesus. As Richard Swenson says: "Chronic

overloading is not a spiritual prerequisite for authentic Christianity. Quite the contrary, overloading is often what we do when we forget who God is." *The Overload Syndrome: Learning to Live Within Your Limits (Guidebook)*, by Richard Swenson, NavPress, 1999.

Extend yourself the kindness and comfort you generously give others. Ironically, the times we most need God's comfort are the times we deprive ourselves of soul-nurturing time.

We feel selfish. Yet, God says, we can only comfort others with the comfort we first receive ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Instead of layering on guilt, let God love you through your choices to prioritise taking care of you.

WHEN YOU FEEL NUMB, INVITE JESUS INTO YOUR WORLD. JOURNAL.

Instead of struggling to reach Jesus, invite Jesus to enter your world. Research in a *New York Times* article shows the power of writing your personal story can lead to behavioural changes and improve happiness. Even 15 minutes of expressive writing makes a difference (goo.gl/pDr4kQ).

When we journal our stories with God, we give him space to re-write our stories with us. Don't you get "ah-ha" moments as you write?

"For the word of God is alive and active ... it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit ..." (Hebrews 4:12).

The "word" is the Greek word *logos* – translated as living voice. God is not limited to the written word. God uses everything living to speak into our lives. This includes journaling.

HAVE AN HONEST CONVERSATION. TAKE A WALK. FIND GOD'S LOVE NOTES.

Your silence will not drive Jesus away. Nothing can separate you from his love. In a recent interview, author Max Lucado shared that prayer must be an honest conversation with God and not a repetitive act (goo.gl/eCpbS1).

"I don't pray for long periods of time ... my prayers are relatively brief," he says. "The times I really feel blessed through prayer is when my prayers are sincere – when I kind of think through what I'm going through, or I'm going through a hard time and I use that

"But God is showing me prayer is an intimate soul conversation to be loved and known, rather than a spiritual transaction to be made better."

prayer to talk to God about everything."

Take a walk outside and let God touch you. Research shows that just 10 minutes can refresh and help with anxiety, depression in school work, work and everyday life.

WHEN YOU'RE TOO EXHAUSTED TO PRAY, STOP AND REST.

"Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you" (1 Kings 19:7).

Elijah had done everything he knew to do – even defeating the prophets of Baal. Yet, his problems did not go away. Stress broke Elijah's spirit. In despair, Elijah woke up to find fresh bread baking on hot stones and water – left just for him.

Not only that. God sent an angel to touch him – twice. God knew Elijah needed physical rejuvenation first in order to hear his gentle voice, whispering in a gentle breeze.

So, when you find it's hard to pray, don't be afraid. You're standing at the very cusp of who God longs to connect with – the real you. Take the time to rest. You're worth it.

Bonnie Gray is the author of *Finding Spiritual Whitespace: Awakening Your Soul To Rest* Revell, 2014. Bonnie blogs at faithbarista.com "because sometimes you need a double shot of faith".

This article originally appeared on 17 February in *Relevant* magazine at goo.gl/svnm7. Re-printed with permission.

PHOTO: Kathy Hughes



reflection

WE ALL GET WEARY

words Katherine Mills
Women in Touch contributing writer

Weariness can befall us in different ways. Having suffered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome for 17 years, I've experienced that bone-tired weariness that grates down to your very soul.

Having lived in a fallen world, I've also experienced the kind of emotional weariness that fractures hearts.

Pressing into my relationship with God, his promises and Christian community has provided the resilience and strength I needed to come through times of weariness. However, when spiritual weariness hits, it becomes so much harder to bear.

It is in the weary times that I find myself like the Israelites in Isaiah 40:27, wondering whether my way is hidden from the Lord and my cause is disregarded by my God? Whether he sees me and, if he does, then does he even care? And do I care anymore; is faith even worth anything?

Spiritual weariness has a myriad of causes and comes in different forms. Somewhere along the track you find your relationship with God is distant, your spiritual tank is empty or there are more questions than answers.

Some call it a dark night of the soul. This title fits well with my experience; times of spiritual weariness have felt like great voids. It has been like wearing a cloak of heaviness that can't be shaken off.

I might be aware that what I need is to reach out to God, to cry out, to whisper a plea for help, but I just don't have the strength or courage. It feels as if nothing can possibly break through my circumstances or the darkness that surrounds me.

I know that I am not alone in my experience. However, unfortunately, in some circles it is taboo to talk about feelings of spiritual weariness.

Black nights of the soul are seasons that many, if not all, Christians will travel through and should be shared. For when we can't pray for ourselves, we need to have trusted others praying for us.

If our church family do not know we are struggling, then how will they know to pray?

In Isaiah 40:27-31, the prophet reminds the weary Israelites who their God is. Grab a Bible and discover it afresh for yourself. God knows exactly where we are and what we are going through. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even if you are not feeling it, hold on to the promises of God. God never gives up on us. The way out of spiritual weariness may not be easy but if we are trusting God, it will be easier.

Hold on to these verses of Isaiah 40, for trusting in God will renew your strength.

"Nowhere in the world is a woman safe from violence. The strengthening of global commitment to counteract this plague is a movement whose time has come."

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro

recommended read

UNEXPECTED LOVE

Julie Zine Coleman
Thomas Nelson, Inc. 2013

Perhaps the best recommendation for any book is wanting to go out and buy copies for friends, which is exactly what happened to me. I began to see different women I knew in situations just like those described in the book.

As I was reading I could see again that, as Julie says in her book, "Women of the first century were not so different from women of today. They struggled with a need for significance, a need to be loved".

Julie Zine Coleman writes about nine women, each having a different encounter with Jesus and each discovering that they were precious and loved. This encounter changed their lives forever.

Julie carefully retells each story, almost as if she was there, and then recounts how the story would be if happening to someone today. This is the basic format of each chapter: telling the story, digging deeper, challenging us each with "food for thought" and encouraging us to reflect through journaling.

While each reader will decide for themselves if they will dig deeper and allow each encounter to speak to them, I was reminded time after time that Jesus values women as individuals.

I thought of those individuals whose stories mirrored those in the book.



I thought of the mother who just wanted everything to be okay with her children as they grew into adulthood.

I thought of the woman with the terminal illness who wants to live life to the full but is continually admitted to hospital with infection after infection, and I thought of the woman overcome with anxiety and anger as everything in her life just always seemed to go wrong.

Jesus had simple conversations with women and their lives were changed forever. Encounters with Jesus today are just as life changing, and this book is presented in a way that makes it easy to see that – both then and now.

Major Angela Eyles
Contributing writer

Win a copy of this book! Simply send your name and email address to simone.worthing@ae.salvationarmy.org to win our giveaway copy of *Unexpected Love*.

Congratulations!
Congratulations to Debbie Tillack who has won last issue's giveaway – *A Beautiful Mess* by Major Danielle Strickland.

recipe

SMOKY BARBECUE RIBS

Recipe and photo by Lena Pobjie

INGREDIENTS

2kg pork spare ribs
½ cup brown sugar
1 ½ tsp paprika
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
1 375g bottle smoky barbecue marinade or barbecue sauce of your choice

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 170 degrees. Mix together sugar, paprika, garlic, salt, and pepper. Rub combined spice into pork ribs, covering both sides.
2. Cover baking tray with foil. Arrange ribs on the tray, meat side down. Cover firmly with foil and bake for two hours or until meat has shrunk from the end of the bone.
3. Allow ribs to cool, then pour sauce over them, covering both sides. Refrigerate for three to four hours.
4. Preheat barbecue or frying pan. Cook for 15 minutes, occasionally turning and basting with any leftover sauce. Cook until crisp on both sides. Enjoy!



Empowered to change the world

She is a trailblazer who reminds us that women are not only included, but empowered and equipped to change the world whether the world wants them to or not.

It's a story of a wayward woman's outrageous encounter with a powerful yet mysterious Middle Eastern man that will change the course of history.

Scandal, intrigue, redemption – find it all at “The Well”. Bible stories get great traction with the public when sold as epic dramas, and this narrative in John 4 has all the makings of a great film.

As we uncover the full meaning we realise that the damsel in question is more than meets the eye.

We know there is something “wrong” with this woman because she visits the well alone and at an unusual time of day to collect water. We know that even among her own people she is excluded. And the intrigue begins when Jesus, a Jew, starts a conversation with her, a Samaritan woman.

Now let me clear up a common mistake: Samaritan doesn't mean “good”. Samaritans were a race of people that were not well liked by the Jews.

Jesus gets chatty (very chatty given it's the longest recorded conversation with Jesus!) with an ostracised, Samaritan woman. And it gets worse. As the conversation unfolds we find out the woman has been divorced many times and is now in a de facto relationship!

This is where Hollywood could really make the story interesting! Too often we place our 21st-century context upon this woman and judge her as a “hussy”, therefore understanding the story as Jesus accepting her in her filth of immorality.

But this is first-century Palestine. A woman had no control over her marital status and needed a man to survive. So we can assume that, rather than being indecisive, she was probably barren and had been abandoned by numerous husbands and now must settle with any man who will “keep” her but not even marry her. She, through no fault of her own, has lost her honour and is despised by all because of it.

This is the woman Jesus chooses, not only to talk to, but to reveal himself to for the first time as “Messiah”. In doing so, Jesus is assuring her that she is “seen” and valued by God. What's more, this woman, and by extension all who resemble her (everyone!), is accepted and adopted into God's family.

BACK TO THE WELL

This encounter at the well is not a first. In fact, this movie could be called “Back to the Well – 4”.

You've heard the story – foreign man stops at a well and asks a woman to draw him water. This was the set up for Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel and Moses and Zipporah.

But don't worry; I'm not suggesting Jesus wanted to marry this woman! Rather, God was “proposing” a union between his people and all gentiles, and it is a proposal that continues to be offered today between God and all people. God wants each one of us to accept his proposal to join his family, regardless of our supposed earthly worth.

So, what is the response of the woman? She abandons her jar (which can be interpreted as synonymous with that of the disciples dropping their nets) and races into the villages to spread the good news and invites them to meet the Messiah.

Her inclusion into God's Kingdom becomes a vehicle for her connection and value in the world. She becomes the first evangelist to the gentiles and this deprived and rejected woman is remembered and celebrated 2000 years later.

She is a trailblazer who reminds us that women are not only included, but empowered and equipped to change the world whether the world wants them to or not.

GENDER INEQUALITY

And yet, 2000 years on, we continue to see women excluded and judged as unworthy, often through no fault of their own. One in three women will experience violence from men in their lifetime, and at the time of print 34 women have been killed by their partner in Australia this year alone.

Throughout the world, women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria.

As a modern Western society, we make all kinds of excuses for this, citing drugs, alcohol, anger management, financial stress, mental illness or a host of other social issues challenging families today.

However, experts agree that, while these are contributors to behaviour, it's gender inequality that causes violence

against women. Essentially, many men still see women as weaker and inferior to themselves and some men still see women as their possessions.

These men use their assumed power to manipulate and dominate women, and our society, that subconsciously accepts the general principle that women are less valuable, accepts that violence against women is an unfortunate but unchangeable reality.

Too often, rather than holding men to account, we blame the woman for her inability to control or leave a violent situation. We fail to realise that, to leave and attempt independence from a man who defines her as “his” could very well place her in more danger than ever before.

OF EQUAL VALUE

The story of the woman at the well is so powerful because it reminds us how God sees women, especially those who have been rejected and abandoned by society.

Jesus' desire to converse with the woman reminds us that God sees and includes women.

Jesus' acknowledgement of her de facto relationship reminds us that God sees the injustice in the actions of others, and doesn't turn a blind eye to its victims.

Jesus' admission of “messiahship” and her response of evangelism remind us that God's unfolding mission will use both men and women, equally. And the disciples' baffled response to Jesus' actions reminds us that there will always be those who just don't understand God's intention for equality of value of men and women.

Perhaps as we look at the encounters Jesus has with women throughout the gospels, we will begin to renew our understanding of God's love and acceptance of women, not as a good second best, but as individuals created in his image.

Captain Genevieve Peterson
Outreach Officer, Frankston
Australia Southern Territory

The secret of the Sabbath

words Dana Townsend



It is incredibly easy to succumb to a relentless cycle of busyness and be on the go 24/7.

Phones, emails, social media, assignments, work, church, family, friends, and hobbies – the list goes on.

Jesus taught that, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27 *New Living Translation*).

What can I learn here?

Spiritual rest

It is a wonderful blessing from the Lord which meets my human needs. I began to discover this blessing during my university years.

During high school, my understanding of the Sabbath was much more limited. I thought “Sabbath = day for church”. And so nothing would come between my family (and me) attending church every Sunday. I praise God for this discipline instilled in me, but as I came to realise later, this is not what Sabbath is about.

For me, a typical Sunday consisted of the morning meeting, an extended

family lunch, working on homework or assignments, music practice, and a Sunday night meeting. Full on busy! So was the rest of my week as a student with various extra-curricular activities.

Cue a life-sapping illness in June 2007 when I was in Year 12. I was forced to rest, basically 24/7, for months. I had periods of improvement and then a major relapse, but praise the Lord, on 17 July 2012, I was totally healed! Hallelujah!

During my university years, perhaps as a result of the illness, I began to learn the secret of the Sabbath. The Lord showed me the wisdom of having a regular day set apart for resting – physically and spiritually. I began to see that “Sabbath = day of rest”, and as Jesus said, it was made to meet our human needs.

I made a determination, a covenant if you like, to set aside Sundays as a time in which I would never do any work related to university. I trusted that God would equip me to do well and give me strength to get up early on the Monday to study for an imminent

exam. Additionally, I would never schedule any tutoring for Sundays.

This was incredibly freeing. Sundays had already been a day to look forward to, but now I anticipated them with much joy! I was able to give my mind a rest from the intellectual gymnastics it had to do during the week, and I could focus much more easily on the Lord. Sundays were then free for corporate worship (church), resting, devotions, worship, prayer walks and spending quality time with my immediate family and friends.

I was living in the reality of Isaiah 58:13-14:

“If you watch your step on the Sabbath and don’t use my holy day for personal advantage,

If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God’s holy day as a celebration,

If you honour it by refusing ‘business as usual,’ making money, running here and there –

Then you’ll be free to enjoy God! Oh, I’ll make you ride high and soar above it all ...” (The Message).

What a beautiful blessing! And upon waking on Mondays, I felt

refreshed, re-calibrated and ready for a new week of study.

As I began full-time work last year, the Lord encouraged me to go further and set Saturdays aside as a Sabbath. Because of my church commitments, Sundays remained quite a busy day for me.

I needed time to rest physically, to think and pray through the events of the past week and to spend time in unrushed worship. Although it was not possible to set aside every Saturday, the days which I did were an immense blessing.

That being said, daily time alone with the Lord was a mighty weapon against burnout as well. I firmly believe that both were significant in enabling me to stay strong in this new season of full-time work, and continue to bring abundant blessings. Why? Because at the heart of it all is this beautiful truth: Come to Jesus and you will find rest!

He is the One whom we seek; He is the One who can refresh us and prepare us for what lies ahead. It’s all about him: The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

I needed time to rest physically, to think and pray through the events of the past week and to spend time in unrushed worship.

Find your Ministry

SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP

Interested in starting a Bible study or life group?

Salvation Army life groups are a great place to meet friends and grow in your relationship with God. But where do I start? Here are some tips for starting a life group.

What's your motive? Ask yourself, why do I want to lead a life group? Be sure your motive is to further God's kingdom rather than wanting to be the boss of something.

Are you equipped? Do you feel spiritually ready? It's important that you have an ongoing relationship with God. And if you've never led a life group, speak to someone who has run a life group, about the responsibilities it involves.

Be committed Are you able to make running a life group a priority in your life? Along with being available to run a regular life group, leading a life group also involves praying for your group members, and offering a listening ear and words of encouragement when needed.

Get permission Speak to your corps officers or leader about whether they believe you are ready to run a life group.

Get trained Go to toolkit.salvos.org.au to read the *LIFE Leadership Handbook* and here you will also find life group series you can use when leading your group. You will also need to attend a Caring for Kids training course. Speak to your local corps officer or leader about completing this course.

The logistics Choose a location, whether at your church hall or someone's house, and a time, such as before or after school. Invite members – we recommend a maximum of eight members and to have an all-girl-group.

Group challenge

As a group, why not join together and complete random acts of kindness. Maybe you know someone who needs help moving? Does one of your group members have a lonely grandparent who would appreciate some visitors? You could even cook some meals for someone who is unwell. Take the challenge together and show God's love in a practical way.

REFLECTION:

GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY; OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Recently I had a life-changing conversation with an extremely holy woman of God. I was asking her how she came to a place where she was secure in her identity in Christ and confident in the gifts that he had given her. Basically, I was asking how she had gone about reaching her potential in Christ.

I guess I was expecting her answer to be "pray, pray and pray". And yes, that was part of it. She said to me something along the lines of: "Vanessa, you need to be active in developing the gifts and graces God has given to you. You need to take responsibility and partner with God. You need to be active and not passive."

An interesting thought – I need to take responsibility for the development of my gifts. It's not just a matter of praying: "God please help me to be the best I can be for you". We have an active role to play.

Each of us has spiritual gifts which God has graciously given to us to use for the benefit of the wider church and for his glory.

Firstly, you need to discover your gifts. Are there things within the church you seem to be good at or have a heart for? Do you, for example, like to serve? Do you love to communicate and teach the truths of God's Word? There are many spiritual

gifts tests online; I encourage you to find one if you haven't yet done any.

Secondly, once we know how we are wired, we need to develop our gifts. This is where our responsibility kicks in. We can research and learn some more about our gifts and how they can be used. We can exercise these gifts within the church. We can ask in faith for God to give us opportunities to use those gifts.

One of my spiritual gifts is teaching. I love to delve into the Word of God and then communicate those truths to God's people through preaching, small groups and one-on-one mentoring. Being an extrovert certainly helps with being comfortable talking in front of people, however, there are other aspects of teaching that I have had to work hard at to help develop this gift.

Knowing how God has wired you is incredibly liberating. It may explain particular characteristics you have. It may also give you a sense of purpose within the Church. God has created you unique with your own set of gifts and talents. Not one of us is without them! My prayer is that as you discover them, you'll take steps in reaching your potential in Christ.

Lieutenant Vanessa Hunt
Assistant Corps Officer, Petersham Corps



PHOTO: Lena Pobjie

YoungWIT Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." #pray #faith-filled-prayer #group-prayer

REAL LOVE – DEREK JOHNSON

MUSIC REVIEW

Jesus Culture band member Derek Johnson has released his first solo album, *Real Love*. He has hand-written a collection of 12 worships songs for a new generation of worshippers.

The title track sums up the message Derek is aiming to portray throughout his album – to reveal a God of real, authentic love.

Our Salvation is an upbeat, guitar-driven opener which sets the tone. The song cements Derek's desire for his music to be an opportunity to express thanks, praise and love towards Jesus.

The One We Love follows the same sentiment, with lyrics focused on lifting praise to Jesus. The melody is quite catchy, so be prepared for this song to get stuck in your head.

Power in the Cross is filled with powerful

lyrics that point towards the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made for us through love. It's definitely one of Derek's standout tracks.

I Belong To You first appeared on Jesus Culture's 2012 *Emerging Voices* album and has been reinvented for this album, with a driving beat and atmospheric sound through extra guitar riffs.

The theme of God's love continues in the chorus of *Washed Away*, with a catchy melody that speaks of being overwhelmed with the love of Jesus – the joy, freedom and power that comes from standing in his presence.

This is an album filled with songs that can easily fit into a Sunday worship set-list.

Real Love is available for \$14.99 at Word Bookstore. Go to www.word.com.au

– Esther Pinn



WIN OUR GIVEAWAY COPY!

Simply send your name and email address to simone.worthing@ae.salvationarmy.org for a chance to win our giveaway copy of *Real Love* by Derek Johnson.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Coral Underwood from Kingaroy Corps who has won our giveaway copy of last issue's CD, *We Will Not Be Shaken* by Bethel Music; and to Zoe Simpson who has won our giveaway copy of last issue's book *The One Year Devos for Teen Girls*.

CINDERELLA

MOVIE REVIEW

Self-absorbed, self-consumed and self-focused. These words are inwardly focused and form part of the "me" culture that's prevalent in 2015.

While ambition is important, it's easy to get caught up in our personal desires and forget a characteristic that the Bible speaks of – humility.

In Disney's latest live-action film, *Cinderella*, the last words Ella's mother says to Ella before she dies are: "Have courage and be kind".

Tragedy soon strikes again when Ella's father passes away and Ella is put to the test to fulfil her mother's request. Ella slowly becomes less of a stepdaughter and stepsister and is reduced to a scullery maid. While she is ridiculed by her stepmother and stepsisters, being called names such as "cinder-wench" and ultimately nicknamed "Cinderella", she remains humble. And, although Ella is tested daily, she continues to be kind and find strength in humility. She even stands up to the Kingdom's prince by

challenging the kingdom's traditional ways of thinking. Instantaneously, he is struck by these qualities.

Today, humility is a characteristic that is not always admired. Rather, society tells us to pursue our own dreams at the expense of others.

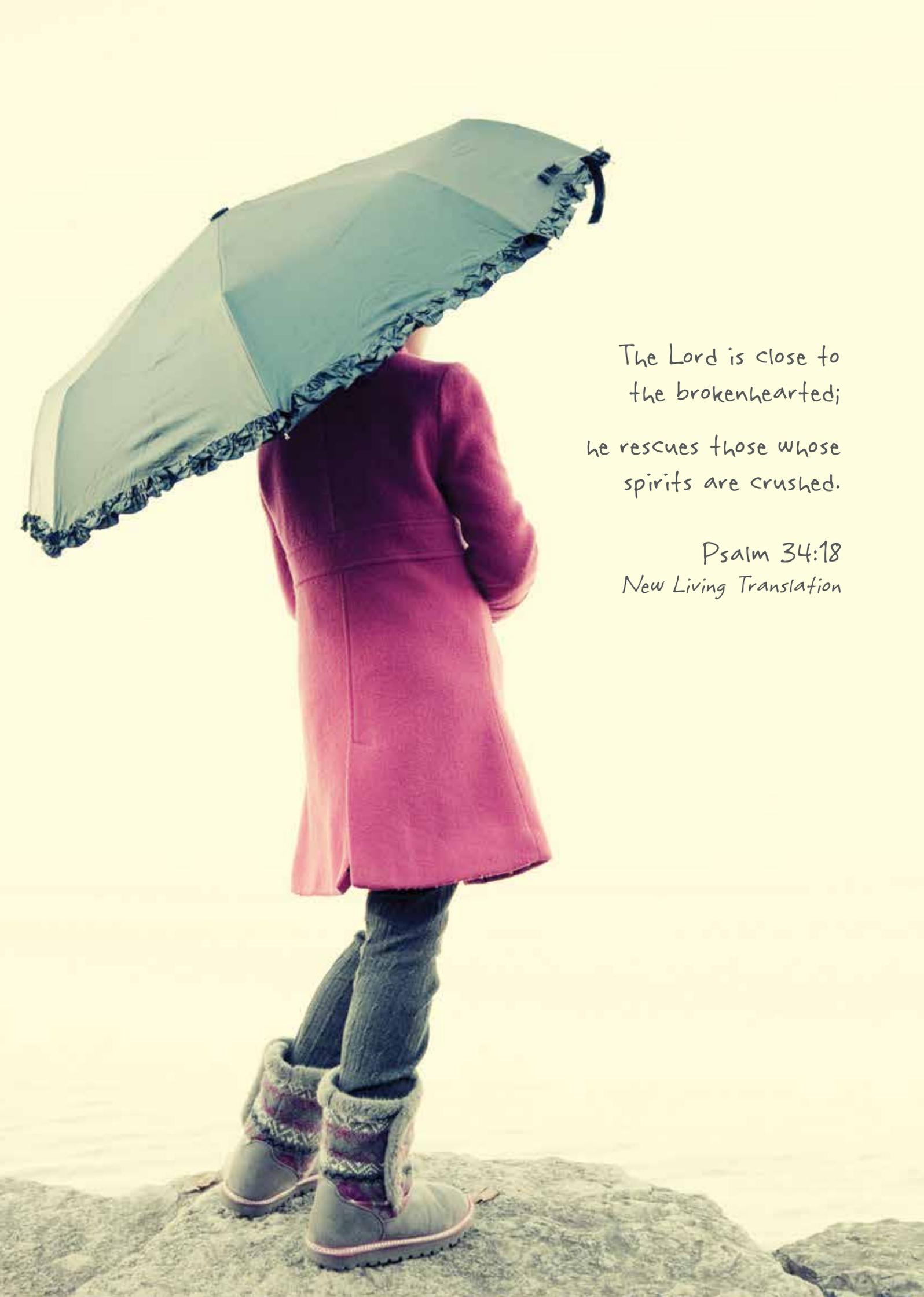
Ella displays qualities we as Christians are called to embrace. Her stepsisters pursue the prince to fulfil their materialistic desires, while Ella seeks out humility. And it's her traits of courage and kindness that get her noticed by the prince.

Let's take Ella's example and show a little kindness and humility. Like Jesus, let's be more "others" focused than self-focused. Let's build a culture where we have the courage to pursue our dreams without pulling others down in the process.

If you didn't get the chance to see *Cinderella* while it was screened at the cinemas, make sure you get your dose of magic and kindness when it's released on DVD.

– Esther Pinn





The Lord is close to
the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose
spirits are crushed.

Psalm 34:18
New Living Translation