

Devotional

**Reflections by Majors Barry
and Rosslyn Casey**

Secretaries for Spiritual Life
Development

Self
Denial
Appeal
2021





Introduction

TRANSFORM A LIFE—TRANSFORM THE FUTURE

Pause and pray (2 minutes)

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; recentre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Romans 12:1–5 (The Message)

‘So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. I’m speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it’s important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for

us, not by what we are and what we do for him. In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvellously functioning parts in Christ's body...'

Reflection

The theme for this year's Self Denial Appeal is ***Transform a Life—Transform the Future***, and over the next six weeks we are being invited to enter into the personal journeys of transformation that took place in the lives of four individuals. As we listen to their stories, I would encourage you to focus on each individual, their experience of Jesus, and The Salvation Army, and how the transformation in their lives changed not only their immediate circumstances but that of their future, and the future of their communities.

Our Scripture passage from Romans chapter 12 speaks clearly about the transforming power of the Gospel. The first 11 chapters set the doctrinal foundation for the Christian life, and now Paul begins to spell out ways that faith and doctrine should be demonstrated in our daily lives. *'So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.'*

The key verse for this campaign is: ***“Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it.”*** (Romans 12:2)

It is a call to **action**, and the daily living out of the transforming work of God in our lives that sets us apart and empowers us to be influencers for change and transformation in our neighbourhoods and communities. Self Denial gives us the opportunity to have a much wider impact, reaching individuals and communities across the globe.

Reread the scripture passage above, and then take time to consider the following:

As you read the Word, use this pattern of reflection, and ask yourself the questions.

- **Revelation**

What basic truth does this scripture teach? What is the writer actually saying?

- **Conviction**

How does this scripture challenge my life? How does this scripture correct, balance and direct me?

- **Action**

What do I need to change in my life as a result of today’s reading?
How does this scripture equip me for life today and the future?

Brazil

CRISTINA'S STORY—VILA DOS PESCADORES CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Pause and pray (2 minutes)

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; recentre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Ephesians 1:15–18 (NIV)

'For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.'

Reflection

The underlying theme of the first three chapters in the letter to the Ephesian Church was twofold.

Firstly, it was to remind the early Christians of the incredible work of transformation God, through His Spirit, had brought about in their lives.

Secondly, it was to help them understand that this changed life was not exclusively reserved for them but was available to everyone. Because of what they had themselves experienced, they now had the ability and opportunity to bring hope and enable transformation for many.

At the very commencement of the letter, Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians is that they might see clearly and understand fully the hope that is inherent in God's invitation for all to be part of God's family. This was a whole new way of thinking for them.

In the prayer (vs 15–18), he specifically asks that the 'light of God will illuminate the eyes of your imagination, flooding you with light, until you experience the full revelation of the hope of his calling' (The Passion Translation). What a powerful prayer—that the One who has brought transformation to their lives would continue this work of grace and hope into the future.

Transform a Life—Transform the Future!

As we reflect on today's story, we can see the fulfilment of that prayer almost 2000 years after it was first prayed.

What, for Cristina, began as a personal revelation and act of transformation in her own life has now become a powerful demonstration of transformation and hope, not only in the lives of the children she felt convicted to assist, but for their families as well.

Because she allowed the 'light of God to illuminate the eyes of her imagination', when she so desperately wanted to provide a way of hope to the children of the favela, what began as a small programme

in her living room has now grown to the point where every day over 200 people are welcomed through the doors of The Salvation Army Centre in Vila dos Pescadores.

Cristina states: 'Everything we do is through the love of God.' As a result of her obedience to the promptings of God, and as she allowed 'the light of God to illuminate the eyes of her imagination' not only did she experience the revelation of the hope of his calling over her life, but is now daily witnessing the impact this is having on the lives of so many others. Through the transformation of one life, the future of a community is being transformed.

Reread the scripture passage above, and then take time to consider the following:

As you read the Word, use this pattern of reflection, and ask yourself the questions.

- **Revelation**

What basic truth does this scripture teach? What is the writer actually saying?

- **Conviction**

As I think about my neighbourhood/community, is there a specific need that comes to mind that is not being met?

What part can I actively play that will see needs met and lives transformed (volunteer; influence; create awareness; connect)?

A word of caution: Don't ask God to direct your steps if you are unwilling to move your feet.

- **Action**

What do I need to change in my life as a result of today's reading?

How does this scripture equip me for life today and the future?

Prayer

Dear Lord, if today I lose hope, please assure me that your plans are bigger and better than my dreams.

Prayer Points—Brazil

- As you consider the amazing story of transformation that took place in the life of Cristina, pray that the impact of the ministry that takes place in Vila dos Pescadores will continue to expand so that many other children will experience hope, and their communities will continue to be transformed.
- Pray for the life-transforming ministry that takes place in 57 centres across Brazil, including early childhood education centres, nurseries, support services for vulnerable youth and care programmes for women.
- Pray for officers, staff and volunteers around the world who sacrificially minister to, care for and serve people, often above their own needs. Pray for protection, health and strength for them as they come alongside others seeking to transform lives and communities with the love of Jesus.

India

MANJEET'S STORY—WOMEN'S COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Pause and pray (2 minutes)

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; recentre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Isaiah 58:6–9 (The Message)

*This is the kind of fast day I'm after:
to break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed,
cancel debts.*

*What I'm interested in seeing you do is:
sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.*

*Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.
Your righteousness will pave your way.
The GOD of glory will secure your passage.*



*Then when you pray, GOD will answer.
You'll call out for help and I'll say, "Here I am."*

Reflection

God calls the prophet Isaiah (chapter 58) to address the problem of false religious observance. Although, it appears to focus on two religious disciplines, that of fasting (vv. 3–12) and the observance of the Sabbath (vv. 13–14), these are only the surface, presenting problems rather than the root problem.

The root problem was people who observed spiritual disciplines for selfish reasons (to gain God's blessings) while ignoring the hunger, poverty, homelessness and nakedness of those around them who were in need.

If we love God, then, that love will be evident in the way we treat others—our neighbours (e.g. Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25–37). It means taking concrete steps to care for those in need—those who are hungry, poor, homeless, naked or otherwise in need.

Our chosen scripture for this reflection reminds us that the motivation behind our prayer and fasting must come from a 'heart response' to God. A devoted life to God. Therefore, the outflow of that response must be one of love and generosity to our neighbours, and not based on religious ritual or obligation. Prayer, fasting and obedience to God go hand in hand. Obedience requires action! (Faith and works).

The quality of life for Manjeet, her family and her community has been transformed. This transformation not only impacts their current

circumstances, but also the future for both her children and her community. By the teaching and development of skills, and assistance with resourcing, Manjeet and many other women, through The Salvation Army Community Empowerment Program, have been given hope for a better future.

You and I, thousands of geographical kilometres away, have an opportunity to also impact this community. We can not only bring them before our loving Heavenly Father in prayer and petition, but also show our love by financially and practically empowering them to be all that God has created them to be.

Reread the scripture passage above, and then take time to consider the following:

As you read the Word, use this pattern of reflection, and ask yourself the questions.

- **Revelation**

What basic truth does this scripture teach? What is the writer actually saying?

- **Conviction**

How does this scripture challenge my life? How does this scripture correct, balance and direct me?

- **Action**

What do I need to change in my life as a result of today's reading?
How does this scripture equip me for life today and the future?

Prayer

Dear Father, I am aware you know me intimately. Create in me a pure heart, refine and restore a right spirit within me. May my words and actions be congruent today, as I reflect your love to others. Amen.

Prayer Points—India Northern Territory

- Financial resources have become extremely limited throughout the India Territories, and many others across the globe, due to COVID-19. Imposed restrictions have meant that local fundraising has ceased. Many of these funds cover officer allowances and provide for local ministry initiatives. Pray for officers struggling to financially provide for their families.
- In villages across India Northern Territory, there are over 1000 self-help groups for women just like Manjeet. The groups help women to make an income by developing skills in sewing, embroidery and tailoring. Pray for the ongoing development and success of these programs, and the transforming impact they have on the lives of the women who access them.



Ukraine

ARTEM'S STORY—CORPS OUTREACH

Pause and pray (2 minutes)

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; recentre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Scripture: James 2:14–17 (TPT)

“My dear brothers and sisters, what good is it if someone claims to have faith but demonstrates no good works to prove it? How could this kind of faith save anyone? For example, if a brother or sister in the faith is poorly clothed and hungry and you leave them saying, “Good-bye. I hope you stay warm and have plenty to eat,” but you don’t provide them with a coat or even a cup of soup, what good is your faith? So, then, faith that doesn’t involve action is phony.”

Reflection

Charles Schultz, the cartoonist and creator of the Peanuts cartoon strips, had a strong faith and he often used the medium of his famous cartoons to bring out biblical truths. One of his illustrations, that I feel speaks so clearly into our passage from James chapter 2, portrays Snoopy shivering outside in the cold and snow. Charlie Brown says to

Linus, “He looks kind of cold, doesn’t he?” And Linus says, “Maybe we’d better go over and comfort him.” So, they walk over to Snoopy, rugged up in their warm winter coats, mittens and hats and Charlie Brown says, “Be of good cheer, Snoopy!” Linus joins in and says, “Yes, be of good cheer.” And then they walk away.

On the surface this may bring a smile to our faces, but the incongruency it portrays is blatantly obvious. It is this incongruency that James is wanting to address.

As he writes, he is wanting to clearly make the point that, as Christians, our actions should be the by-product of a living, vibrant faith. How could they not be? Christian faith and Christian deeds are one and the same, and you can’t have one without the other. The two must go hand-in-hand. How we live reveals what we believe and is evidence of a life that has been transformed.

When we have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit our lives will demonstrate that new life, and our works will be characterised by obedience to God. Unseen faith will become seen by the production of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22).

In this week’s story, we are introduced to Artem. He had been abandoned, taken advantage of, and horribly abused. As a result, he felt trapped. He had lost faith in people, especially those whose words were incongruent with their actions. All he longed to do was escape from the nightmare he was living, but did not know where to turn, or who to trust.

How different his story would have been if, when he attended The Salvation Army, he met Christians who were superficial and were not

genuinely interested in investing into his life. However, because of authentic faith and action working in unity, Artem's life was totally transformed. "I am no longer an orphan. I am a child of God and my family is The Salvation Army."

Reread the scripture passage, and then take time to consider the following:

Below is an exercise that may be helpful to you while reflecting on the scripture provided. As you read the Word, use this pattern of reflection, and ask yourself the questions.

- **Revelation**

What basic truth does this scripture teach? What is the writer actually saying?

- **Conviction**

How does this scripture challenge my life? How does this scripture correct, balance and direct me?

- **Action**

What do I need to change in my life as a result of today's reading?
How does this scripture equip me for life today and the future?

Example: Verse 15 mentions brothers and sisters 'in the faith' struggling to make ends meet (poorly clothed and hungry). Are there people in your faith community you are aware of that are doing it tough right now? In light of James' teaching, what can you do to show authentic faith by your actions toward them?

Prayer

Lord, I give you my habits, my lifestyle, even my schedule. I want my life—my everyday life—to be authentic, to draw people to you, and to bear Kingdom fruit. Amen.

Prayer Points—Ukraine

- As we turn our thoughts to Ukraine, we think especially of children who have been physically, emotionally and mentally abused and, as a result, feel trapped, disempowered, devalued and abandoned. Pray that our corps and centres will continue to be places where children can be welcomed, nurtured, loved, protected and accepted.
- Pray that all expressions of our worldwide Salvation Army will be welcoming places where authentic faith and action work in unity.
- Pray for those who are displaced, homeless, orphaned and unjustly treated. Pray that instead of apathy, judgement and isolation they will experience compassion, acceptance and a sense of belonging.

South Africa

ZAMA'S STORY—WATER, SANITATION, HYGIENE PROGRAMME

Pause and pray (2 minutes)

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; recentre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Scripture: John 4: 7–14 (TPT)

“Wearied by his long journey, he sat on the edge of Jacob’s well. He sent his disciples into the village to buy food, for it was already afternoon. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink of water.’ Surprised, she said, ‘Why would a Jewish man ask a Samaritan woman for a drink of water?’ Jesus replied, ‘If you only knew who I am and the gift that God wants to give you – you’d ask me for a drink, and I would give to you living water.’ The woman replied, ‘But sir, you don’t even have a bucket and this well is very deep. So, where do you find this ‘living water’? Do you really think that you are greater than our ancestor Jacob who dug this well and drank from it himself, along with his children and livestock?’ Jesus answered, ‘If you drink from Jacob’s well you’ll be thirsty again and again, but if anyone drinks the living water I give them, they will never thirst again and will be forever satisfied!”



For when you drink the water I give you it becomes a gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit, springing up and flooding you with endless life!”

Reflection

Clean, fresh water is one of the necessities of life. It is a fundamental need for all human beings, and yet there are those who still, in this present age, do not have access to this most essential commodity. During the past two years, in the Kwazulu Natal region in South Africa, over 50,000 people in 11 communities have been transformed through The Salvation Army’s Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Program by simply having access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

Jesus, in the story of the woman at the well, points to not only the quenching of his physical need but also opens the conversation to the quenching and satisfying of a soul’s desire by offering the gift of ‘living water’ through him. **John 6:35:** Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, **and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.**’

On its surface, the story chronicles ethnic prejudice and a woman shunned by her community. But take a deeper look and you’ll realise it reveals a story of transformation, not just in the life of the woman, but in the lives of the people in her village.

Jesus’ behaviour shocked the woman at the well. As she began to grasp the reality of her encounter with Jesus, the disciples returned. They too were shocked to find him speaking to a woman—a Samaritan woman at that! Leaving behind her water jar, the woman returned to

town, inviting the people to '**Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did**' (John 4:29, ESV).

Jesus knew her history but still accepted her and ministered to her. By reaching out to the Samaritans, Jesus showed that his mission was to all people, not just a select group.

An encounter with Jesus totally transformed this woman's life. Because she went back to her community and shared her story of an encounter with Jesus, they believed and were transformed. 'Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony' (v39). 'They said to the woman: We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and know this man is the Saviour of the world' (v42).

Our human tendency is too often to judge others because of stereotypes, customs or prejudices. Jesus treats people as individuals, accepting them with love and compassion.

Thought: None of us can help everyone, but all of us can help someone, and when we help them, we serve Jesus.

Reread the scripture passage above, and then take time to consider the following:

As you read the Word, use this pattern of reflection, and ask yourself the questions.

- **Revelation**

What basic truth does this scripture teach? What is the writer saying?

- **Conviction**

How does this scripture challenge my life? How does this scripture correct, balance and direct me?

- **Action**

What do I need to change in my life as a result of today's reading? How does this scripture equip me for life today and the future?

Example: Do you dismiss certain people as lost causes, or do you see them as valuable, and worthy of knowing about the Gospel?

Prayer (adapted from the prayer of John Cardinal Newman)

Dear God, help me to spread your love everywhere I go. Penetrate and possess my whole being so fully that all my life will reflect your compassion. Shine through me and be so in me that every person I meet will feel your presence in my spirit. (Joyce Rupp).

Prayer Points—South Africa

- The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project provides access to safe water, sanitation and basic hygiene education to schools and communities. This reduces the risk of preventable disease and helps children attend school because they are not sick or having to collect water. Pray that funds will be available so that this programme will continue to thrive and children's health will continue to improve.
- Pray for the staff and teachers who serve in the many creches, preschools and schools, providing much needed education to thousands of children across the territory.



Altar Service

Pause and pray (2 minutes)

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; recentre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Scripture: Matthew 25:35–40 (TPT)

‘For when you saw me hungry, you fed me. When you found me thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I had no place to stay, you invited me in, and when I was poorly clothed, you covered me. When I was sick, you tenderly cared for me, and when I was in prison you visited me.’ Then the godly will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and give you food and something to drink? When did we see you with no place to stay and invite you in? When did we see you poorly clothed and cover you? When did we see you sick and tenderly care for you, or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Don’t you know? When you cared for one of the least important of these my little ones, my true brothers and sisters, you demonstrated love for me.”’

Reflection

Over these past six weeks we have been privileged to hear some amazing accounts of transformation that have not only taken place in the lives of four individuals, but the wider impact and positive change

this has had in their local communities. Each of these stories has one common thread running through them— someone saw injustice, refused to remain silent, and chose to do something to bring about change.

Robert Louis Stevenson, the 19th century author, said: ‘Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant.’

We can no longer be silent. We can no longer be indifferent. We can no longer turn a blind eye. ‘Faith that doesn’t involve action is phony’ (James 2:17). Christ calls us to be His hands, His feet, His voice. Our sacrificial giving, through the Self Denial Appeal, gives us the opportunity to be the planters of seeds of hope, love and transformation in the lives of people and communities that would otherwise continue to be exploited, abused and oppressed.

Transform a Life—Transform the Future.

Let us encounter your heart

And your heart transforms our minds

For our minds inform our hands

And our hands could change a life. (Excerpt from song)

Thought: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” (Dr Seuss) *The Lorax*

Reread the scripture passage above, and then take time to consider the following:

As you read the Word, use this pattern of reflection, and ask yourself the questions.

- **Revelation**

What basic truth does this scripture teach? What is the writer actually saying?

- **Conviction**

How does this scripture challenge my life? How does this scripture correct, balance and direct me?

- **Action**

What do I need to change in my life as a result of today's reading? How does this scripture equip me for life today and the future?

Hands Can Change a Life

May I say nothing
May I do nothing
May I seek nothing but truth
Let my soul ache
Let my heart break
For all the same things as you

Let me encounter your heart
And your heart transform my mind
For my mind informs my hands
And my hands could change a life

I will stand for
All that is yours
And give up all that is not
Let no distraction
No other action
Shift my eyes from you, God
Let us encounter your heart

And your heart transform our minds
For our minds inform our hands
And our hands could change a life

Oh I long for your kingdom come
So let Your will be done in me
That the lost, the last, the least
They would encounter your heart

*And your heart transform their minds
For their minds inform their hands
And their hands could be a light
Our hands can change this life*

*Our mouths can bless or bite
Our feet can walk or stay
Our hearts can sink or pray*

*May I do all things
Through you who strengthens
Seek you in all that I do*

*And let my heart sing
As each new day brings
A new adventure with you*

Self
Denial
Appeal
2021

