



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES **2015**

Go and Tell!

In I Chronicles 16:23 it says, 'Sing to the LORD, all the earth: proclaim his salvation day after day'. This invitation to 'proclaim' our wonderful God is repeated throughout Scripture. When we know something really good we are compelled to tell others about it. It is hoped that through this Bible study series we will be inspired to *Go and Tell!* others about our personal Saviour.

During 2015, the shared theme of Women's Ministries throughout the world is *Go and Tell!*

This series of 12 Bible studies helps us, in the year of the International Congress, to contemplate the 'Boundless' provision of God, and encourages us to *Go and Tell!* as we have found. For this series we will be exploring Ephesians, as it is full of God's goodness and grace in our lives. The studies are designed to be flexible, so that you can add material that is relevant to your culture and context.

Each study includes four sections which can be explored with your group, as follows:

1. What the Bible says – where you explore 'What does the text actually say?'

It is important that you read the Bible carefully and allow it to speak to you and guide the content of your study.

2. Our lives today – considers such questions as:

- What does the Bible reading tell you about your lives?
- Does it highlight any problems in society?
- What challenges are there for the way you live your life?

3. Discussion questions – depending upon where you are using the studies, you may choose to select one or two that seem most suitable for you, or ask different groups to discuss other aspects and possibly, if you have time, share what they have been speaking about.

4. Living to *Go and Tell!* – this is designed to give you something to take away and do before you next meet. If appropriate, you could share how members of the group worked through their Living to *Go and Tell!* the next time you meet.

As you consider through 2015 how you are called to *Go and Tell!* we pray that God's blessing will be evident as you study his Word and share together.

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Bible Study I

Go and Tell!

Bible reading – John 20:17,18

*Jesus said [to Mary], ‘Do not hold on to me . . .
GO instead to my brothers and TELL them,
“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” ’*
(v 17)

What the Bible says

The remarkable story of Mary Magdalene is recorded for us within the Gospels. Jesus released her from the power and torment of seven demons (Luke 8:2) and subsequently Mary faithfully followed him, supporting both Jesus and his disciples to the best of her abilities. We also find her among the women at Calvary, gathered at the cross, witnessing Jesus’ cruel death (John 19:25).

For the purpose of this Bible study, we pick up her story in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mary finds the tomb empty and straight away goes to tell the disciples. Then, distraught and distracted by grief, she returns to the garden and speaks with someone, mistakenly believing him to be the gardener. She recognises him as Jesus when he utters her name. We need to take note that Mary’s story doesn’t end with this personal encounter. Immediately Jesus involves her in the business of witnessing, by requesting her to ‘GO instead to my brothers and TELL them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” ’

During Old Testament times the Psalmists often extolled the greatness of God. Psalm 8, Psalm 22:22 and Psalm 105:2 are prime examples. However, Mary is given an even greater message to communicate. She is invited by Jesus to share the wonder of all she has seen and heard, making her central to the spreading of the gospel of Jesus – the certainty of his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. What news she had to tell! Her mood changed from despair to hope, from fear to peace and from sadness to joy as she realised that Jesus was alive and that he was definitely the long-awaited Messiah. Mary, the first witness, was soon joined by many others as they too felt compelled to obey the command of the Lord to *Go and Tell!*

Our lives today

As women of God we all have a story to tell of what God has done in our life. Our individual stories may differ but each is a powerful example of New Testament redemption. Jesus wants us not only to benefit from a personal relationship with him but also encourages us to *Go and Tell!* That means sharing our testimony of his love for us, his incredible presence in our lives and the strength he gives us to go through difficult situations. It includes telling the wonderfully inclusive message of the gospel demonstrated in his example, his life and teaching, and his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension!

We must never forget that we are Jesus' mouthpieces on earth. How can the people know about him if we do not tell them? Our own salvation story will have an impact on those who hear it and telling it will also strengthen us. One of the most effective ways of sharing the Gospel remains one-to-one personal testimony.

Jesus chose Mary – a woman – to tell the disciples about his resurrection. Against all the traditions of his race and time, Jesus trusted a woman with his first resurrection appearance and also with the task of telling others. Surely such knowledge encourages us, as Christian women in today's society, that we must not hide behind our gender, make excuses, or remain silent for fear of what people might think of us; neither should we feel inadequate if we have not had all the opportunities afforded to others. We need to heed Mary's example. She went and told the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord' and she told them that he had said these things to her.

In our daily lives, God gives us opportunities to meet with people individually, at work, in our home, at school and in many other situations. Let us, like Mary, take up the challenge to share our faith in a resurrected and ascended Saviour.

Discussion questions

1. When was the last time that you spoke with somebody about what Jesus has done for you? Recall the event in a group discussion.
2. Do you find it easy to talk about Jesus? Share about the challenges and the joys of witnessing for Jesus.
3. Jesus asked Mary to *Go and Tell!*
What are the practical implications of such a request today?

Living to *Go and Tell!*

Reflect on the command of Jesus to Mary to *Go and Tell!*

Write down your story, including what God has done in your life and how he is changing you.

Prayerfully seek an opportunity to share your story with someone during the coming week.

Commissioner Silvia Cox (IHQ, from Switzerland, Austria and Hungary Territory)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his boundless good news by serving him and testifying as I travel around the world as the World President of Women's Ministries.

Bible Study 2

Go and Tell of His Boundless Blessings

Bible reading – Ephesians 1:3

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

What the Bible says

All through Ephesians chapter one, Paul repeats our need to praise God, who loved us, who sent his Son and who now calls us to respond (refer to verses 4, 5, 6 and 14). Paul reminds us that only God is the object of our praise. He is the ultimate cause and source of everything we have received.

When the people of the Old Testament considered the blessings of God, they thought most often of the material blessings the Lord might bestow on his people, such as large flocks, rich harvests, a large family, safety from national enemies and rule over the nations. They felt such material blessings resulted from the covenant relationship between God and his people.

However, in this verse in particular, Paul speaks not of earthly, material blessings but of rich spiritual blessings that last eternally and are ours in Christ. Whether we live in a lovely house in an affluent nation or have been made homeless by floods in an impoverished nation, we still receive spiritual blessings. Paul goes on to break down what these spiritual blessings really are in verses 4-19. Some of the benefits of knowing God are: being chosen for salvation; being adopted as his children; forgiveness; freedom in Christ; the gifts of the Spirit; power to do God's will; a life grounded in fellowship with God and the hope of living forever with Christ.

God desperately wants us to have these rich spiritual blessings and Paul tells us that in order to participate in them we need to be in Christ. We need to be in this relationship with Christ, for 'in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ we have been brought to fullness' (Colossians 2:9, 10). In the same way that it is only through Christ that we can be saved, so it is through Christ that we receive these spiritual blessings.

Our lives today

Although the economic opportunities and natural resources of all the nations differ, the spiritual blessings open to Christians in every nation are the same. Every believer in every nation can receive spiritual blessings! How amazing is this?

People all over the world spend the majority of their days finding ways to have their material and physical needs met. In some areas of the world this is not much of a problem, whereas in other places people have to give up so much yet barely have enough to feed their family. Paul, however, reminds us that God's blessings are far better blessings than just money or health – they are about eternal things.

This does not mean that the blessing of God has nothing to do with material or physical things. God *does* provide for our physical needs too. But when he meets our needs, those blessings are not just physical blessings – when God miraculously gives, he does so to meet our needs and the blessing is not the actual material item but the sense of security and hope in Christ, knowing that God cares and provides.

According to Paul, we have received everything that really matters. So why then do we grieve over not having enough material blessings, which are only temporary? Why are we satisfied with a minimal awareness of our spiritual blessings and instead long for more material blessings?

Discussion questions

1. Which blessings, material or spiritual, do you seek more of every day? Why?
2. How do you understand the phrase 'in Christ' at the end of the verse and how does this relate to being recipients of the spiritual blessings?
3. How can you help other women, who are unaware of these spiritual blessings, to receive or to recognise them in their lives?

Living to Go and Tell!

Spend some time thinking about all the blessings God has given you, and especially count those spiritual blessings you have been given through Christ.

Then praise God for each one of them and tell someone else about them!

Hannah Lee (United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his boundless blessings by serving him as a cadet in training for Salvation Army officership at William Booth College. As a cross-cultural individual (South Korean-born, living in the UK) I am striving to share everything I have been given through Christ in all areas of my life.

Bible Study 3

Go and Tell of His Boundless Grace

To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves
(Ephesians 1:6)

Bible reading – Ephesians 2:6-10

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith
— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God*

(v 8)

What the Bible says

We are all familiar with the word 'grace'. It is often used in benedictions: '...the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit...' We all know gracious or kind people who are helpful and considerate. They are a pleasure to meet and we are thankful when they come our way.

The grace of God is one of the great themes of the Bible. In both Old and New Testaments we find that God's saving grace is demonstrated through his dealings with his people. In Nehemiah 9:16,17 we read how God dealt with the Israelites. 'But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands. They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them... But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them.'

Grace is part of God's character, and also that of his Son, Jesus. 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). From childhood through to adulthood, grace was evident in the life of Jesus. 'And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him' (Luke 2:40). Then in Luke 4:22 we read, 'All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.'

The wonderful thing is that this grace – saving grace – is available to everyone! Titus 2:11 says, 'For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.'

In the verses we are studying in Ephesians, Paul emphasises the fact that grace is a free gift from God. We do not deserve it, and there is nothing we can do to earn it. We only need to have faith to receive God's saving grace, and even our faith is a gift from God! (Ephesians 2:8). He wants to shower his grace upon us, to lavish it upon us!

Our lives today

We are all attracted by a free gift but it is rare that anything is truly free of charge. In my part of the world the invitation at the supermarket to 'buy one, get one free' is not always all that it appears to be, for I may end up buying something I don't really need, just to take advantage of the offer.

We know that everything comes at a cost. It may be difficult, therefore, for us to believe that God's grace is free.

Frederick B. Meyer was a renowned Bible teacher and preacher working in England at the turn of the 20th century. He illustrated the free gift of God's grace to a woman he visited who wanted to know the Lord, but didn't know how to go about it. He asked for a cup of tea, and when the woman brought it, he ignored it and asked again. Four or five times he asked for the tea he already had.

Finally, she saw it – the Lord's favour, eternal life, and the power to live that life right now is already ours – it has already been given. That was God's part; our part is to repent, surrender, and reach out and take it for ourselves.

God's grace transforms us into what God intended us to be and enables us to live in relationship with him, growing in grace and bearing more fruit through the Holy Spirit.

'Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need' (Hebrews 4:16).

Discussion questions

1. How have you experienced God's grace in your life?
2. In what ways do you need God's grace right now?
3. When was the last time you told someone about God's boundless grace? What was their reaction? Share your story with the group.

Living to *Go and Tell!*

God's grace is available for every situation in our lives.

Do we recognise this truth and take hold of it, living as women who are saved by grace and telling others about it?

Commissioner Dorita Wainwright (IHQ, from United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his grace by serving him in corps and divisional leadership in my home territory as well as in territorial headquarters appointments in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia and now I serve at IHQ as Zonal Secretary for Women's Ministries in the Europe Zone.

Bible Study 4

Go and Tell of His Boundless Redemption

Bible reading – Ephesians 1:7

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,
in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.*

(v 7)

What the Bible says

Paul shared with the Ephesians (and shares with us today) the great work that Jesus Christ did for us, to secure a future with him in eternity. And not just in eternity, but to give us the opportunity to live a Spirit-filled life here on earth, with God living, guiding, and working in and through us. Also we are redeemed from our sins, so the past is put behind us and we are given a new life for the days ahead. It is only through the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross that we can experience forgiveness of sin and live with him as our guide. We can be redeemed from the corrupt lives we live. We can be born anew. Salvation can be ours.

A look at the life of Nicodemus (John 3:1-17) brings this truth clearly to us as Jesus explains and answers Nicodemus's burning questions. Nicodemus was a Jew, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin, the Council which included the most important leaders in Judaism. He came from the priesthood and was a man committed to keeping the Law. He was probably often out and about in the crowds listening to Jesus' messages as well as those of John the Baptist so as to be 'up to date' on all that was happening. He would already know what they were preaching and teaching. No doubt, as he listened his own heart was moved and questions began to swirl around in his head as to just who Jesus really was and what these new ideas meant, that one must be 'born again'.

Late one night Nicodemus sought out Jesus to ask him these questions that plagued his mind. Jesus listened and began to answer them. Being born again? What did that mean? How could that happen? Jesus' answers were difficult for Nicodemus. You must repent and believe in order to be born again, to be born anew spiritually. And it would take the sacrifice of one, the shedding of blood, to accomplish that. Jesus was that sacrifice given so we might, if we believe, have eternal life. Jesus is our redemption.

Our lives today

Mankind is born with the natural capacity to mess up. Our own desires often lead us into temptation. Nothing we do or think, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, is hidden from God. He knows all and sees all. Even Paul, the writer of Ephesians, testified elsewhere to his experience of life when he wrote, 'I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do' (Romans 7:15) and when he added, 'for I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is,

in my sinful nature' (Romans 7:18). The only solution, then, to living our lives for God is to have our sins forgiven, our sinful nature taken away and to be born anew, to be redeemed from our old ways. The old is destroyed and all things become new (John 1:9-13).

Our story of Nicodemus points us to this truth, that there is an action we must take to experience redemption. 'We must be born anew'. We must come to the place in our lives where we turn our lives, our will, our all, over to Christ and make him the head of our lives. We must seek out the truth and then not just hear the truth, but act on the truth. This is an act of the heart and the will. God moves our hearts for a reason, so that we might look for answers that lead us to HIM. The promise of God is that when we come seeking, truly seeking, honestly seeking, he will show himself to us. 'You will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul' (Deuteronomy 4:29b).

Discussion questions

1. What first aroused your interest in Jesus? What did you feel moving in your heart before you came to Jesus, before you made him Lord of your life?
2. Does he still move your heart today? Share ways in which he has moved your heart in recent days.
3. How does living in Christ help you when temptations come?
4. What do you think Nicodemus felt when he came away from this conversation with Jesus?

Living to Go and Tell!

Think about your spiritual journey. Are you still in the 'questioning stage' and 'finding of answers stage' that comes before commitment? Or maybe you have moved to the commitment stage (being born again, being redeemed by his blood). If you have committed your life to Christ and are born again, consider whether you are allowing God to daily integrate his word and ways into your daily life.

Commissioner Nancy Roberts (IHQ, from USA Central Territory)

God called me to *Go and Tell!* of his boundless redemption, to share the good news of his love and forgiveness to all those I meet; sharing his word and living a Christ-like life in leadership appointments around the world including the USA, Argentina, Kenya, and currently here in London, England as the World Secretary for Women's Ministries. Daily he continues to integrate his word into my life.

Bible Study 5

Go and Tell of His Boundless Hope

Bible reading – Ephesians 1:12;16-18

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.

(vv 16-18)

What the Bible says

Even though the word hope is mentioned only four times in the epistle to the Ephesians, its significance and thrust in each of the sentences is worth looking at. In chapter one, the writer talks about people who were among the first to put their hope in Christ (1:12). To be the first in any given situation requires a person to be courageous and willing to pay the price for it. It involves risk as success can hardly be guaranteed. The chances of failure are always very high for any first-timer. On the other hand motivation and passion are always at their peak. It was probably so with the first group of believers who set their hope in the Lord.

The author continues to explain about the hope to which believers are called. He writes about the riches of the promised inheritance for God's holy people in verse 18. Elsewhere the apostle Paul mentions this very hope in the first few verses of his letter to believers in Colossae (Colossians 1:5), saying that it is stored up for believers in Heaven. Our Lord Jesus himself assures us that in his Father's house there are many rooms (John 14:2); rooms to accommodate all who have access to such hope.

However, a gentle but firm warning must not be overlooked here. There is a danger that, although we are surrounded by this wonderful hope we may still fail to grasp hold of it. Sailors understand better than anybody else the danger of dying of thirst in the middle of the ocean. Hence this leads us to the next point – focusing on and directing our attention to the one and only hope (4:4). Jesus Christ is the only hope of this world; in him all hope in all its fullness is found.

He is the only hope that satisfies all our spiritual and human needs. This was revealed to the apostle John, 'For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water' (Revelation 7:17).

Our lives today

Living in the midst of extreme poverty, many of our fellow women in the South Asia zone continue to build up their hope to provide a better future for their children and families. Even to make available for their children at least basic primary education and to give them a square meal each day is very tough. To find the means of earning a living is such a huge challenge for so many of our brothers and sisters. To be able to earn enough to provide the basic needs of the family is often like hoping against hope.

Yet, in the well- and better-off societies, many, many people are experiencing the void and vacuum that has been brought in by the worldly riches that are at their disposal. Such riches don't satisfy the thirst and hunger of their souls. To such a world we need to *Go and Tell!* of the boundless hope of Christ, in whom everything is bountiful. Let us ensure the prayer of the apostle Paul is reflected in our lives: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15:13).

Discussion questions

1. Discuss how you understand our hope in Christ.
2. The Psalmist wrote, 'The hope of the afflicted will never perish' (Psalm 9:18). Discuss how you feel this can be applied.
3. Share personal experiences/stories about times when all hope seems to have been lost, and especially how the work of the Holy Spirit has helped to change the situation.

Living to *Go and Tell!*

'No one who hopes in you [the Lord] will ever be put to shame' (Psalm 25:3 – see also Romans 5:5).

Let us be willing to put our hope in the Lord and trust him to the extent that we will never be ashamed of the things we do and are involved in.

Commissioner Nemkhanching Nu-i (IHQ, from India Eastern Territory)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* that there is boundless hope in Jesus Christ as I have served him in my home territory in various capacities, in the India Northern Territory (West Bengal Division) as Divisional Director of Women's Ministries, in Sri Lanka and in the Philippines Territories as Territorial President of Women's Ministries and presently at IHQ as Zonal Secretary for Women's Ministries for South Asia.

Bible Study 6

Go and Tell of His Boundless Riches

Bible reading – Ephesians 3:8

*Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given to me:
to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

(v 8)

What the Bible says

When writing to the Ephesians from his prison cell in Rome, Paul did not boast about his position as an apostle. In Latin, the language of the Romans, Paulus (his name) means little or small and he often thought of himself as being weak. He had great humility, and said: 'I am less than the least of all the Lord's people'. The Lord's people in this verse could be referring to those who we consider Bible giants. But many were actually most humble souls, such as Moses (Exodus 3:11; 4:10), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6) and others. These spiritual giants had the lowest estimation of themselves; they had the least opinion of their own works, but were the greatest admirers of the grace of God.

Like these great men, Paul never gave the impression that he had earned the right to be appointed by God to his special task, nor even that he had earned the right to become a Christian! He was always aware that he was a sinner, forgiven by the grace of God – 'this grace given to me.' He was overwhelmed by God's unmerited favour in his life.

Consider this marvellous message that we have the privilege to *Go and Tell!*, 'the unsearchable riches of Christ'. Another word for unsearchable could be 'boundless'. It is a very hard word to describe or define. It has no limits. God's riches that are extended to all believers are so extravagant, so boundless, as to be overwhelming and beyond our grasp. These riches may not be in gold and silver, but are wealth beyond what we can even comprehend. Such riches are like treasure at the bottom of the sea. It is so deep that you cannot bring it to the shore without using something of immense power. This wealth is in the greatness of God. It is the riches of his wisdom, knowledge, beauty and power.

Our lives today

Just think about it . . . In The Salvation Army you and I can join Paul in preaching about the boundless riches of Christ. We have been chosen to *Go and Tell!* the nations about this extravagant gift that is given to us by God's grace.

Next month, July 2015, more than 16,000 Salvationists representing 126 countries from around the world will gather in London, England, the birthplace of our Army, at the O2 Arena to

commemorate our past, celebrate the present and innovate us forward into the future, under the theme of 'Boundless: the Whole World Redeeming'. I hope that you have joined with the whole world, praying, reading and acting to prepare your heart and mind for what God has to say to us.

Commissioner Theodore Kitching, arriving one morning at William Booth's home at 6 a.m. was surprised to find the Founder completing the verses of a song that he had worked on throughout the night, the song that would later become known as 'the Founder's song'. On the occasion of his 83rd birthday celebration, 'O Boundless Salvation!' was sung at the Royal Albert Hall, which was William Booth's final public appearance.

For the past 150 years, The Salvation Army has been fully engaged in preaching to the nations about this boundless salvation and deep ocean of love that flows for all, and we pray it will be an even greater resolve for the future. Be a part of history – *Go and Tell!*

Discussion questions

1. Have you, or your corps, followed the 'whole world praying/reading plan' in preparation for the congress? If so, what do you think the impact of this may be on the congress, on The Salvation Army, on your corps and on you?
2. Have you ever been asked to undertake a task for which you did not feel adequate or too weak to accomplish? How can God's grace help you?
3. What are some of the boundless riches available to the Army, your corps, or you personally in Christ?

Living to *Go and Tell!*

Our prayer is that a wave of collective riches will flow over us and the passion of our Founder be reborn in all of our hearts and lives as we *Go and Tell!* (in the words of William Booth) of 'boundless salvation for you and for me'.

Lieut-Colonel Kathy Hobgood (IHQ, from USA Southern Territory)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of the riches available in Christ Jesus in London as part of the International Congress team. Before coming to IHQ, I was stationed in Atlanta, Georgia, where my husband and I served as the Territorial Program Secretaries. We had many other appointments in our home territory, where we also had the privilege of telling of God's boundless riches.

Bible Study 7

Go and Tell of His Boundless Power

Bible reading – Ephesians 1:19-21

... and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

What the Bible says

Power is one of the great themes of Ephesians. Maybe this was due to Ephesus being a place of power, in both social and political terms and as a centre of religious power at this time. The power that we read about here also means great strength. Paul uses lots of different words to try and describe and emphasise just how great this power is.

So what is this power? Paul says that it is the divine power that raised Jesus from the dead! So great is this power! This power is that which conquered the two powers over which humanity has no control – death and evil. Humans are mortal so they cannot avoid death; humans are fallen so they cannot avoid evil. But God in Christ has conquered both and therefore can rescue us from both!

In verses 19-21 we see that this wasn't all that God's amazing power accomplished; after the resurrection Jesus is exalted, made to sit at the right hand of the Father and given authority over all things in the present and in all ages to come. What amazing power this is!

And it is this power that is available to all those who believe in Jesus Christ. Earlier in the chapter we read of the call that was ours in the past, and the inheritance that is ours in the future; surely then this incomparable power of God is to enable us to live as his people in the present. In Philippians 3:10 Paul states, 'I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection...' This is the boundless power that we are promised and it is totally sufficient for us.

See also Ephesians 3:17-21.

Our lives today

Many people in our world feel powerless. They are trapped in some way, sometimes due to their own choices but often by the choices of others. Many women particularly feel they have

no power. They have little or no choice about what they do, how they live, where they live; in worldly terms they have no power. And yet, in the Kingdom of God, all people who believe in Jesus have this great power available to them! We are not powerless at all!

In fact, Paul states that God's power is 'made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). May we, like Paul, boast about our weakness in order that Christ's power may rest on us.

So often, we don't make use of this power that is available. We try to do what God wants us to do, using only our own strength. We then begin to get tired and weary, disheartened and discouraged. But when we ask God to give us this incomparable power, the divine power of God, he gives it freely and then we can do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us' (Ephesians 3:20, 21). Oh, that we might seek his boundless, incomparable power every day!

See also Colossians 1:11 and 2 Peter 1:3 for verses of encouragement.

Discussion questions

1. In what ways have you felt or seen the power of God in your life or in the lives of others?
2. What does it mean for you to know that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is available for you?
3. Where in your life do you especially feel the need for the power of God?
4. In your culture, how much power is given to women? How does this affect you? Would you like this to change, and, if so, why?

Living to Go and Tell!

We have been given the power of God in our lives. How can we use this power to empower others?

Major Jane Alton (United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his boundless power by serving him as a corps officer in the UK Territory in three different places in Scotland, and currently as the Assistant Spiritual Programme Director at William Booth College, where I have the privilege and great joy of sharing in the training of officer cadets.

Bible Study 8

Go and Tell of His Boundless Love

Bible reading – Ephesians 2:4-5

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

What the Bible says

In writing to the Ephesians, Paul talks about the greatness of God's love, the richness of God's mercy which 'made us alive in Christ'. It is not because we did something good for God and not because we had sacrificed anything to him. No, God showed his love to us – boundless love – 'even when we were dead in transgressions'. Before we knew anything about love, God loved us. At the time when we were living without hope, when we felt like the whole world was going to collapse on us, when it felt like the only thing remaining for us was complete destruction, God loved and showed us his mercy and his amazing grace.

It is a wonderful assurance that God's love endures for ever (Psalm 106:1). Even when we fall into temptation he picks us up. God forgives and cleanses us from our iniquities. Lamentations 3:22, 23 says, 'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness'.

God's great love is for us and for all humanity. It comes from his riches, mercy and grace to make us 'alive with Christ'.

I suggest that we reflect on the following five descriptions of God's boundless love, adapted from the series 'The joy of knowing God' found on www.bible.org. They are:

1. God's love is unconditional (Matthew 5:44, 45; John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
2. God's love is self-giving (John 3:16; 10:11).
3. God's love is sacrificial (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9, 10).
4. God's love is comforting (1 John 4:18).
5. God's love is life-changing – enabling us to love one another (1 John 4:11).

Our lives today

God's boundless love goes beyond human comprehension. God's love goes beyond race, colour, gender, nationality or creed. It goes beyond all human views of love. It is boundless! The song writer, Sidney Cox, phrased it in this way:

I am amazed when I think of God's love,
So wonderful, matchless and free. (SASB 319)

Our last-born son is now 22 years old. When he was four years old, he was attacked by a neighbour's dog. It pinned him to the ground and bit him all over his body. His face was swollen and bleeding. We thought he was not going to survive. We took him to the doctor, who attended to his wounds and left the rest to God. The whole family came together in love and prayed for him. We were amazed at how quickly he was healed. And today we cannot even see the scars in his face, though he has not forgotten. It was God's love, grace and mercy in action.

We all need love within our own family, our own church and from our friends. To feel unloved can be very painful and disastrous. But thanks be to God, that in him love comes with no strings attached! All are welcome, and all have the same privilege, the same love, the same mercy and the same grace. I am grateful to God that his love embraces me, my gifts and talents – no matter how small I may feel. Through God's love I am encouraged, enthused and empowered. The world can rob us of our confidence in God's love. But in God's love we trust.

'Love is in the air' so the song says. This tells us that we value love and value being loved. Our world needs love. Our churches need love. Our families need love. Our society needs love. True love is found in God who loved us first.

Discussion questions

1. How do I experience God's love in my life?
2. What evidence is there that I have God's love within me?
3. How can I share God's boundless love with others? (John 13:33-35)

Living to Go and Tell!

Make God's boundless love a reality in your daily routine.

Lieut-Colonel Zakithi Mabaso (Southern Africa Territory)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his love by serving in my home country for many years in Women's Ministries, telling of God's boundless love to women and girls. For the past three years I have served in Kenya West Territory and at IHQ.

Bible Study 9

Go and Tell of His Boundless Peace

Bible reading – Ephesians 2:14-18

For he himself is our peace who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

What the Bible says

The main theme in this section of Ephesians is peace. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ 'is our peace' (v 14); that he 'made peace' (v 15); and that he came and 'preached peace' to all peoples (v 17). But what is peace? One of the most common definitions of peace is 'the absence of war or conflict'. But in Scripture, the word peace has a much richer and deeper meaning. Here it denotes a sense of completeness, well-being, wholeness and harmony.

When God called Israel to be his chosen people, he established a covenant with them, a covenant of peace. As long as Israel obeyed God's law and continued to follow him, they would know his peace (Numbers 6:24-26). Centuries later Isaiah looked forward to the day when God would step into history and establish an eternal kingdom through the Messiah, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). In the Gospels, we see Jesus offering peace to those who were troubled (e.g. Luke 7:50 and 8:48), promising his peace to his disciples (John 14:27), and after his resurrection, greeting his disciples with words of peace (Luke 24:36). No wonder Paul could say, Jesus is our peace!

Look how many times Paul uses the word 'one' in this part of Scripture. He who is our peace 'made the two groups one' (v 14); he created in himself 'one new humanity' (v 15); he offered reconciliation 'in one body' (v 16), and he enabled access to the Father 'by one Spirit' (v 18). Peace is about the restoration of right relationships. Peace makes us one.

The peace that comes through Jesus breaks down every barrier and brings about unity and reconciliation - not only between peoples of all nations, but between God and lost humanity.

Our lives today

In Jesus, we can experience the peace of God in two specific ways. Firstly, we can know peace in the context of our relationships with each other (peace between us), and secondly, we can know peace in the context of our salvation relationship with God (peace within us).

When we look at the beginning and end of this passage there are two phrases which, when taken together, hold the key to finding true peace in our lives, 'He [Jesus] himself is our peace' . . . 'for through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit'. Without Jesus in our lives our relationship with God can never be right. If our relationship with God isn't right, our relationships with each other will always suffer.

As Prince of Peace, Jesus breaks down the wall of enmity that had divided Jew and Gentile for centuries. Only Jesus could do that. Only Jesus could bring about peace between the nations and create a new humanity (v 15).

As Prince of Peace, Jesus breaks down the wall of sin that separates us from God. We could not do that for ourselves. Only Jesus could do that. Only Jesus could bring about peace between us and God (Romans 5:1).

If we want to know peace in our world and peace in our lives, we need to first know Jesus.

Discussion questions

1. How would you describe peace?
2. Can you think of a time when you have had to be a peacemaker? How easy or difficult was that?
3. Can you remember a time when you yearned for peace? Describe what that was like.

Living to Go and Tell!

Let there be peace on earth – and let it begin with me!

Major Pat Brown (IHQ, from United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his love by serving him in corps and divisional roles here in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand. For now I serve on IHQ as Chaplain and City of London Liaison Officer – with numerous opportunities to *Go and Tell!* of his love in this workplace and in this great city.

Bible Study 10

Go and Tell of His Boundless Energy

Bible reading – Ephesians 3:14-17

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

What the Bible says

Women of all ages are continually looking for more energy. We balance a busy schedule of cleaning, washing, care for our family and/or work. We place our head on the pillow but our mind is filled with yet more questions of how to get done what we have left undone. What we need is energy in our inner being, and not just a little energy – we need boundless energy.

God's Word promises that we can be strengthened through his Spirit in our inner being. When God is invited into our lives, he is able to speak into our hurts, our weariness and our daily duties. He can give us the strength to accomplish what is needed.

At first, we are excited at this possibility, but doubts come. We have spent time in prayer and read the Bible, but the list and the weariness remains. We can gain such boundless energy promised in his Word by giving him space in our life to energize us.

God's Word gives us simple steps.

1. 'Kneel before the Father' invites us to come to him humbly, asking for renewed purpose and energy. We know we can ask him, but too often the busy list becomes the priority. Come and kneel before our Father.
2. 'Pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you' invites us to recognise his ability to energise us. He is able and more than willing.
3. Asking him to 'strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being' calls us to invite the Holy Spirit to energise us within our very souls. Physical strength has a shelf life but spiritual strength can be renewed. We can have boundless energy in Christ.

Our lives today

The final words, 'through faith' are our response to him today. Through faith, he changes our perspective. Through faith, he teaches us to prioritise our list. Through faith, he gives us new purpose, new strength, new energy.

Take just a few minutes wherever you are, stop speaking words to God and, instead, listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit – just listen. No words, no requests, no demands but only a quiet listening. In these moments, the Holy Spirit can speak to you and give you renewed strength for the day and all that it holds. Make space for him to breathe energy into your inner being. He created you; he can energise you in a way you have not previously experienced.

What is our response to the Holy Spirit? When he empowers us, we will tell others of this new energy. Weariness is overcome by new purpose. Schedules become prioritised by those things that are God-driven and God-energised. We become excited about our future and the natural next step is to tell our friends and family. Let him energise you today.

Discussion questions

1. What stops me from being energised by the Holy Spirit today?
2. When was the last time I heard the Holy Spirit speak to me and what did he say?
3. How does being energised in our inner spirits energise us physically?

Living to *Go and Tell!*

God-given boundless energy is exciting! *Go and Tell!* others what a difference he makes in your life today!

Major Anita Caldwell (USA Southern Territory)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of being energised by his Spirit while serving him as a corps officer in the USA; as Regional Director of Women's Ministries in the Moldova and Romania Region and in the Georgia Region, as well as Training Principal in the Eastern Europe Territory, Moscow, Russia. Today, I *Go and Tell!* of being energised by the Holy Spirit as author of *Holiness Alive!* and following a brief period at IHQ based in London, I am once again a corps officer in my home territory, serving at Waco, Texas.

Bible Study 11

Go and Tell of His Boundless Joy

Bible reading – Ephesians 5:18-20

*Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms,
hymns, and songs from the Spirit.
Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to
God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*
(vv 18b-20)

What the Bible says

Now we're moving to Ephesians 5 where most of the chapter is a comparison of life without Christ versus life with Christ. We are encouraged or even urged to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Being filled with the Spirit means we experience Christ as an ongoing, active presence in our lives, transforming us more and more into the likeness of Christ. Only through the Spirit can we then live the life Paul is speaking about in these two short verses: encouraging one another with psalms and songs, making music from our heart, always giving thanks to God – or in other words – living a life of joy!

Joy is a massive theme in the Bible. Whilst earthly experiences might give happiness, the emotion described in the Bible is deeper than happiness and deeply spiritual. In the very well-known verse, 'the joy of the LORD is your strength' (Nehemiah 8:10), the writer speaks about the joy that comes from knowing God and delighting in him. Psalm 51:12 says: 'Restore to me the joy of your salvation'. Joy is a by-product of salvation, of the life in the Spirit. Joy is given by God as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5.22) and it is received by faith.

When Jesus says, 'In this world you will have trouble', we understand that the joy will not be fully realised until the great day when we see Jesus face-to-face and live with him for ever. In the meantime we can be 'joyful in hope' (Romans 12:12). Joy is available to us. We only need to tap into it, choosing joy over sadness, choosing joy over negative thoughts. Christ's gift to us, his joy, is limitless. What boundless joy! (See also John 15:9-11.)

Our lives today

The Salvation Army has been known as a joyful movement from its beginnings and is still recognised as such in most parts of the world. Instruments of all kinds, shouts of 'hallelujah!' and joyful singing, clapping and dancing continue to be characteristics of Salvation Army meetings. However, is this expressive joy also part of our daily life? So often as women we worry about the future, our children or parents and so many other things and the joy can be taken from us.

There is legitimate grief, because death and hardship are part of our earthly lives. In our grief we can be comforted knowing that Christ, the man of sorrows (Isaiah 53) understands our trials better than anyone ever will.

However, sometimes we let the enemy steal and kill and destroy our joy far too easily (John 10:10a). But Jesus wants to give us life and fullness of life. Joy that comes from Christ is part of this fullness of life. If we choose joy over sorrow, our surroundings, our family or workplace will start to notice. We will be able to go and tell of his boundless joy. We might not even have to tell, because people around us will notice and will ask us why we are so joyful. What a witness to the giver of joy that is!

Discussion questions

1. How did you experience joy when you first were saved?
2. What helps us to live a life of joy?
3. Tell us of a situation when you experienced joy in the midst of persecution, hardship or loss.
4. There's nothing more contradictory than an unenthusiastic Christian. Share your thoughts on this.

Living to *Go and Tell!*

Try for a week to consciously choose to live in joy. Choose joy over sadness, over doubt and sorrow. Remind yourself every morning of Galatians 5:22: 'the fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy!'

Lieutenant Christianne Swansbury (United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his joy by serving him as an officer in The Salvation Army. God called me to officership when I was very young, growing up in Switzerland. He confirmed his calling when I spent a year in London as a teenager. I have experienced his joy when working as a therapeutic educator in Switzerland, and also now as a corps officer in Ashford, Kent. Hallelujah!

Bible Study 12

Go and Tell of His Boundless Protection

Bible reading – Ephesians 6:10-20

Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes
(v 13)

What the Bible says

The Bible shows us on many occasions that God wants to protect his people. In Exodus, Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses is not able to do this in his own strength, but only because he relies on God. He finds that God provides for their physical needs, God also shows his protection of them. 'Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still"' (Exodus 14:13, 14). God showed his protection of them as he provided them with a pillar of cloud in the daytime, and a pillar of fire at night. The cloud was able to cover them during the day so when they were pursued by the Egyptians they couldn't see them. At night time the cloud was dark and also prevented them from being seen, although on the other side of the cloud God gave them light – see Exodus 14:19-20. This is an example of God's physical protection.

Later, in the Psalms, we read about God's protection of the soul in Psalm 91:2, 4. This word picture shows how God protects, like chicks under the mother's wings – such safety and protection!

In the New Testament Paul speaks about the protection of God as putting on the full armour. Paul had experienced prison for the sake of the gospel on a number of occasions. When he writes to the Ephesians he speaks about being 'an ambassador in chains', it could be that he is in prison at this time (see Ephesians 6:20). Due to his prison experiences he is familiar with a soldier's armour. It is no wonder he sees a spiritual application in this. Paul speaks out against the devil's schemes, acknowledges we are in a spiritual battle and we need the protection of God. He shows us that God has provided all we need. Three times he mentions the need to 'stand' in this passage; 'take your stand' (v 11); 'after you have done everything, stand' (v 13); 'Stand firm'(v 14). Each of these phrases, and also the phrase we saw earlier from Exodus, reminds us to 'stand'. This speaks of us being able to have confidence in God that we can stand against the forces of evil at work today.

Our lives today

My eldest son is now 25 years old, yet I can remember very well how it felt to bring him home from hospital as a tiny baby. I wanted to protect my newborn baby in every possible way. As we transported him from the hospital to our home I saw the potential of danger on the roads.

I became aware of germs and wanted to be sure that the people who handled him did not give him any infections. I wanted to protect him from all dangers, I felt it was my role to protect him and so I did my best to keep him from harm. Our heavenly Father is aware of our need to be protected today. He protects our soul. Paul names the armour that we can put on to protect us. It is: the belt of truth; the breastplate of righteousness; feet fitted with the gospel of peace; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (verses 14-17).

Today this armour of God is still relevant to us. As Christians today we need to protect ourselves against the devil's schemes. The evil one would want to attack us, infect us, and knock us. Often the devil's schemes are subtle, but dangerous. As women today the devil can tell us that we are not valuable, not worthy, not able. But in God's strength we can stand against the negative messages the evil one would want to use against us.

Equipping ourselves with God's armour is not a mechanical operation; it is an expression of our dependence on God. According to Ephesians 6:18-20 prayer is to pervade all our spiritual warfare. Let us look closely at these verses and take heed of his instruction about prayer. When we engage in prayer, we are fully equipped for the fight against evil.

Discussion questions

1. Can you share an occasion when you have felt in danger but God protected you?
2. Look closely at the six main pieces of the armour of God. Why is each piece vital for spiritual battle?
3. How can you 'stand firm' as an individual or a group. What evil force do you need to stand against?

Living to Go and Tell!

Memorising Scripture can be a great benefit. Each day try to learn a verse of the passage Ephesians 6:10-20 and in 11 days you should be able to recall these verses from memory. Then use it when you sense you are under spiritual attack, so that you can 'stand firm'.

Major Julie Forrest (United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

God has called me to *Go and Tell!* of his boundless protection in my home territory as I served as a corps officer and on British Red Shield Services in Germany. I have also served on the staff at the International College for Officers and in the Women's Ministries department at IHQ. I am currently a divisional leader in Birmingham, UK.



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