

# a gift from the heart

## SELF DENIAL APPEAL



### WEEK ONE

#### Mingle

If you have your own icebreakers, feel free to stick with those! Otherwise, here are some questions you could use:

- Would you rather speak every language or be able to play every instrument?
- If you could stay one age forever, which would you choose and why?
- Choose three words to describe the past week in your life—get creative!

#### Pause and pray

*'Hey God, we thank you for this day and for everybody here with us. We ask that you help us to listen, learn and be inspired to help others, as we hear their stories! Amen.'*

Encourage them to have their Bibles ready and/or notebooks.

#### What is Self Denial and why do we take part?

Explain a brief run-down of the cause, as some young people may not be aware of what it is and why we do it as a church:

The Salvation Army's annual Self Denial Appeal raises funds for the mission and ministry in countries that are unable to financially support themselves. It's called Self Denial because it's about sacrificing a portion of what we have to give to those in need. God commands us to love others as we would ourselves and to give from a generous heart, which is why we take part in the cause—helping others and offering our support is a very valuable gift.

#### Watch

Go to [selfdenial.org.nz](http://selfdenial.org.nz) and watch **Week One video—Commissioners Mark and Julie Campbell.**

#### Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1–14 (NLT)

Either one person reads this aloud or go in a circle, with each person taking a turn at each verse.

<sup>1</sup>Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

<sup>3</sup>For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. <sup>4</sup>They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action

was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

*“So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. <sup>7</sup>Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving. <sup>8</sup>I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. <sup>9</sup>You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. <sup>10</sup>Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. <sup>11</sup>Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. <sup>12</sup>Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. <sup>13</sup>Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. <sup>14</sup>Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.*

## Study

Have you ever received a gift from a friend or family member that has sparked a lot of joy? Maybe you've given a gift to someone you care about because it lets them know you value that relationship. Doing something thoughtful for someone else—like giving a gift—can demonstrate love and kindness, because it is the meaning behind the gift and where your heart is situated towards giving it, that matters most.

A Gift from the Heart is the theme for Self Denial 2023. In the verses we just read, Paul uses his great knowledge and love for the people of Corinth in order to teach them about demonstrating love through giving. Paul encourages these believers to willingly and generously respond from their hearts, offering good advice on how they could do it well.

Earlier in the Bible, in Galatians 2:8–10 (NLT), Paul made a commitment to himself, to ‘remember the poor’. In our verses today from Corinthians, he mentions the ‘believers of Jerusalem’ (8:4), who were very poor people, and didn't have much. Paul tells the Corinthian people that God views every gift—big or small, expensive or cheap—as worthy and acceptable as long as it has been given eagerly (8:12) and from a generous heart.

This scripture teaches us about Christian giving, and the

blessing our gifts and support can be to communities and people in need. When giving and sharing are others-focused and not selfish, we learn how they can impact our lives as well. As we look beyond ourselves and notice the needs in our home communities, or overseas, we should consider how to respond with compassion and practical support, because the act of giving holds more value than the gift itself. This means that our attitude towards giving can be a joyful expression and demonstration of God's love.

As Jesus first loved us, so we love him in return, as well as his people and the work of his kingdom on earth.

In the coming weeks of the Self Denial video series, we will learn about different Salvation Army territories around the world that are greatly in need of help and resources. We will also see how God has strengthened and gifted people to go and support, empowered by the Holy Spirit within them.

Reflecting on our main theme—A Gift from the Heart—let's continue to ask God for his guidance as we learn and seek the generosity in our hearts.

## Discuss

Use these questions to encourage discussion. Feel free to add your own and ask follow-up questions as people share:

- What stood out to you from the video or the Bible verse?
- How does God command us to act toward people in need?
- What are some ways we can give generously from our hearts?

## Action

Either in pairs or in groups, ask the youth to brainstorm how they might be able to help others in need overseas. Encourage them to get creative with saving pocket money themselves or fundraising as a youth group; this kind of gift is enough to change many lives.

## Prayer

Spend some time praying together. Here are some possible topics to include, as well as prayer over your discussion today and the week ahead:

- Pray for those facing damage from natural disasters.
- Pray for communities in need of better medical and hospital facilities.
- Pray for missionaries overseas who provide support to those in need.
- Pray that our Self Denial gifts will provide the funds to meet those needs.

# a gift from the heart

## SELF DENIAL APPEAL



## WEEK TWO

### Mingle

If you have your own icebreakers, feel free to stick with those! Otherwise, here are some questions you could use:

- Would you rather only ever watch movies or only ever read books?
- What is your best skill?
- What is your favourite emotion (joy, relief, safety, etc)?

### Pause and pray

Go around in a circle and have everyone (if they would like to) say something they are grateful to God for.

*'Hey God, we thank you for this day and for everybody here with us. We ask that you help us to listen, learn and be inspired to help others, as we hear their stories! Amen.'*

Encourage them to have their Bibles ready and/or notebooks.

### Recap

Remind the youth that you're looking at the Self Denial Appeal and ask if they can remember anything of what was discussed last week. Is there anything they have done during the week to apply what was discussed?

### Watch

Go to [selfdenial.org.nz](http://selfdenial.org.nz) and watch **Week Two—Kenya Worth Project: Rose's Story**.

### Chat

What caught your attention in Rose's story?

### Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:1–15 (NLT)

Either one person reads this aloud or go in a circle, with each person taking a turn at each verse.

*<sup>1</sup>I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving.*

*<sup>3</sup>But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you. <sup>4</sup>We would be embarrassed—not to mention your own embarrassment—if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them! <sup>5</sup>So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly.*

*<sup>6</sup>Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will*

get a generous crop.<sup>7</sup>You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.'<sup>8</sup>And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.<sup>9</sup>As the Scriptures say, 'They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.'<sup>10</sup>For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

<sup>11</sup>Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. <sup>12</sup>So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.

<sup>13</sup>As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. <sup>15</sup>Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

## Study

Grace is a central theme that Paul used in his letters to the people in these Bible passages. Paul's main goal was to remind them of God's grace so that they would be ready to focus on the task at hand and respond with compassion.

Last week we spoke about God's kindness and grace through his faithfulness towards the Corinthian believers, who Paul was now speaking to about understanding God's grace in a new way. Paul reminds them of the churches of Macedonia (who we read about last week), that although they tested by many troubles and were poor themselves, they were also filled with joy which overflowed in rich generosity (8:2).

The Macedonians recognised God's goodness and grace over anything else, before opening their hearts to give generously to others. The Corinthian people developed other priorities over time, which meant that their enthusiasm was lacking for the offering they had agreed to participate in. But the Macedonians, even down to their last dollar, considered only the privilege of giving and how it would help others. This is an awesome example of how easy it is to be generous—sometimes our lives and our comfort can stop us from seeing others' needs around us, and it can also sometimes mean we feel guilty for not being able to fully meet someone's needs, even though we want to help.

As a mission-focused church, The Salvation Army has seen many communities around the world struggle with

life's challenges and finding ways to overcome those challenges for themselves. They have witnessed acts of tremendous generosity as people responded to cries for help. As time passes, there are also more and more people who struggle to feel true, heartfelt compassion and conviction towards these circumstances because of how often it happens in our world—it can be confronting and saddening to watch the news sometimes, right?

When we start to become overwhelmed and it feels easier to turn a blind eye, it is so important to keep our focus on Jesus and remember his example! We are called to share God's kindness, hope and healing with the world! We can remember the example of the Macedonians, so that during Self Denial, we can acknowledge and be grateful for the privilege and blessing in our own lives, as we consider what we can do to bless others.

Paul reminds his friends of Jesus and the cross; speaking of Jesus' sacrifice, in order to pour out blessings of salvation and grace on them and on us. It is a 'gift too wonderful for words!' (9:15)

## Discuss

Use these questions to encourage discussion. Feel free to add your own and ask follow-up questions as people share:

- What stood out to you from the video or the Bible verse?
- How can we follow the Macedonian example to give joyfully and generously?
- What are some examples in your own lives of generosity? Maybe a moment you showed generosity or somebody was generous to you?

## Action

Remind the youth of things they could do to fundraise for Self-Denial (pocket money, car wash, etc). Perhaps do some goal setting for the week ahead!

## Prayer

Spend some time praying together. Here are some possible topics to include, as well as prayer over your discussion today and the week ahead:

- Pray for opportunities to help others in our own communities and homes.
- Pray for self-control over spending unnecessary money.
- Thank God for his blessing and grace in our own lives.

# a gift from the heart

## SELF DENIAL APPEAL



### WEEK THREE

#### Mingle

If you have your own icebreakers, feel free to stick with those! Otherwise, here are some questions you could use:

- What is your favourite kind of bread?
- What is your favourite Bible story?
- Who is your favourite Bible character?

#### Pause and pray

*'Hey God, we thank you for this day and for everybody here with us. We ask that you help us to listen, learn and be inspired to help others, as we hear their stories! Amen.'*

Encourage them to have their Bibles ready and/or notebooks.

#### Recap

Remind the youth that you're looking at the Self Denial Appeal and ask if they can remember anything of what was discussed last week. Is there anything they have done during the week to apply what was discussed?

#### Watch

Go to [selfdenial.org.nz](http://selfdenial.org.nz) and watch **Week Three—Papua New Guinea Lae Street School: Stanley and Gillie's Story**

#### Chat

What caught your attention in Stanley and Gillie's story?

#### Scripture: John 15:7–11 (NLT)

Either one person reads this aloud or go in a circle, with each person taking a turn at each verse.

<sup>7</sup>*'But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!*

<sup>8</sup>*When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

<sup>9</sup>*'I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!'*

#### Study

As a fruit of the spirit, joy is for sharing! Has anyone heard the quote, 'joy is like jam; it sticks to you as you try to spread it!?' That creates a messy illustration, but it's so

true! Joy can look like many things, but for us, it's the joy of Jesus in our hearts (John 15:11). Joy is much more deep-rooted than happiness, because joy comes from Jesus.

In our scripture verse from week one (2 Corinthians), we read that the Macedonians faced hardship and extreme poverty (8:2), but despite these hardships, they also experienced abundant joy. God's grace fulfilled their every need, meaning they were joyful and faithful to God in their sufferings, which shows us that Jesus' joy was complete in them. Have you ever felt joyful after experiencing someone's generosity or after being generous yourself?

Troubles and hardships are a reality of life. Jesus taught that living as Christians would not mean we would be free from pain or sorrow. We learn through these scriptures that this is not a sign of God's absence or neglect but is a sign of his presence, as we can still experience his grace and joy once we know his plan for our lives is at work. In mission fields, where people are struggling and resources are low, miracles of faith and provision bring joy and transformation! Faith is holding on to God's promise even when times are tough.

Some time ago, while exploring the Port Arthur penal settlement in southern Tasmania, I went into the small church in the precinct, still being used for worship. On a wall I noticed a memorial plaque to a man who had been the caretaker and attendant for services and activities for many years. The plaque said of him: 'Duty was a pleasure faithfully performed.' I have never forgotten the simplicity of the statement and its testimony to the spirit of a man whose willing service was a gift filled with joy!

A gift from a joy-filled heart is only ever pleasing to God.

## Discuss

Use these questions to encourage discussion. Feel free to add your own and ask follow-up questions as people share:

- What stood out to you from the video or the Bible verse?
- How can we remember to be joyful when things aren't going so well?
- Is there a moment in your life where you truly felt God's joy?

## Action

Remind the youth of the fundraising plan for Self-Denial (pocket money; Hope 320 Combo). Encourage them to share God's love and joy with someone else at home or at school—this could look like offering a kind word, buying someone a snack or simply sitting with someone who may be lonely.

## Prayer

Spend some time praying together. Here are some possible topics to include, as well as prayer over your discussion today and the week ahead:

- Pray for God's joy to overcome anyone who is struggling this week.
- Pray that God will provide good resources for people in need overseas.
- Pray for opportunities to share the joy and love of Jesus within our homes and schools.

# a gift from the heart

## SELF DENIAL APPEAL



### WEEK FOUR

#### Mingle

If you have your own icebreakers, feel free to stick with those! Otherwise, here is a small activity.

Ask everyone to think of three 'facts' about themselves, but one of them should be something made up.

Then go around in a circle, with each person saying their three things, not stating which one is made up.

The rest of the group must guess which 'fact' is fake.

#### Pause and pray

*'Hey God, we thank you for this day and for everybody here with us. We ask that you help us to listen, learn and be inspired to help others, as we hear their stories! Amen.'*

Encourage them to have their Bibles ready and/or notebooks.

#### Recap

Remind the youth that you're looking at the Self Denial Appeal and ask if they can remember anything of what was discussed last week. Is there anything they have done during the week to apply what was discussed?

#### Activity

**You will need:** Bibles and blindfolds

Within the small groups, assign 'parts' of the body. Two people can be 'arms,' two to four people can be 'legs,' one person can be a 'mouth,' and the last person can be the 'eyes.' The task of the group is to cross from one side of the room to another and to open a closed Bible to 1 Corinthians 12.

The challenge is that only the people who are legs can have their feet touching the ground. Only the people who are arms can use their hands. Only the person who is eyes can see (the rest of the group should close their eyes or be blindfolded), and only the mouth can speak.

Basically, it falls to the 'legs' to carry the other members of the group across the room and the 'eyes' and 'mouth' to direct the 'arms' to open the Bible to the correct page. The first team that completes the task is the winner.

#### Watch

Go to [selfdenial.org.nz](http://selfdenial.org.nz) and watch **Week Four—Kenya ACE Project: John's Story.**

#### Chat

What caught your attention in John's story?

## Scripture: Romans 12:6–16 (NLT)

Either one person reads this aloud or go in a circle, with each person taking a turn at each verse.

*<sup>6</sup>In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup>If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup>If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

*<sup>9</sup>Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honouring each other. <sup>11</sup>Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. <sup>13</sup>When God's people are in need, be ready to help them.*

*<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. <sup>15</sup>Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!*

## Study

The Apostle Paul, who we've spoken of in earlier weeks, wrote many letters to the early churches. In these letters, he often spoke of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and noting how and why they came about (for further study, see Romans 12:4–8, Ephesians 4:7–16 [NIV]). The Apostle Peter, one of Jesus' disciples also says:

'God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well so that God's generosity can flow through you' (1 Peter 4:10–11 [NLT]).

As we attend Sunday church, community church events, even youth group during the week, you may have noticed the variety of spiritual gifts in action. God-given gifts enable compassion and grace within areas of church ministry, especially when those gifts work together—sometimes this may look like gifts of wisdom, leadership, serving, teaching or even healing. Through the generosity of the Holy Spirit, these kinds of gifts are given. It is also important to remember that God also gives gifts of natural abilities, which you may even already recognise in yourself, such as creativity, innovation, a good sense of intuition, empathy, and many more. God offers these gifts so generously and asks that we use them all for the good of his ministry and mission both at home and overseas.

In the passage we've all just read, Paul teaches on how to best use a spiritual or natural gift you've been given. He centres his message around the importance

of working together, respecting one another's gifts and strengths, through patience, encouragement and love. All of us bring something different to the table, and our gifts are all equally important. In verse 10 it says, 'love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honouring each other'. Love is the greatest gift and should be at the heart of everything we do!

Elsewhere in the Bible, Paul uses a metaphor to help us understand the importance of working together. The image of a body working together with every different part, every muscle and limb with a different responsibility and importance—just like the activity we did earlier! Every gift of ours works together in the body of Christ.

'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it' (1 Corinthians 12:27 [NIV]).

Every part is valuable, every gift is good!

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) says: 'For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'. God's creation and purpose for each of us, is an awesome truth we can speak over our lives. With God, as his people, we can do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine' (Ephesians 3:20 [NIV]).

As we continue getting to hear about what God is doing overseas, and how important our support is for the good of people in need, we may be able to sense the Holy Spirit nudging us to get involved in something new, outside of our comfort zone. This might even be a new sense of God's gifting within us, and it's best to embrace that feeling and not reject God's prompting—he has amazing plans for your life, using the gifts you've been given to do good in his kingdom. Let's remember to keep pressing into God and the gifts he has given us, in order to truly offer a gift from our hearts for the Self Denial Appeal and beyond.

## Discuss

Use these questions to encourage discussion. Feel free to add your own and ask follow-up questions as people share:

- What stood out to you from the video or the Bible verse?
- Do you feel as though you have a gift? If yes, how can you best be using it in your church community? If no, think of some of the things you are passionate about or hobbies you have, and what skill or feeling those things require!

## Action

Remind the youth that in just two weeks, the money for Self Denial is being given—a gift from the heart, the gift that is enough to change many lives.



## Prayer

Spend some time praying together. Here are some possible topics to include, as well as prayer over your discussion today and the week ahead:

- Pray for opportunities to use our God-given gifts.
- Pray for those who feel as though they have no gift to offer, and ask God to reveal their gift to them.
- Pray for missionaries overseas, for renewed strength and enthusiasm as they help others.

# a gift from the heart

## SELF DENIAL APPEAL



### WEEK FIVE

#### Mingle

If you have your own icebreakers, feel free to stick with those! Otherwise, here are some questions you could use:

- Would you rather be the funniest or smartest person in the room?
- If you could choose any person from history to be your imaginary friend, who would it be and why?
- What is your most used emoji?

#### Pause and pray

*'Hey God, we thank you for this day and for everybody here with us. We ask that you help us to listen, learn and be inspired to help others, as we hear their stories! Amen.'*

Encourage them to have their Bibles ready and/or notebooks.

#### Recap

Remind the youth that you're looking at the Self Denial Appeal and ask if they can remember anything of what was discussed last week. Is there anything they have done during the week to apply what was discussed?

#### Watch

Go to [selfdenial.org.nz](http://selfdenial.org.nz) and watch **Week Five—Papua New Guinea Adult Literacy School: Martha's Story.**

#### Chat

What caught your attention in Martha's story?

#### Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:16–24 (NLT)

Either one person reads this aloud or go in a circle, with each person taking a turn at each verse.

*<sup>16</sup>But thank God! He has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. <sup>17</sup>Titus welcomed our request that he visit you again. In fact, he himself was very eager to go and see you. <sup>18</sup>We are also sending another brother with Titus. All the churches praise him as a preacher of the Good News. <sup>19</sup>He was appointed by the churches to accompany us as we take the offering to Jerusalem—a service that glorifies the Lord and shows our eagerness to help.*

*<sup>20</sup>We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. <sup>21</sup>We are careful to be honourable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honourable.*

*<sup>22</sup>We are also sending with them another of our brothers who has proven himself many times and has shown on many occasions how eager he is. He is now even more enthusiastic because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup>If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who*

*works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches, and they bring honour to Christ.<sup>24</sup> So show them your love, and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.*

## Study

There are people who come into our lives who are a gift from God. They not only help and encourage us by complementing our gifts and skills, but they join in on the joys and struggles we face in everyday life. Paul had a friend named Titus, who consistently encouraged and supported Paul as he endeavoured to complete his mission in Corinth—collecting their gifted money and taking it back to the poor people in Jerusalem.

Titus, along with another two men recruited by Paul, was very willing to be involved in Paul's ministry—happy to share his faith, preach God's word, and assist in practical ways of collecting the offerings correctly and respectfully. The Bible tells us about how grace flowed through the open hearts and willing hands of Paul's co-workers. Their desire to be involved and their spiritual strength were very helpful not only to Paul, but to the people in Corinth who responded positively to their presence and were comfortable having them visit.

God's plan was to spark a desire in the Corinthian people so that they would excel in giving, and Titus was the man for the task. Eagerness to be involved and willingness to give from the heart was the idea right at the centre of the church at Corinth. Through Titus' joyful spirit and gracious leadership, he helped make Paul's God-given mission a reality. God calls his people and equips them with the gifts they will need to fulfil their calling. Titus was understanding, encouraging and strong. Godly people who are able to both serve and see the best in others are best equipped by God for a good and healthy community.

Another biblical man, named Luke, speaks of a church where all the believers were united with each other, sharing their possessions so that there remained nobody poor or in need around them. Luke's image demonstrates a close-knit group, living peacefully and boldly sharing stories about Jesus. The Bible says there was 'great grace' among them (Acts 4:33 [NIV]). By God's power and grace within this church, all the believers were able to stand together in a community of faith, supporting one another as they walked out a Christian life. We all need this support as we follow Jesus!

The story of Titus and his friends, with the examples of generous and Christ-like people, encourages a deep-rooted desire in us to give our best in every way we can. Many of God's gifts are generously given to all Christian believers. This means that every single one of us can take part in the joy of giving all we are capable of—all

gifts, of any shape or size, contribute to the blessing of people in our own communities and in far off lands.

As we look for opportunities to serve and to give of what we have, it's important we remember that we are included in a huge ministry of people around us. Together we are stronger, and our gifts are a massive blessing within the kingdom of God.

## Discuss

Use these questions to encourage discussion. Feel free to add your own and ask follow-up questions as people share:

- In what areas of our church community can we willingly use our gifts to serve?
- Does Titus have any qualities/gifts that you can see in yourself (eg, strength, positivity)?
- Look at the people around you—have you noticed any gifts or strengths that they have?

## Activity

**You will need:** Paper, pens, and (optional) tape

Hand out plain pieces of A4 paper, and have each person write out their name at the top, then have them tape their piece of paper onto their back, or alternatively pass the papers around in a circle.

The idea is for everyone to write an encouraging word or sentence for one another (eg, 'you're so kind', 'you are always so positive'). Encourage everyone to write at least one word!

## Action

How's the fundraising? Next week is Self Denial Sunday!

## Prayer

Spend some time praying together. Here are some possible topics to include, as well as prayer over your discussion today and the week ahead:

- Thank God for the example of people who already serve and volunteer in our community.
- Ask God for the confidence to help us serve with a willing and joyful attitude.
- Pray for people overseas or in our community who need extra encouragement, or a friend to support them.

# a gift from the heart

## SELF DENIAL APPEAL



## WEEK SIX

### Mingle

If you have your own icebreakers, feel free to stick with those! Otherwise, here are some questions you could use:

- What was the best thing that happened to you this weekend? This month? This year?
- What is something you hate doing? Why?
- What is something you love doing? Why?

### Pause and pray

*'Hey God, we thank you for this day and for everybody here with us. We ask that you help us to listen, learn, and be inspired to help others, as we hear their stories! Amen.'*

Encourage them to have their Bibles ready and/or notebooks.

### Recap

Remind the youth that you're looking at the Self Denial Appeal—this is the final week—and ask if they can remember anything of what was discussed in previous weeks. Is there anything they have done to apply what was discussed? Has anyone managed to fundraise by themselves? Have you fundraised as a group?

### Watch

Go to [selfdenial.org.nz](http://selfdenial.org.nz) and watch **Week Six—Self Denial Song by Kenya West Cadets.**

### Scripture: Psalm 67 (NLT)

Either one person reads this aloud or go in a circle, with each person taking a turn at each verse.

<sup>1</sup>May God be merciful and bless us.

*May his face smile with favor on us.* Interlude

<sup>2</sup>May your ways be known throughout the earth,  
your saving power among people everywhere.

<sup>3</sup>May the nations praise you, O God.

*Yes, may all the nations praise you.*

<sup>4</sup>Let the whole world sing for joy,

*because you govern the nations with justice  
and guide the people of the whole world.* Interlude

<sup>5</sup>May the nations praise you, O God.

*Yes, may all the nations praise you.*

<sup>6</sup>Then the earth will yield its harvests,  
and God, our God, will richly bless us.

<sup>7</sup>Yes, God will bless us,

*and people all over the world will fear him.*

### Discuss

Today is Self Denial Sunday which means we have the privilege of presenting our gifts from the heart, in the

form of money we have fundraised and sacrificed, so that others may be blessed. Along with many other people, we are contributing to The Salvation Army global mission, meaning that so many people's needs will be met through new resources that will help them live and thrive. Through us, God's struggling people are supported and uplifted.

We give God so much praise through prayer and worship, as we take part in this amazing act of giving generously! We celebrate that God's word, and his good news is being received by more and more people all around the world—our gifts today go far and wide, and so does God's blessing.

If you remember back to earlier in our Self Denial series, we heard about the Macedonian church. The Macedonians gave generously from a very joyful heart, and we too, are able to experience that same joy and privilege by witnessing others receiving our gifts and also receiving the joy that comes from our giving. Even out in mission fields where environments are rough and situations are hard, people will be blessed by our generosity.

Wrapped around our gifts is a faith that God will multiply the blessing of them, meaning that even though we may not have been able to give much, it will still be used in powerful ways. No matter the size or amount, God blesses every good gift, so that his love may be known on Earth, which means more people around the world can come to know God and his goodness.

We all know that the world has faced many hardships and struggles in the last couple of years, which is why our compassion and heartfelt response is so important. Some of us may have also been through difficulties lately, maybe even having to adjust to change or adapt to new ways of living. Paul's spiritual encouragement says that the Lord who knows us and knows our hearts, accepts and blesses all that we give willingly and thankfully, joyfully and generously. It's so important that we support one another and extend a helping hand when someone needs our encouragement or help!

During Self Denial, we are journeying together with many other people within The Salvation Army who we can consider friends all the around the world!

- Together we have confidence in God's power to bring the opportunity of salvation to all people, knowing that everyone deserves to know of God's goodness and grace.
- Together we understand the importance of being a part of a good Christian community—people may come to know the light and life that Jesus offers to the world, making sure we include everyone and anyone.
- Together we remember that everyone is made in the

image of God, and through this belief, we commit to helping and caring for people in need through the mission of The Salvation Army in our own communities and around the world.

Use these questions to encourage discussion. Feel free to add your own and ask follow-up questions as people share:

- What is one thing you have learned over these last six weeks of Self Denial?
- In what ways can we continue encouraging and supporting people in need?
- Why is it so important to share God's love with others?

## Prayer

Spend some time praying together. Here are some possible topics to include, as well as prayer over your discussion today and the week ahead:

- Pray for the money given today for people overseas and ask God to bless the people who receive it.
- Pray for opportunities to be generous in our daily lives and remind us to give from a joyful heart.
- Pray for The Salvation Army in all countries around the world and ask God to bless your own church community.