



**SELF
DENIAL
2024**

**LOVE
IN
ACTION**

A DEVOTIONAL

LOVE IN ACTION

THE HEART OF GOD

WEEK 1

OUR WORDS

"Self-Denial" – a compound word, not literally from the Scriptures, used to describe the biblical concept of denying oneself for a God-appointed purpose.

"Love" – not the romantic or the brotherly kind, but the unconditional and enduring love of God.

THE WORD

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3: 16).

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"God is love" (1 John 4:16).

THE WORD SHARED

In today's consumer-driven world, some may say the idea of self-denial is out of place. Unless, of course, it is connected with fulfilling our own dreams and looking after our own nests. We can deny ourselves our favorite food with the goal of losing weight. We can deny ourselves spending to save for a new car.

But with a theme like "Love in Action" for the 2024 Self Denial Appeal, looking at love and its connection with self-denial is a good place to start. Not only is it a good place to start, it is the best place to start.

The love we are talking about over these next six weeks is the love of God. Jesus came to us, sent from Heaven, God in the flesh, to show us a new way to live. It is the way of love, the ultimate demonstration of which is a supreme act of self-denial – Christ's submission to a cruel and unjust death by crucifixion for the sake of all humanity.

"For God so loved the world," says John 3:16, "that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This is central to our understanding of the nature of God. "God is love" says one of the shortest sentences in the Bible from 1 John 4:16. God cannot help but love because love is who God is.

God loves humankind. Even the worst of us are seen by God through the lens of love because love is at the heart of all God has made. God did not create the world and everything in it, including humankind, on a whim or as an experiment. God created the world so that God's heart of love might proliferate and flourish among creation. It was, and is, to use Salvation Army Founder William Booth's term, "boundless love".

The love of God and the expression of that love through self-denial was highly counter-cultural in the time of Jesus' life and ministry on earth and continues to be counter-cultural today. You can see this coming out of the heart of God in Jesus' words and actions throughout his earthly ministry.

When Jesus was asked by leaders of Judaism to pinpoint the greatest commandment, his response placed the love of God at the heart of the law of God as they knew it. It was to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind". Then he said the second greatest was like it. It was to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-40). "All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments," he said.

Exactly what is this love? The Hebrew word is *hesed*, used over and over, for example, in Psalm 136 where the Psalmist announces "his love endures forever". *Hesed* combines the understanding that the love of God is both unconditional and enduring. It is lavish and generous love. It is the highest love, wanting nothing but the highest good for us all. Love pours out of the heart of God because "God is love".

The Greek word for the love of God used in the New Testament is *agapē*. When Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34) and "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (John 15:9), love was translated *agapē*. Like the Hebrew *hesed*, *agapē* is the highest form of love, literally meaning "charity". It embraces the concept of both mercy, as in the Good Samaritan parable Jesus used to describe the love of God, and sacrifice. In John 15:13, Jesus clarified the extent of *agapē* when he said, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."



The Self Denial Appeal, now in its 138th year, is first and foremost about the action of God's love reaching out across the world, embracing suffering humanity. It is God being one with us, and the love of God flowing through us to spread the love, by uplifting others through our generous giving. It is the heart of God tending to the struggle on Earth.

How we thank God for his love is by giving ourselves up to it – allowing it to fill us, reach us deeply, heal us, and transform the darkness into light in our lives and circumstances, so we can, in turn, be carriers of his love, the love that changes everything for everyone.

REFLECTION

Spend some time reflecting on Romans 8:38-39. What does it mean to you that nothing can separate us from the love of God? Write down your answers and consider sharing what insights you have gained and how you felt with a friend. You can also pray.

NEXT WEEK

Love in Action – The Heart of God in Us

PRAYER

God of goodness, I come into your presence so aware of my human frailty and yet overwhelmed by your love for me. I thank you that there is no human experience I might walk through where your love cannot reach me.

If I climb the highest mountain you are there, and yet if I find myself in the darkest valley of my life, you are there. Help me today to love you more. Help me to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child.

During this time of self-denial, help me to listen with my heart to your voice of love, guiding, counselling, forgiving, affirming and preparing me to be your hands, your face and your voice of love to the world.

Amen.

THE HEART OF GOD IN US

OUR WORDS

Compassion – a feeling that arises out of love for others and for creation that motivates people towards acts of kindness for those who are struggling.

Sacramental living – the grace of God made known to us in Jesus Christ and, subsequently, lived out through our lives and faith.

THE WORD

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (1 John 3:16).

"And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you'" (Luke 22:19-20).

"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

THE WORD SHARED

Last week we focused on the kind of love that is at the heart of our theme for this year's Self Denial Appeal. It is the unconditional, enduring love of God. "God is love" we noted several times. God poured out this love into all of creation. It's like the love of God is the engine room through which all of life finds its meaning and ability to function. "All you need is love", the Beatles sang, probably not quite realizing just how profound their words were for every one of us.

But there are two sides to love. We are the focus and the recipients of God's love, and, we are the carriers of God's love. When you believe in and follow Jesus, it is impossible to dodge this responsibility. Jesus establishes God's heart of love in us and we become God's hands, God's face and God's voice of love in the world.

The New Testament encourages us over and over to be open channels for the love of God to reach the world. Like Jesus, when he looked out over Jerusalem and wept over its lostness, its poor state of heart and its misplaced priorities, we can't help but love others because the love of God flows through us. Compassion rises quickly for individuals, families, communities, even nations, amid the struggles and challenges they face.

It is really something beautiful – the heart of God birthed in us, growing, transforming us from the inside out, making us into the likeness of Jesus who loved unconditionally and whose compassion and mercy were love in action to the people of first-century Palestine. His healing, his parables, his answers to people's questions arose out of the deep love of God flowing through him.

Sometimes, like in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before his crucifixion, it took extreme self-denial for Jesus to say yes to the love of God. "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42) was his response to the temptation to divest himself of responsibility for the salvation of the world. The love of God can be a costly love when it takes us out of our comfort zone and calls on us for complete trust.

In the immediate aftermath of World War Two, while travelling through war-torn Germany, The Salvation Army's newly appointed leader General Albert Osborn was greatly challenged by the brokenness and destruction he saw – people with no hope in their eyes. Through his own tears for them, he penned these words, now part of The Salvation Army's hymnody:

*My life must be Christ's broken bread,
My love his outpoured wine,
A cup o'erfilled, a table spread
Beneath his name and sign,
That other souls refreshed and fed,
May share his life through mine.*

—Song 610, The Song Book of The Salvation Army, 2015 edition

These words, inspired by Jesus words in Luke 22:19-20, beautifully and dynamically capture the mind and heart of The Salvation Army on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are the broken bread and the outpoured wine of God. Our whole lives are a sacrament to the love of God in Christ, entering into this love both through our moment-by-moment personal walk in Christ (a cup o'erfilled, a table spread) and our availability to share this love with others (my love his outpoured wine).



WEEK 2

REFLECTION

Consider that your life is “Christ’s broken bread” and your love and compassion for others “his outpoured wine.” How does this impact you, particularly during this time of self-denial as we focus on the mission of The Salvation Army in places like Indonesia, the Philippines and Tonga?

Taking that a step further, what should living a sacramental life look like? What are the implications for your relationships, your ministry and your support for mission in the world? What could be the practical outworking of sacramental living in the life and mission of your corps? How can you show love in action?

NEXT WEEK

Love in Action: A History of Self Denial

PRAYER

O Lord, I confess that it’s challenging to love as you love, To love myself and love others despite our sins and imperfections.

But I can see that the way of love is the only way for humankind, And that self-denial is a powerful expression of this love, your love.

So please help me to let go of the things in my life that block your love Filling me and overflowing into the world around me.

Help me to see with your love, listen with your love And reach out and touch the lives of others with your love.

Lord, I commit myself to this way of living, To the way of love and self-denial. My heart and my mind blended with yours, I enter into the heart of God for all creation.

Amen

LOVE IN ACTION

A HISTORY OF SELF-DENIAL

OUR WORDS

Consistency – the quality of achieving a level of performance which does not vary greatly in quality over time (Oxford Dictionaries).

THE WORD

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, ESV).

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (1 John 3:16).

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

THE WORD SHARED

In weeks one and two of our "Love in Action" devotional series, we saw that humankind both receives the love of God and gives the love of God.

Of course, this wonderful reality about being human is not new. It has been the foundation for life on earth for time immemorial. The consistency of this love in action is a feature of the Self Denial Appeal.

As we noted in week one, the Appeal is now in its 138th year, a testimony in itself to the consistency of The Salvation Army's enduring commitment to sharing the love of God with those living in some of the most challenging circumstances on Earth.

The amazing fact for all who contribute to the Self Denial Appeal is that we get to support this love in action and all the people it benefits. We are partners in mission with all who serve on the front lines of nations where The Salvation Army is journeying with communities to find solutions to the challenges they face – particularly poverty, being self-reliant and able to sustain their own wellbeing.

So it will help us, motivate us, inspire us even, to unpack the history of the Appeal. As The Salvation Army and its mission began to spread around the world in the 1880s, the Army's leadership was challenged about how it could fund such expansion. The idea of a self-denial fund began with Founder William Booth after one of his officers, then Major and later Commissioner John Carleton, said he was

prepared to go without his pudding for 12 months and donate the savings towards the Army's mission.

Booth obviously thought 12 months of practical self-denial was probably over the top, but that one week just might be achievable. So the first concerted effort by Salvationists at raising funds for mission was established on the basis of one week of self-denial. That year, 1886, it was run only in the UK and raised 5,000 pounds, not bad at all for those days.

In time, this yearly commitment became known as the Self Denial Appeal with funds going to both local and international mission, and conducted worldwide. A letter dated 15 October 1894 reveals that Booth also sought the contribution of those outside The Salvation Army: "May I ask you to join with my people in the Self-Denial effort about to be made throughout the world," he wrote. "During this week, every good Salvationist will deny himself of some pleasant or necessary things, and devote the money saved to the extension of the Kingdom of God and the benefit of the suffering. Will you kindly unite with us in this work?" (from The Salvation Army archives, United Kingdom and Ireland Territory).

Eventually, the Self Denial Appeal became an internal appeal only, conducted over several weeks and with funds dedicated to resourcing the mission of The Salvation Army in Developing World nations. Funds for local mission became the focus of external fundraising appeals, like the Red Shield Appeal in Australia and in New Zealand.

To help Salvationists and all who are a part of The Salvation Army consider their Self Denial giving, a specific challenge arose to give One Week's Salary On Missionary Service (OWSOMS). Even though each year's Self Denial Appeal has a different theme now, this idea continues to be an underlying benchmark for our giving. In a practical and challenging way, it links the biblical concept of self-denial with sacrifice.

Jesus, in his inimitable way with word pictures, said it like this: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 19:23). Using the word "daily" adds the idea of consistency and ongoing devotion. Our giving to God and the mission of God is an act of self-denial ("deny themselves"), of sacrifice ("take up their cross") and of consistency ("daily").

WEEK 3



At first, this might sound like a hard saying from Jesus – and it is. But when we consider that such giving arises out of the enduring love of God filling our lives and our vision for a better and just world, it makes sense. The hardness of following Jesus is softened and overshadowed by the joy of God's love surging through us, calling us to action.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases," says Lamentations 3:22-23, "his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning." If that is the extent of God's love, then it can be expressed powerfully through our Self Denial giving. It has been that way for over 130 years and Salvationists in more than 130 countries around the world now participate freely and with enduring commitment to sharing the love of God through the Self Denial Appeal.

REFLECTION

Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture verses for this week. Consider what it can mean to you to know and share "the steadfast love of the Lord" through the Self Denial Appeal and what it means for you to "deny yourself and take up your cross daily" and follow Jesus?

PRAYER

O Lord, I admit it is challenging for me to love others in the spirit of self-denial, and to be consistent with the expression of my love for others.

I pray that during this time of self-denial, when I'm feeling short on love, you will help me to be an open channel for God's love – to receiving and giving the gift of your love to the world.

It is your love that makes all the difference – in me and through me.

Amen.

NEXT WEEK

Love in Action – Our 'Brothers and Sisters'

LOVE IN ACTION

OUR 'BROTHERS AND SISTERS'

OUR WORDS

Sacrifice – an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy (Oxford Dictionaries).

THE WORD

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:16-17).

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

THE WORD SHARED

Sometimes, compassion for people struggling amid their particular life circumstances can rise more quickly within us than at other times. During times of disaster, for example, donations towards the welfare of victims/survivors can surge quickly into the millions. We are impacted by the tragic images of homes destroyed and people struggling with their loss.

It's similar with the Self Denial Appeal in The Salvation Army. We see the images of people struggling, particularly with poverty and the lack of resources for living, and we want to contribute. Worldwide, in the 2021/2022 financial year, GBP 24.8 million pounds was donated to the Self Denial Appeal (source: The Salvation Army Year Book 2023, Salvation Books, p.60).

As we have seen, the Scriptures encourage us to give generously out of the love of God. And 1 John 3:16 and 17 particularly encourage us to give sacrificially “for our brothers and sisters”. Let's spend some time unpacking this term. Just who are our “brothers” and “sisters”?

That's an important question for us at self-denial time. The answer is multi-layered. There is our universal family comprising our fellow human beings on earth – our “brothers” and “sisters” who share our common humanity. There is our national family comprising all fellow Aussies, or Fijians, or Kiwis, or Samoans or Tongans, who share a local

identity. And there are the “brothers” and “sisters” from individual family units.

In these particular verses, the writer applies this concept of being “brothers” and “sisters” to people who have a common love for Jesus Christ. This is our family of faith whose origins are with our triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God calls us to look out for and support our “brothers” and “sisters” in Christ. In both John's Gospel and the writings of the Apostle Paul, we are called “children of God” (John 1:12, Romans 8:16).

We are part of a unique and beautiful family anchored in the love of God and, subsequently, in being the hands of God's love to each other as “brothers” and “sisters”. At Self Denial time, we get to support those of our brothers and sisters appointed to serve in countries where resources are few and living conditions much more challenging than at home. They have sacrificed comfort to be available for mission. We give sacrificially from our own resources to support them and the mission they have undertaken.

In a very real sense, our giving is at the heart of being the family of God – of putting the love of God we share into action. Being “brothers” and “sisters” rises to a whole new level as a result of the radical transformation that happens when we become children of God. This transformation shows itself in action through a supernatural love that is birthed within us for others in the family of faith.

But we cannot assume that the beauty of the love of God in us will remain untainted by the world or not subject to unhelpful ways of being from our past life that can show up in our new life. Love needs intentional nurture. In a very real way, through self-evaluation particularly, we can measure the love of God in us. At any time, it can be a litmus test of the genuineness or the extent of our faith.

That's what the writer suggests in 1 John 3:17: “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” And Jesus' message in John 13:35 puts it into the positive: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

We cannot pick and choose when we seek and show God's love. It is a constant test, requiring regular self-assessment;

WEEK 4

and not only during times like the Self Denial Appeal. At any time, even daily, we can ask ourselves: If the presence of God's love in my life is the true test of my faith, just how much love do I have – for God, for my brothers and sisters, for our mission together in the world? We can also ask ourselves: How do I demonstrate love in action?

In last Sunday's video, we looked at the work of The Salvation Army in Tonga. Here, as in countries we have observed in previous weeks, our Salvation Army family of faith is working with limited resources to bring transformation to the people of Tonga – people we can regard as our wider human family. The love of God in us applies to them all – whether our brothers and sisters within or our brothers and sisters without.

PRAYER

Lord, you are so good and so giving and so loving and so full of grace in your embrace of all the peoples of the earth. I can see that this is who you are.

I pray for more of your love and a special ability to give more of myself to others.

I pray you might bless and inspire me as I consider my gift to the Self Denial Appeal.

Amen

REFLECTION

Consider that love is the supreme test of our faith in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Spend some time evaluating the love of God in your life. Here are some questions that might help:

Do I have time for others in my daily schedule?

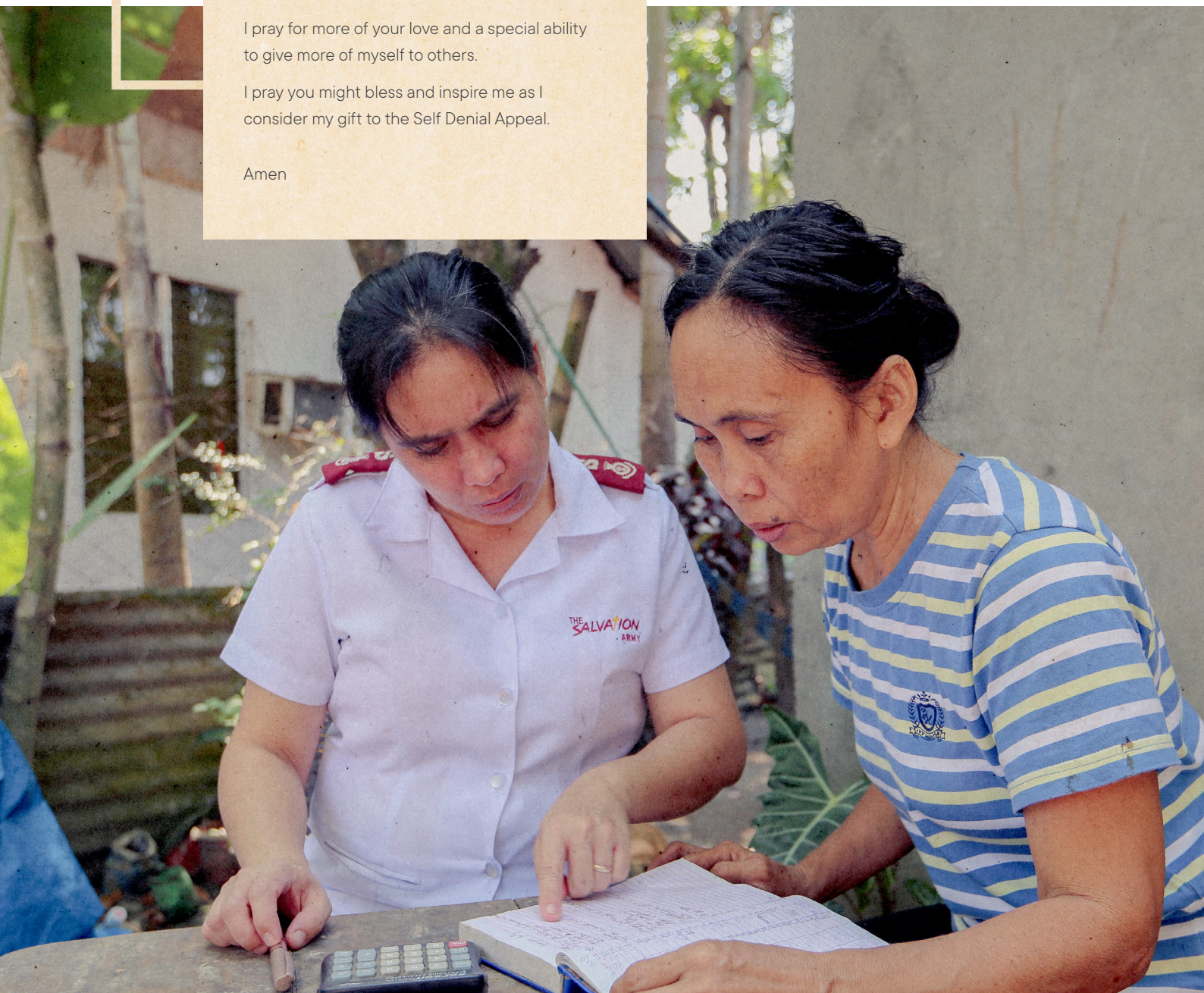
Have I left room in my budget for others, or only my own expenses?

During this year's Self Denial Appeal so far, have I felt connected with my family of faith and wider human family in the Philippines, Indonesia and Tonga?

What does a sacrifice of love look like for you in the context of self-denial?

NEXT WEEK

Love in Action – The Miracle



LOVE IN ACTION

THE MIRACLE

OUR WORDS

Miracle – a remarkable event or development that brings very welcome consequences; an extraordinary and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore attributed to a divine agency (Oxford Dictionaries).

THE WORD

“And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16).

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If anyone remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit” (John 15:5).

THE WORD SHARED

Next Sunday is the Self Denial Altar Service. It will be the culmination of our “Love in Action” theme, a time to give sacrificially out of the love of God in our hearts, a time to make a financial commitment that reflects the love of God for humankind flowing through our lives.

That’s the encouragement we have been considering from Scripture: “And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 16). The Apostle Paul also spoke of this love in very practical terms: “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9:6). Our Self Denial offering is a gift from the heart.

Over these past weeks we have seen the direct and unmistakable impact of giving to the Self Denial Appeal. In Indonesia, we have seen how Self Denial funding has helped rebuild and repair corps buildings following a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2018. It has also helped families rebuild their lives. Many people have come to faith through the ongoing recovery ministry of The Salvation Army.

In the Philippines we saw how funds from the Self Denial Appeal have helped year-11 student Donato and his family establish a small livelihood business with a gift of five chickens and training in how to care for them and build a micro-business. The family was worried about how it would sustain itself, including Donato’s education.

They now have fifty chickens and the sale of both chickens and eggs resources the children’s education and has helped the family build a more permanent house. “Our organic chickens and eggs are in high demand,” said Donato, “and my parents are happy to have a reliable food source and income ... I’m very thankful to The Salvation Army and excited for my future.”

In a Tongan kindergarten, Mele Finau’Afu is the head teacher, and she is helping children to develop emotionally, physically and spiritually. She is excited about how the kindergarten is helping the community, particularly those families who are unable to afford the fees. The Salvation Army is assisting these families with scholarships, allowing children to start going to school. That the love of God in our hearts brings practical results like these from The Salvation Army’s mission in countries like Indonesia, the Philippines and Tonga, is a miracle of God’s grace and for God’s greater glory.

On Self Denial Altar Service Sunday, we act upon everything we’ve been talking about during these past five weeks. We join with others in bringing our gifts to God and committing them to God in prayer for the uplifting of people who are struggling all around the world. Our gifts are tangible evidence of how God has moved in our hearts to participate in making the world a better place for all. They are gifts of faith because we believe the Holy Spirit will take our gifts and multiply their impact many times over.

That’s the miracle about prayerful and sacrificial giving – about giving from the heart with the love of God. Although the gift itself may have practical goals, it is spiritual action. God sees the intent of our hearts and our gifts get wings. Jesus put it powerfully when he said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If anyone remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit” (John 15:5).

WEEK 5



REFLECTION

Spend some time reflecting on John 15:1-17 as both preparation and inspiration for the upcoming Self Denial Altar Service. What is God speaking into your heart about your Self Denial gift?

Also, consider that giving sacrificially for the wellbeing of others is not only a practical action for good, but a spiritual action rising out of the love of God filling our lives. What decision will you make about your giving next Sunday?

It might be helpful, if the opportunity arises, for you to share your thoughts with others.

NEXT WEEK

Love in Action Epilogue – Let Go and Let God

PRAYER

Lord, I am seeing more and more that your nature is one of abundant life, of unlimited love and unbounded generosity.

Right now, and with your help Holy Spirit, I step into your life, your love and your generosity, wanting to love and give more fully of myself and my resources.

Please inspire and bless my Self Denial offering.

Amen.

LOVE IN ACTION

LET GO AND LET GOD

OUR WORDS

Renew – to give fresh life or strength; revive (Oxford Dictionaries).

THE WORD

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:7-8).

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Ephesians 6:18).

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1).

THE WORD SHARED

With the Self Denial Altar Service now behind us, you might be wondering what's next for "love in action". After five weeks (six Sundays) does love in action stop and we move on to something else. After focusing on such a powerful theme there can be an anticlimax as we realise that self-denial is over for another year.

But is it really over? In a very real sense, "love in action" never stops. It's a 24/7 call, particularly on followers of Jesus. "This is my command," Jesus said. "Love each other" (John 15:17).

So we want to put out there in Salvosphere two next steps for love in action to continue – both through our own lives and through our community of faith.

1. Live counter-culturally

In John 17, Jesus described the power of love in a passionate, far-reaching prayer. At one point he prayed: "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23).

"Complete unity"! This is the ultimate result of the love of God filling our lives and inspiring our mission. The original Greek word means "perfected into one". It suggests a process of refinement and is a great challenge for the community of faith and the individual Christian today. How easy it is for us to be seduced by the complexity, the comforts, the consumerism, the technology and self-focused lifestyle of the 21st century.

As contemporary followers of Jesus, we should be wise to the seductive nature of culture and live in a counter-cultural way. Jesus was counter-cultural. He challenged the accepted norms, valued those whom society counted as worthless, loved in the face of hostility. He built a community of diverse people who would not naturally be drawn to each other and he taught them to love one another.

Unity is the first sign or mark of this counter-cultural way of life – unity grounded in God's love in Christ abounding in us through the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. "If you love me, you will obey what I command," Jesus said elsewhere. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15-17). Unity is powerful when it is in full bloom. People are drawn to it like nothing else. They want to be part of a united mission to the world.

Sometimes it's not easy to love and to live in unity. We all know that. But the encouraging message here for us is that we are not alone on the journey of love. By his Holy Spirit, Jesus journeys with us. It is in his strength that we love – even those we may have regarded as enemies. It is in his strength that we unite and are able to see each other through the heart of God, despite our differences.

2. Pray

It was at the end of a long list of spiritual resources – called "the armor of God" – in Ephesians chapter six that the Apostle Paul added: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Ephesians 6:18). We can speak the Word of God and seek to live a righteous life, have faith, and be people of truth. But it is prayer that gives all of these their power and refreshes them daily. Why? Because the Spirit of God and the likeness of Christ come to us through prayer.

Love in action includes our active prayer. As well as our local mission and life together, our prayer will include all the nations of the world because the Holy Spirit is interested in "the ends of the earth" (Matthew 28:19). We can commit ourselves to praying for The Salvation Army's mission in nations that benefit from our Self Denial giving.



WEEK 6

CONCLUSION

There comes a time when we put our differences aside and work and pray and love together. We let go of the things that divide, sometimes obstacles that have impeded our personal and corporate development for years, and embrace one another for a God-breathed journey ahead.

Spiritual breakthrough comes when we let go and let God. The Holy Spirit came in great power to the earliest followers of Jesus (read Acts 1 and 2). They were remorseful and forgiving of one another for past sins. They united in prayer and the Spirit came igniting within them a fresh love for the Word of God and a new passion to share the love of God with others.

The Church today, including The Salvation Army, needs the Spirit to come in power again. This is not something we dream of for our future. It is a present reality and we need to claim and live into it now – together. Praying and seeking God together is how the Spirit comes to the people of faith. And it's only as the Spirit comes that we can be the welcoming, embracing, empowering, loving and transformative place God intends us to be.

REFLECTION

Have you ever been part of a community of faith where it was obvious that God's Spirit was filling and blessing them abundantly? What was it like?

Set aside some time, perhaps with a coffee or a tea or a hot chocolate, to read the book of Acts in one sitting. You'll probably need a couple of hours. Have a pen and paper handy to write down what stands out for you as you read.

If you could implement a "revival plan" for your corps, or The Salvation Army as a whole, what would you put in it? How would it take shape?

What will you do now to be all you know God wants you to be – to be "love in action"?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I stand in awe of you and amazed that you have redeemed my life and chosen me to follow you. May I follow you holding nothing back and giving my best to your mission of transformation in the world.

Holy Spirit, come and fill my life today, and every day, with your presence and power, renewed passion to follow Jesus and fresh love for others.

Amen