

FEATURE

The unseen struggle

FAITH TALK

Running on empty

MY STORY

A cry from the heart

Created for connection

Belonging to something bigger than ourselves



SALVOS

MAGAZINE





*“The human heart
is exquisitely fragile.
Our judgments need
to be gentle, our
understanding deep, and
our forgiveness wide.”*

—Ron Rolheiser



The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice



The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders, past, present, and future. We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and well-being of people of all ages, particularly children.

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Critical connections

In our second edition focusing on social isolation, we look at the often-hidden loneliness in our communities and share stories of those who struggle to find friendship and support.

Di writes about the social isolation, exhaustion and lack of understanding she has experienced as the parent of a now adult child with special needs, and the difference in her life that becoming part of a supportive group of women from a local church has made.

The need for deep connections and support also comes through in Anton's story – a teenage boy with an angry exterior who broke down during a Religious Education class and shared the story of his parents' addictions, neglect and his role in caring for younger siblings.

Anton broke down when he heard that God knows the hearts of people, loves them unconditionally and wants to walk life's journey with them. Belinda Davis writes about this in Faith Talk too – God is there to 'fill up our tanks', so we don't have to go through life on empty.

For these stories and more, go to salvosmagazine.com.au

Simone Worthing **Assistant Editor**

The unseen struggle

Understanding the impacts of social isolation

Over the last two editions, *Salvos Magazine* has talked to different people experiencing social isolation. These people come from all walks of life and are often not seen, or known about, in their communities. Below we share the story of Di, who cares for her adult son.

Salvos Magazine: Could you share a brief overview of your role as a carer?

Di: Over the past 26 years, I have been a carer to my son Nicolas who has severe cerebral palsy, ASD, OCD and anxiety.

SM: Has being a carer contributed to feelings of social isolation?

D: Yes! During the first five or so years after my son was born, there was very little support. Standard mothers' groups were emotionally not suitable and unintentionally very judgmental (such as parents talking about milestones and similar).

“

Carers are often overlooked
as they appear to be well
off or involved ...

”

We also had a lot of therapy and specialist appointments in those early years, which took up a lot of our time and left little time or energy for making friends. Once my son started in a special needs school, support and shared experiences increased along with friendships, but there were still times of isolation as we were significantly restricted with access (he was in a wheelchair at four years old) and social invitations.



We found many of our old friends were unable to relate to our new situation, and rather than try to help/learn/support, they ignored us. Family had a slightly pitying attitude, which was at times also unhelpful.

SM: How would you describe what it's like to be socially isolated?

D: Desperately lonely. Feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness were normal to the point where I would eventually welcome being on my own rather than struggling to fit in.

SM: What impact does being socially isolated have on you mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically?

D: Feeling socially isolated was very debilitating. I have suffered from severe depression/anxiety on and off over the last 20-plus years and was once hospitalised as a result. I have felt rejected and judged and made to justify my situation and provide personal information that others would not have been expected to supply. My weight has fluctuated, I have struggled with alcohol abuse, and at one point left my partner as I felt even he didn't understand.



Spiritually, I have only come to know Jesus in the last 10 years or so, and I feel that has been a big benefit. I now don't feel so alone or helpless, and I have a wonderful group of supportive and encouraging ladies who I have met through church.

SM: What are some of the biggest challenges in your current circumstances?

D: At the moment, I am doing well. My son moved into supported accommodation nearly three years ago and while that is still very hard to deal with, it has allowed me to reconnect with others and even start part-time work. While I currently don't feel socially isolated, there are times when dealing with my son's ongoing issues is isolating – mainly because these issues are so often misunderstood. We are also often perceived as ungrateful as he receives a generous funding package from the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme), but there are still issues around the equipment and other necessities that he requires.

SM: What help or support would assist you in what you are facing?

D: I think non-judgmental phone support would be great, with the possibility of follow-up or referral to other services. I did call phone counselling at certain times in the early days but that didn't offer follow-up support.

SM: What would you like people to know about socially isolated people?

D: I think education is great. Carers are often overlooked as they appear to be well off or involved when they are actually struggling. I think carers are a very misunderstood part of our community, and more awareness would be helpful.



Scan here for more on mental health.

Belonging to something bigger than ourselves

Overcoming loneliness and social isolation

In the second of our two-part series, *Salvos Magazine* talks to Salvation Army counsellor Warren Draney and case manager Maris Depers about loneliness and social isolation.

Salvos Magazine: Are social isolation and loneliness issues that you see in your work?

Warren Draney: Loneliness is definitely an ongoing problem. The statistics show that one in two (50.5%) Australians feel lonely at least one day per week, while one in four (27.6%) feel lonely for three or more days.

These issues have been increasing for years, but COVID-19 has impacted them heavily. The pandemic, in some ways, has trained us not to be with people. Protective and necessary health safety measures have increased our isolation and anxiety.

We know that friendships happen with proximity, and we need to be near others to



develop and grow relationships. This was a challenge, even with the caring arrangements and online activities during the pandemic.

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Humans are like velcro, if you put them close enough together, they will connect.

”

Human beings are social beings – we need to feel part of a group and a sense of belonging. Our western lifestyles are now a lot more transient and it can be harder to establish and develop friendships.

SM: What impact can loneliness and social isolation have on people?

Maris Depers: Lonely people are shown to have poorer mental health, higher levels of anxiety and depression, and more social anxiety about relationships. These issues are also associated with poorer physical health outcomes. Entire families and communities are affected.

Given that many people live alone, don't feel connected to a friendship group or are struggling with financial, work, health, relationship and other issues that prevent them from developing relationships, this is something we need to continue working on and addressing.



PHOTO BY BROOKE CAGLE ON UNSPLASH

We want to live in a world where there is ample opportunity and funding for all to participate, and we can aspire to create that world.

SM: How do you distinguish social isolation from loneliness?

WD: Research has shown that loneliness is related more to quality rather than quantity of relationship. We may know a lot of people, but our relationships with them may not come up to hopes or expectations. We may feel lonely in a crowd because of what is happening around us.

We can be socially isolated, not see many people, but we have good quality relationships with those we do see or connect with. As people age, they tend to have fewer friends but a deeper quality of relationships. The research also shows that the over-65 age group are not as worried about relationships as those in the 18 to 25-year cohort.

Of course, it depends on why people are isolated. Poorer mental health or trauma will cause people to withdraw and doesn't allow them to have healthy relationships to

help the healing process. If people struggle with addiction or are grieving, they are often disconnected from family and friends. Language barriers, caring responsibilities, relationship breakdowns, health, culture and many other issues also play a role.

SM: How can online connections help?

WD: These can help sidestep physical barriers such as health or disability issues and can often make social contact attainable and accessible. All you need is literally in the palm of your hand. Many groups find this helpful, including those with social anxiety.

As much as the pandemic has caused increased social isolation, it also forced us to work hard and find novel ways to connect, such as through Zoom trivia and games, regular family chats and check-ins and reconnections with family and friends around the country and world. Hopefully, some of this will continue, even if we can often now engage face-to-face.

There is evidence that, for others, online connection is important, but they don't attribute the same value to those connections. ▶



They know and interact with people but don't necessarily consider them deep friends they feel comfortable accessing support from. It's mixed and complex.

SM: What are some good starting points for safely making new connections?

WD: People can feel less lonely, even by having brief or casual conversations with people they don't know or don't know well. This could be the local barista, supermarket attendant, a person at the dog park or community hub.

There are also free walk and talk groups in different communities, which are especially good for men. Local Salvos and other churches also offer free or low-cost activities and meeting points in different areas.

MD: We all have to find answers to developing connections, whether that is having a chat with a neighbour as we bring in the bins or volunteering with a local organisation to be valued and included as part of a team. Humans are like velcro, if you put them close enough together, they will connect.

It's helpful to develop a habit of short exchanges with those we share the world with, as well as focusing on deeper connections. This can include communicating more

at work as people return to the office and intentionally interacting with them.

SM: How can people help those they see who are isolated?

MD: Pick up your phone and think about it in terms of who is socially isolated. Send them a text as a starting point. Be mindful of the people at risk in your life and go the extra step to maintain contact, visit or call, or offer respite in trusting relationships to those who might need a break from caring for others. Book time with them or schedule an activity together to help them feel connected. Contact relatives and old friends and talk to neighbours. Be friendly to people and help them to feel included in groups.

WD: Not everyone who is isolated is lonely, so don't automatically make that assumption. And some people recharge by being on their own. Be sensitive to how much time people need for themselves and for outside connection.

Assisting the traumatised can be more complex and often requires long-term work and professional help. We can meet people where they are at, in a safe environment, build their trust and give them choices and affirmation. We cannot, though, do this alone.

We can all consider our own needs and expectations too. How do I recharge? What are my relationship needs? Am I placing unrealistic expectations on too few relationships?

MD: The pandemic forced us to recognise that we are social beings, and we have found ways to do it differently. Let's not lose those connections and that sense of being part of something bigger.



Scan here for more on mental health.

An open house for hope in Caloundra

A vision to create a presence in downtown Caloundra on Queensland's Sunshine Coast became reality when House 4 Hope officially opened last month.

House 4 Hope will provide a range of Salvo services such as a safe place for locals to connect, Moneycare, financial counselling and Positive Lifestyle Programs, with plans to expand as additional needs are identified.

House 4 Hope is funded mainly by profits from the Salvos' four local family stores and community donations. Thousands of dollars of in-kind support from local organisations also make a significant contribution and demonstrate strong partnerships.



Volunteers Sue and Ray Sandberg, from Caloundra Salvos, on barbeque duties at the opening of House 4 Hope.

SalvoConnect (emergency aid) will operate three days a week from House 4 Hope and the other two days at the Salvos church to provide continuous services for the Caloundra community.

Rustic van spreads hope and kindness in Bunbury

The Bunbury Salvos' 'Van of Hope' – an old, rustic van – is used each week to collect bread, vegetables and fruits from various locations around the south-west of Western Australia. After each pick-up, the produce is sorted and distributed to help those in need in the local community.



The 'Van of Hope' distributes food to those in need.

On average, around 1000 loaves of bread are given out to the community each week.



The food parcels are carefully created with a mix of the collected produce to ensure that people get healthy and nutritious food. Donations to the Red Shield Appeal keep the van on the road and support those in need.

"The old van, with its volunteers, is doing such a wonderful job to rescue food and give back to the community," said Captain Mark Schatz, Bunbury Corps Officer. "It is helping us carry on the mission of Salvos and spreading kindness as it goes around."

Running on empty

Filling up life's fuel tanks

WORDS Belinda Davis

I am one of those annoying drivers who does not sense a state of urgency as my car's petrol indicator starts ticking down towards the 'E' side of the gauge.

There have been times when I may have pushed my vehicle to the limits of sensible behaviour by putting off filling up, despite lights and 'dings' alerting me to imminent fuel reserves being completely depleted. I have never run out of petrol, but I have come incredibly close on a couple of occasions.

I know that this practice is not the best for the longevity of my engine, and it's not necessarily a deliberate action (or lack of it) on my part. It is more that I forget to do it, or I find the whole petrol station experience

tiresome and inconvenient, so I put it off.

I recently discovered what it might be like to try to power on when your fuel tank is empty. I headed off to my usual Saturday morning local parkrun – a free and timed 5km run, jog or walk activity held in communities across the world. Lately, I have been able to jog every step of the course without too much difficulty, but a recent run was another story.

The night before had been a perfect storm of circumstances that meant the only food I consumed for 'dinner' was a doughnut at the airport at 8pm. Not a deliberate action, but one impacted by the happenings of the world around me and my complacency in trying to find a better option.



At parkrun, I discovered that this doughnut only managed to fuel my exertion for the first 2km before I literally felt like my fuel tank had been drained of anything useful to keep me moving. I spent the rest of the activity making my body work harder than it should to reach the destination.

CALLING ON RESERVES

How often in life do we forge forward with something, expecting to be able to keep going without the appropriate fuel loading? It could be a lack of preparation for work, study or physical activity. It will have consequences, sometimes immediately and other times a bit later, when you are part way through and really need to call upon the resources you don't have.

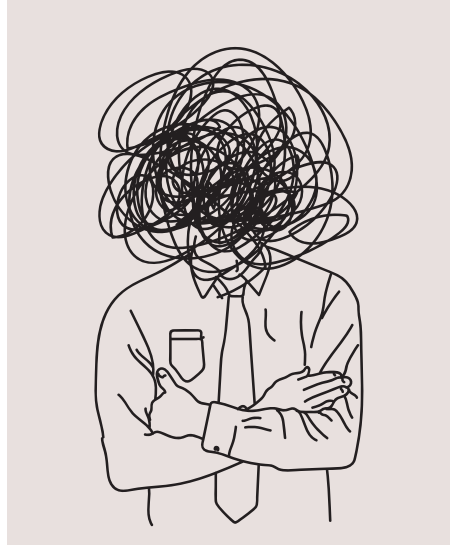
Even more dangerous is trying to navigate your spiritual life journey with only the barest of sustenance levels to help you survive. Plenty of times, if your spiritual gauge is bordering on 'E', you will face situations without access to the divine strength and sustenance to get you through well.

“

How often in life do we forge forward with something ... without the appropriate fuel loading?

”

While you might get through, you'll reach your destination in a diminished capacity. How much better to arrive knowing you have more resources at your disposal should you face an unexpected detour that requires a little, or a lot, of extra effort.



FILLING THE TANKS

Can I encourage you to make sure you are not running through any area of life on empty? The short-term gain is not worth the longer-term consequences.

Consider seeking out opportunities to fill up your tank. This could include spending more time with friends and family, getting more rest or exercise, or reflecting on the God who loves you and is always there and ready to 'fill your tank' in any way, regardless of your circumstances.

God tells us in John chapter 10, verse 10, that, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." This doesn't mean that everything will be easy, but it does mean that God will give us hope, joy, meaning and purpose as we go through life, and that he will strengthen and walk with us every step of the way.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

A cry from the heart

Reaching out beyond the tough exteriors

WORDS Dean Simpson

Anton* was a tough nut. To be honest, I was quite scared of him. His outward appearance was threatening. He had an earring, a tattoo and was scruffy.

As a youth worker for the Salvos, one of my weekly roles was to teach Scripture, or Religious Education as it's now called, at a local high school. The first two terms with my Year 9 boys had been a disaster as I struggled to connect with them.

Anton was the main problem. Being a class ringleader, he exuded a quiet confidence. He would often stare me down, refuse to cooperate and displayed a demeanour akin to a prisoner sentenced to life. Everything he did was drenched in suspicion. Yet, he continued to turn up to the Scripture lesson each week. I wondered why.

“

**God definitely did something
in Anton's heart that day
in the classroom ...**

”

I had made some progress with the boys by splitting the 40-minute lesson in half – 20 minutes in class and 20 minutes on the nearby basketball court. But Anton remained the key to everything.

The turning point came near the end of Term 3. Until then, if Anton was restless and didn't

want to cooperate, none of the boys would. If Anton was quiet and listened to my attempts at presenting my lesson, then all the boys would.

One day, we were sitting in a circle in the classroom, discussing a certain topic, when I shared a story based on the Bible verse from 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 7: "God does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart."

HIDDEN STRESS

Suddenly there was a sob. It was Anton.

He continued to break down and jaws dropped as I put my arm around him and took him aside. I sent the rest of the boys off to the basketball court. Anton then opened up to me with these words: "Mr Simpson, I can't do it anymore, I just can't. It's too hard."

Through tears, Anton started telling me about his life outside of school. It was heartbreaking. His parents, he said, were drug addicts and rarely at home. He was the eldest of four children, and each morning he awoke at six o'clock to start getting his younger brothers and sister ready for school, making their lunches, getting their uniforms ready and walking them to the nearby primary school. Every afternoon when the bell rang, he would rush out the gate to meet his siblings again, walk them home, get dinner for them, and help them with any homework before settling them for bed.

In essence, he was the parent. At 15. And coming to school was his 'escape'.

The rest of Anton's story came gushing out during the lunch break as the school



If there is someone in your life with a tough exterior but struggling underneath, today may be the time to reach out.

counsellor joined us. Anton admitted that his outward appearance, rough demeanour and sullen attitude were all a front. He told us that he was really “a nice kid with a good heart” and just “wanted to be understood”.

“When you read out that Bible verse, Mr Simpson, I just couldn’t hold it in anymore. Do you really think God looks at my heart and can help me?”

I told him yes. I told him simply that God loved him and cared for him and his situation.

ACCEPTANCE

The counsellor and I were able to get Anton some help through Family and Community Services and various Salvo programs. Over the next couple of months, Anton seemed happier. He said the people helping his family were nice. And he said his parents were getting help too.

By the start of the following year, Anton and his family had moved away, and I lost contact with him. In fact, I never saw him again, and I’ve often wondered what happened to him and his family.

Yet, I’m reassured that God used me to play a role in his young life in a dysfunctional environment. And I hope that role was a turning point – the moment he heard that there was someone who looked past his outward appearance and into his heart.

God definitely did something in Anton’s heart that day in the classroom, something that I trust has stood him in good stead throughout his life.

Is there an Anton in your life? Someone with a tough exterior who is struggling underneath and desperately needs to hear that God loves them and knows their heart. Reach out today.

**Name changed*

Dean Simpson is a member of the Communications team, The Salvation Army, Australia.



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Veggie fritters



PHOTO BY IRA G ON UNSPLASH

Ingredients

2 potatoes, 1 carrot, 2 zucchinis, 1 x 125g corn kernels (drained), 1 onion (chopped), ½ cup SR flour, ½ tsp salt, ¼ cup chopped parsley, 3 eggs (separated), 2 tbsp olive oil.

Method

- Peel potatoes and carrot and grate into a bowl. Add grated zucchini, corn, onion, flour, salt, parsley and egg yolks. Stir to combine.
- Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold through vegetable mixture.
- Heat a large saucepan over medium heat and add a little oil. Add ⅓ cup of vegetable mixture and flatten lightly with the back of a spoon. (Cook four at a time.)
- Cook for five minutes per side until golden. Enjoy!

Quick quiz

1. What are the two leading causes of farm fatalities in Australia?
2. What crop is grown the most in Australia?
3. How much of Australia's land mass is taken up by farmland?
4. How many eggs does the average Aussie eat a year?
5. What is the average age of the Australian farmer?

* Stats from *Farmsafe Australia Safer Farms Report 2021*



Tum-Tum

On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?



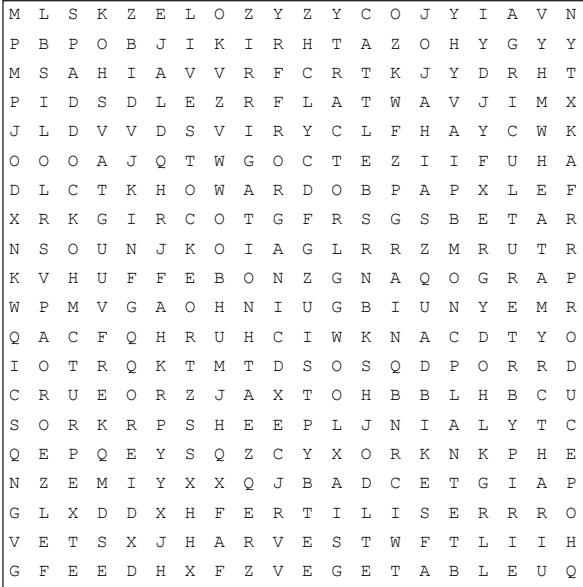
Bible byte

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you."

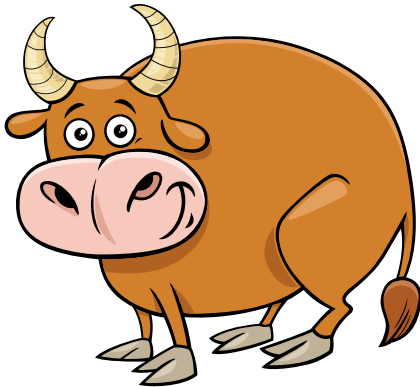
Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 10
New International Version

Wordsearch

Words are hidden horizontally, vertically, diagonally, forwards and backwards. Enjoy!



- Agriculture
- Cattle
- Crops
- Drought
- Farm
- Feed
- Fertiliser
- Grain
- Harvest
- Hay
- Irrigation
- Livestock
- Organic
- Paddock
- Plant
- Produce
- Quadbike
- Seed
- Sheep
- Silo
- Soil
- Tractor
- Vegetable
- Water
- Wheat
- Wool



HAVE A LAUGH

- What kind of things does a farmer talk about when they are milking cows?
Udder nonsense!
- What did the mummy cow say to the baby cow?
It's pasture bedtime.
- Why do cows have hooves instead of feet?
Because they lactose!

DID YOU KNOW?

Farm Safety Week in Australia is from 18-24 July.

The 2022 theme is 'Recipe for Averting Disaster'.

The week focuses on risks and hazards such as fatigue, aging workforce, labour shortages, complacency and the blurred line between the home and work environment.

Answers: 1. Quadbikes and tractors
2. Wheat 3. 58 per cent 4. 249 5. 56
Turn-Turn: is hiding in the box of veggies on page 9.

"I'm struggling," said Bear.

"Is there anything I can do?" asked Rabbit.

"Just be here as you are now," said Bear,
"and let me lean on you."

"Do you mind if I lean
a little back?" asked Rabbit.

"Of course not," said Bear.
"We can lean on each other."

