

PART 4



WORSHIP & EVANGELISM

In addition to visitation, Christians have an opportunity to serve older persons in nursing homes as they help them to worship God and study the Bible, and as they share the good news of Jesus Christ with them. In this part you will be given a number of practical suggestions as to how you might organize and implement a program of worship and evangelism.



WORSHIP

Worship of God is an often neglected aspect in the lives of the institutionalized elderly. Yet worship can and should play an important part in their lives. Not only can they offer God the praise and honor He deserves, but they can also derive deep satisfaction, joy and peace through worship of Him.

Because of the varied backgrounds of people in nursing homes, there are many types of worship services that can be appropriate. On the one hand, there is the very formal liturgical service; on the other, the informal, flexible and sometimes improvised service. This second type is more usual in homes where the residents have limited alertness and difficulty participating in or following a fixed service.

In either situation there is likely to be a variety of religious backgrounds (Roman Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc.) as well as ethnic backgrounds (Ukrainian, black, white...). Some blend of traditions, therefore, is recommended—a variety of type of hymn and style of prayer, for example—in order to give the most people something to which they can relate from their own past experience. Touch on the familiar whenever possible—Bible stories, old hymns, the Lord's Prayer, the doxology. Focus on the basics of Christianity—Christ, His death for sin and resurrection to give new life. Avoid unnecessary controversy. Work toward simplicity yet don't be afraid to exercise their minds.

INITIATING A WORSHIP SERVICE

Pick a time of day for the service, in consultation with the activities director and nursing staff, that will avoid interrupting meal times, medicine distribution, other planned activities or times when residents may be especially tired. Staff are often helpful in suggesting who might like to come to the services and may assist in gathering people from their rooms. If not, allow enough time before the service to remind people to come and to bring those in wheelchairs. Consider visiting rooms regularly before the service to extend personal invitations, introduce yourself and generally acquaint yourself with the home.

Finding a good location within the home for the service can be a problem. Often the home will have no special chapel area, nor even a separate room that could be used for services. If this is the case, you will probably find that a general lounge area is available—sometimes with a built-in audience! If you do use a general open area, be tactful and courteous as you turn off the television, rearrange furniture as necessary and otherwise transform a lounge into a chapel. Remember that many of these people cannot move independently—and they may wish they could. Be gentle and humble in your approach, but don't let negative reactions deter you from your purpose. If necessary, help move those who don't wish to be involved in the service to a new location.

Often the location for the service is one where it is impossible for everyone to see and hear, if the leader simply stands in one place. Sometimes furniture and/or people can be rearranged. If the changes are quite extensive, assume that you will be doing the moving yourself, but check with the staff first. Be sure to express your gratitude to staff members who help you set up. This encourages them and makes you an asset rather than a burden.

If you are unable to rearrange the furniture satisfactorily, you must plan to have your leader move about so that all participants can have eye contact. Move slowly and as naturally as possible. Don't be surprised or "thrown off" by someone wanting to touch you as you pass. Try to minister to this need in a way that doesn't detract from the service. A squeeze on the hand is often enough, or a brief word of acknowledgment. Or perhaps you can hold the person's hand for several minutes as you continue the service.

The worship leader and all those who have a part in the service must be sensitive to those who are hard of hearing. It is not inappropriate to ask whether anyone is having difficulty hearing. Once you have determined what your volume level ought to be, try to maintain it.

SUGGESTED FORM OF WORSHIP

(Total time: 30-45 minutes)

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and the worship time, making a transition from other activities.

CALL TO WORSHIP

A psalm (such as Psalm 95 or 100) is useful here.

INVOCATION

Your opening prayer should be clear, authoritative and short.

SONGS

Singing brings involvement and awakens past experiences of worship. Instruments (piano, guitar, flute, etc.) can be profitably used, especially if the leader has trouble directing in singing. Requests for favorites may be included here.

SCRIPTURE

Scripture may be read at this point or during your message. Many worship leaders prefer to use the King James Version since it is what many elderly people are accustomed to.

MESSAGE

This should not be a full-scale sermon. Ten to fifteen minutes in length should be sufficient.

PRAYER

This prayer is the counterpart of what is often termed the “pastoral prayer.” Pray for residents in the home, and with them for others. Requests may be taken, but note what is said in “Participation in a Worship Service”. Remember too that much training in intercession can be done by example.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Because this prayer is familiar, it can well be used as a prayer in unison at the close of the previous prayer.

SONGS

Depending on the time available (e.g., if your talk was quite brief), circumstances (e.g., no scheduled activities follow the service) and alertness or eagerness of the residents, more singing may be appropriate.

CLOSING

Close with a brief prayer and scriptural blessing (e.g., Jude 24, 25; Heb 13:20, 21; 2 Cor. 13:14 and/or the doxology).

We have found it worthwhile to announce at the beginning of the service that we are willing to talk or pray with individuals after the service. Those who have a desire to share their extensive needs and deep-felt emotions during the service will then be satisfied to wait. After the service we ask those who wish to pray—or who just need to talk—to raise their hands.

We have also noticed in the homes we have visited the desire of many individuals to receive Holy Communion. The elderly are often overlooked in this area of the church's spiritual life. Perhaps a way to overcome this is to arrange for a minister to come, asking individuals to indicate, during the week before, their desire to receive communion. Take down names and go to individual rooms with the minister to provide a link with the worship services you have been conducting. If individuals express privately their desire for Holy Communion, ask appropriate ministers of their denomination to come to them whenever possible. Churches should also be encouraged to transport the elderly to their communion services.

SUGGESTED FORM FOR WORSHIP SERVICES (CASUAL)

This suggested form for worship uses stories throughout the service. It is as if the message were presented in short portions, spread out over the whole service, rather than given in a separate 10-15 minute segment. Based on a text and/or a topic from a text—like *contentment* or *forgiveness*—find three or four short stories or illustrations. Books of illustrations (or often websites) are very useful here, as are other sources, for example emails from friends or magazines like *The Reader's Digest*. Nursing home residents, like most of us, like stories and usually eagerly pay attention to a good one. The theme can be introduced with a story, to get people all thinking about the theme, then hymns, prayers, Scripture readings, special music, and the other stories/illustrations can be alternated for the remainder of the service, all in keeping with the chosen theme. By the time we finish, we've heard some good stories, we've talked about the biblical point of the stories using Scripture, we've sung songs related to the topic, we've prayed about the topic as it relates to our lives, and we have given our lives afresh to God, asking for His help in our circumstances and thanking Him for His mercy and kindness. The form, which follows, is one combination of these elements (30-45 minutes).

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned above, it is beneficial to express gratitude for how God allows all of us from different churches and cultures to come together to worship Him.

OPENING PSALM

Usually just a few verses from a Psalm, for example **Psalm 92, 95, 96, or 100.**

OPENING PRAYER

Thank God for who He is and what He has done; invite Him to be present

HYMN #1, STORY #1, HYMN #2, STORY #2

SPECIAL MUSIC, PRAYER, SCRIPTURE READING

Message using Story #3, bringing all the stories and the Scripture together (usually only 5 minutes)

HYMN #3, HYMN #4 (IF TIME ALLOWS; OFTEN A REQUEST)

CLOSING PRAYER

PARTICIPATION IN A WORSHIP SERVICE

Participation by persons other than the leader is very helpful. Since the elderly often are like small children with respect to attention span and interest, activity during the service promotes alertness and attention. This is true whether the activity comes from people you bring with you, or from those within the home. Beware, however, of precipitating confusion and disorder through too much activity or by means of changes that occur too quickly.

PARTICIPATION BY PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE THE HOME

Use the many gifts that others have been given by having them lead in song or prayer, give their testimony, read Scripture or do whatever they feel confident enough to do. Assistants are invaluable for providing help with hymnbooks (both distribution and finding the hymns during the service) as well as functioning as troubleshooters for the possible interruptions that may occur. Children can be of considerable help in certain tasks and usually are appreciated by the residents.

PARTICIPATION BY RESIDENTS IN THE NURSING HOME

Feel free to ask the staff, residents and even visitors to participate if they wish. Often there are staff members who are free to listen and even join in. They may respond to your suggestions by singing, praying, sharing a testimony or otherwise encouraging the residents.

If you want to give some of the residents an opportunity to contribute something to the service, think over the following questions: Will the contribution be heard? (Repeating what is said will help.) Will the contribution be an aid to worship? (Am I ready to handle in public what may be deep personal concerns such as “I want to die,” “Someone stole my money” and “I hate it here”?) Will the contribution be significant and edifying? (Would controversial and relatively insignificant points of view be disclosed which would be difficult to include in worship?)

Participation from the residents is quite valuable. Their worshipful, controlled participation is a great blessing. It is important to bring them into the service as much as is possible. But as you do so, be ready to handle problems should they arise.

DEALING WITH INTERRUPTIONS IN A SERVICE

In any nursing home, no matter where or when you are holding a service, there may be interruptions. These could come in the form of wandering visitors, residents or staff, or as talking, shouting or even arguing among those attending the worship service. Obviously you must either recognize the interruption within the context of worship or ignore it. The following suggestions may also be helpful.

INTERRUPTIONS BY RESIDENTS

In the case of loud outbursts or irrelevant interference, it is best if someone not leading the service quietly attends to the problem. Often a few soft, direct words along with a light touch (a hand on the shoulder, for example) will restore calm. If you are alone, or if the outburst persists, you yourself may need to say or do something. Feel free to ask the staff to remove the person if the service is continually disrupted.

INTERRUPTIONS BY STAFF

When it is a staff member who is noisy, inconsiderate and disruptive—be forbearing! Indicate before the service in a gentle, humble manner that you are about to conduct a worship service and would appreciate their cooperation. In some cases, someone may need to remind them during the service. We have found that most staff members are willing to cooperate if they are approached in a humble manner. If problems persist, however, feel free to speak to the activities director or the nurse in charge. Remember, by now you have cleared your presence with the authorities and have their backing. Use this clout if you need to, so that God may be worshiped and glorified and the needs of the residents may be met.

INTERRUPTIONS BY VISITORS

We have found most visitors to be very sensitive and cooperative. Encourage them to join in the worship until it is finished and then continue their visit afterwards. If they have limited time and must visit with their friend or relative, visitors will often move away from the service. Assist them in this if necessary so that there may be minimal disruption of the service.

PREPARING A MESSAGE

We offer here some suggestions to those who are not accustomed to delivering a Bible message as well as to those who might want to improve their skills:

1. Familiarize yourself with the Scripture passage on which you are going to base your message. Read and reread the passage in its larger context. Pray for insight to understand and present the passage faithfully. If possible, memorize the key text.
2. Pick several key words or concepts from the passage, and study them in light of the whole of Scripture. In studying Matthew 5:6, for example, look at the image of hungering and thirsting, as well as being satisfied, in both the Old and New Testaments. Also explore the concepts of blessedness and righteousness.
3. Summarize the main point of the passage in a simple sentence. It is important, especially with the elderly, to be both crystal clear and concise. Making such a summary will help you to do this. An example of such a sentence, using Matthew 5:6 as a base, would be: “In order to be righteous we must desire it with our whole being.”
4. Prayerfully seek out applications of this passage to present daily situations in your life and the lives of the elderly. Reformulate your summary sentence with these applications in mind, using the word *you* so that your audience will be clear on what *they* can do differently in response to your preaching.
5. As you actually write the message, work backwards from your conclusion (i.e., the application). Ask yourself questions like “what?”, “where?”, “how?” and “why?” about the application, in order that all you say will point to your single conclusion.

GUIDELINES FOR BIBLE MESSAGES

Relate to the Past

For many elderly people there are strong elements of the past that need to be appreciated, evaluated and often reconciled before God. There is a scriptural basis for this in Psalm 105. This psalm shows Israel in the process of reviewing and evaluating her past relationship with the Lord. You want to help the elderly—as the psalmist does in this psalm—to see the hand of God in their lives. Keep in mind general areas that are areas of difficulty for many older people, such as bitterness, anger, grief or guilt, and use them as themes for your message. People should be able to make personal application to their own lives.

Relate to the Present

Many people use reflection on the past not to resolve conflicts, but to escape present conditions. Seek to involve elderly people in the present. Remember their present afflictions such as loneliness, pain, feelings of uselessness, etc. Speak to these concerns specifically. In order to help

them relate to the present, speak to them of what God is doing today in the world, in the church and even in their own nursing home.

Relate to the Future

Convey the hope we have as Christians both in this life and the life to come. Emphasize the promises of God and His great faithfulness. The resurrection is central to our hope (see John 3:16b; Col. 3:1-4; 1 John 3:2, 3; Rev. 21, 22).

As you relate your messages to the past, present and future, keep in mind the following general suggestions:

1. Exhort your congregation to faith, to hope, to love and to service of God *now* (see 2 Corinthians 1 and any of the praise or lament psalms—e.g., 22, 77, 143, 113-118—for some scriptural support for this as well as the scriptural patterns).
2. Build many of your messages on a consistent theme. Emphasizing one theme over a long period is valuable, for it gives stability to their lives and helps make meaningful connections for them week by week. For instance, you might try a series of sermons on Psalm 23, the Lord's Prayer or the Sermon on the Mount. Whatever theme you choose to unite your messages, be sure it is applicable to the nursing home situation.
3. Use vivid illustrations to clarify your main points. Make sure you use images that the elderly can relate to easily—e.g., holiday seasons, birthdays, weddings, family gatherings, relationships, nature, etc. Share illustrations from your own life also, as long as they are things the elderly can identify with.
4. Quote the old, familiar hymns in your sermons, as well as using them for singing. (Remember that what is familiar to *you* may not be familiar to them.)
5. State the gospel clearly somewhere in your message, and perhaps often. John 3:16 is a familiar verse that contains a central aspect of the gospel and fits nicely into many different messages.
6. Repeat, repeat, repeat. Repetition is very necessary in all teaching, especially in a nursing home. Repetition provides coherence to a talk and can clarify and communicate your main point. You may want to recite and possibly help the residents to memorize a certain text as part of your message.
7. Simplify your message to one or two main ideas. Elaborate, amplify, explain, illustrate, repeat and otherwise dwell upon and seek to communicate that main thrust. Use your hymns and prayers to reinforce this same point. The use of explicit biblical language is one good way to communicate simply. The message *must be kept short* (ten to fifteen minutes).

CONDUCTING BIBLE STUDIES

Conducting a study of Scripture in a nursing home can be very similar to conducting a worship service. Because of the short attention span of many older people, a lengthy exposition of a Scripture passage is not advisable. An inductive Bible study, in which questions are asked in order to bring out the main points, is often most helpful, especially when the residents are alert and verbally responsive. Otherwise, a short explanation is appropriate, with questions interspersed if possible. Remember that people may fall asleep if they are not actively participating.

Below is a format for a Bible study that incorporates a few elements of worship as well. Obviously this format can be abbreviated considerably if time or circumstances necessitate.

- Prayer
- Hymn(s)
- Reading of Scripture
- Study of Scripture (including questions and discussion)
- Prayer—based on the study and its implications
- Hymn

We have found the following passages to be excellent for verse-by-verse (and week-by-week) treatment. Dealing with only one verse at each study is good because a single verse is more easily remembered than a longer passage. And we do recommend encouraging the memorization of the verse as a part of the study. The continuous treatment of one text has seemed most wise. In this way a wide field of thought is covered in a unified way, but yet in “bite-sized” portions.

SUGGESTED PASSAGES

1. Psalm 23
2. The Lord’s Prayer
3. Matthew 5-7 (The Sermon on the Mount)
4. Selected topics and themes as appropriate

Bible study guides on selected passages and themes can also be adapted for use in nursing homes.

EVANGELISM

“Evangelism in the Nursing Home” is a topic about which there has been considerable discussion. There are many who believe our main purpose in visitation should be to befriend the elderly and help meet their physical and emotional needs, offering spiritual guidance only if it is requested. Others stress the priority of direct evangelism and desire to submit all other aims to this one overarching purpose. Elderly people are so near to death, this latter group claims, that we must constantly proclaim verbally the gospel and urge repentance, lest they also perish eternally.

Coming to terms with these two different opinions is no easy task. Granted, many people you visit are facing imminent death. This does not mean, however, that there is not *enough* time for the Holy Spirit to work. Overzealous evangelists who proclaim the gospel without first becoming acquainted with the person and accurately assessing the personal needs can often do more harm than good. The good news of Jesus Christ is a gift and it must be offered as a gift, not used as a threat or a weapon.

On the other hand, sickness, an imminent operation, loneliness, grief or depression—all are deep spiritual needs that can be met by the gospel as it is offered even by someone hitherto unknown to the sufferer. We must be sensitive to the fact that God has perhaps prepared someone for us to share the gospel with and we must be ready to give the gift that has so freely been given to us.

There is no single answer as to when and how to evangelize. The key to discovering what to do in any given situation is the Holy Spirit. God has gone before us and we must respond to what He has already done and is continuing to do in people’s hearts.

Our response at times may be simply showing God’s love through our actions. Or we may have opportunity to share the gospel verbally. In either case, we must be people of prayer who are actively relying on God’s guidance before, during and following our visits.

As we seek to be guided in our evangelism, we must not overlook the fact that God has given each of us different gifts. Some people are skilled in the “art of friendship.” They can make a lasting impression of God’s love and care simply through a long, committed friendship. Others have gifts for sharing the gospel directly with people whom they don’t know. We must each evaluate God’s gifts to us, making sure we are truly honest in our motivation. On the one hand, the “friend” must not hold back from sharing the good news of Christ for fear of being thought foolish. The “evangelist”, on the other hand, should not avoid making friends for fear of becoming involved and committed.

With these initial thoughts in mind, the following suggestions should be considered:

1. A worship service for believers is evangelism for the unconverted. The simple, direct gospel (e.g., John 3:16ff.) shared throughout a service is an encouragement and comfort for believers and a call to faith for non-believers.
2. In individual visitation, in the context of an established, caring relationship, one good way to open conversation is to share some recent insight or activity of God in your life.

3. Literature provides another avenue for evangelism. Subordinate the literature to personal communication. Share from the literature before leaving it. Avoid, when possible, mass distribution of literature without personal contact.
4. Be sensitive to the needs of the individual you are visiting. These needs—often very near the surface—provide a wonderful opportunity to express the truth and compassion of Jesus Christ.
5. Sharing openly with a Christian resident in a room where there are non-Christians present can be another effective method of evangelism. We have found great interest among roommates when they see the joy and peace that a relationship with God through Christ can bring. Sometimes there may be only a desire to be noticed—but that, too, offers a chance to befriend and share more openly. Encourage Christian residents to share their faith with other residents who do not know Christ.
6. See “The Visitor and Your Resources” (in Part 3) for further information on how to share the gospel through using yourself, Scripture and prayer.
7. Evangelism with the elderly is in many respects like evangelism with any other person. Therefore, we recommend the reading and study of any good book on the topic of evangelism.

HOW DO WE LEAD A RESIDENT TO JESUS?

(taken from *Nursing Home Ministry: Where Hidden Treasures are Found*)

Jesus said; “*Come to Me...*” (Matthew 11:27). As we come, He promises to take care of us. But how can we effectively help people come or turn to Jesus? There are many “Plans of salvation” that have been very effective in helping millions of people make decisions to follow Christ, but sometimes these do not work as well in a nursing home setting because of the many different religious backgrounds and levels of cognitive impairment. There will be times when residents will be very open to the gospel. You may be able to lead them down preplanned evangelistic paths using tools like the “Roman Road,” or the “Four Spiritual Laws;” on the other hand, these may become confusing for them or cause you to lose their attention. The following points may prove to be very liberating not only in nursing homes, but also in the church, family, and even one’s own life.

HOW TO LEAD A PERSON TO JESUS

- **Prayerfully:** Sometimes our efforts are fruitless because they are also prayerless. By prayer we mean making requests and listening to what God may say in response to our prayer. Through prayer, God leads us to do things at the right time and sometimes in ways we have never thought of doing.
- **As a friend:** It is possible to lead strangers to Jesus and some people have special gifts of evangelism and are able to do this quite easily, but in a nursing home context, friendship evangelism is the most effective way for a person to become a Christian. Friendship earns us the right and privilege to be heard and to share the gospel. In truth, we are actually helpers to those who are seekers of Christ. Whether saved or unsaved, a seeker/helper relationship is, in reality, two or more seekers of truth sharing and helping each other along the journey to Jesus.
- **With Understanding:** We need to understand what it means to lead someone to Jesus. If Jesus had His throne nearby and we could take our struggling friend by the hand and walk together to His door, we would knock, gain access, introduce our friend to Jesus and explain his concerns. Then one could say that we have led our friend to Jesus. We know if this were possible, Jesus would hold His hand out to our friend. If our friend takes His hand, Jesus will not only give the right to become God’s child (**John 1:12-13**), Jesus will also give your friend’s weary soul His strength, peace, and direction (**Matt. 11:28-30**).

By faith, we helpers know that Jesus is near and we can take the seeker by the hand (in prayer) and Jesus will offer His hand of grace. The way a seeker, saved or unsaved, takes Jesus’ hand is in accepting His word. When Jesus gives a word of instruction, comfort or understanding, the acceptance of that word is taking His hand. We know this because we too are seekers along the narrow path who realize we cannot travel very far without Jesus. All of us are subject to straying

from the path and getting overwhelmed and even lost in the darkness. Taking Jesus' hand is our daily exercise of faith. Sometimes we can get so discouraged in the midst of the darkness that we need a friend to help us find our way to Jesus.

When visiting one-to-one with a friend at the nursing home or sharing the message in a church service, one important goal is to encourage your friends to take Jesus' hand so that He could lead them along the narrow path. If they reach out to Jesus, He is faithful to take their hand and walk with them in their valley. The way to do this is to respectfully share a fresh, down-to-earth perspective of Jesus' way, His love, or one of His promises. As they accept God's Word, agree with them in prayer for its fulfillment in their life. Accepting God's word will often include: letting go of past beliefs, sins or even grudges toward others. We must be patient and prayerful as this may take more than a few visits.

Jesus said; *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:27-30).

Sinner's Prayers: *In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.* (Luke 15:10)

A traditional sinner's prayer would be: Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe that you died on the cross for the sins of all people including mine. I purpose to turn from all my sins and I invite you to come into my heart to live in me and guide my life. I desire to trust you as my Lord and Savior all the days of my life. Amen.

Another example of a sinner's prayer is: Father God, I ask that you would receive me as your child. I come to you because I believe that Jesus made forgiveness of my sins possible through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. I ask that you would have mercy on me and accept me as your child and servant forever. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. Amen.

These kinds of prayers have been used in many different situations in the past and have been the beginning of life in Christ for millions of repentant sinners. If you are able to help your friends pray like this from their heart, you can be sure that our merciful Father in Heaven has accepted them. However, a person's mental and physical state may not afford them the ability to articulate so many words. It is important, therefore, to realize that such a traditional sinner's prayer is not a specific command in the Bible for salvation. The Bible is clear that a person must believe enough to trust in Jesus. There are many examples in the Bible of sinners who cried out to the Lord and received His grace:

- **A man with leprosy; Mark 1:40-44**
 - *The sinner's cry:* "If you are willing, you can make me clean."
 - *Jesus' response:* "I am willing. Be clean".

- **A blind man; Mark 10:46-52**
 - *The sinner's cry:* "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
 - *Jesus' response:* "What do you want me to do for you?"

- *The sinner's request*: "Rabbi, I want to see."
 - *Jesus' response*: "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you."
- **A lost son (parable); Luke 15:11-32**
 - *The sinner's cry*: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."
 - *The father's response*: "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."
- **Ten lepers; Luke 17:11-19**
 - *The sinner's cry*: "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"
 - *Jesus' reply*: "Go show yourselves to the priests". "Rise and go, your faith has made you well."
- **A tax collector (parable); Luke 18:9-14**
 - *The sinner's cry*: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
 - *Jesus' reply*: "I tell you that this man... went home justified before God."
- **A man on the cross next to Jesus; Luke 23:40-43**
 - *The sinner's cry*: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
 - *Jesus' response*: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
- **A thief; Luke 19:1-10**
 - *The sinner's confession*: "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."
 - *Jesus' response*: "Today salvation has come to this house."

We need to keep in mind: Whenever a humble sinner cried out to the Lord, whatever the situation, the Lord answered their cry. This is the grace of God. God required no one specific prayer and demanded or expected no one specific response. Peter said, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Acts 2:21. And we are reminded in 2 Samuel 1:4 that: God devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from Him.