



# MARCHING TOWARDS JUSTICE STUDY GUIDE

*Community Organising and  
The Salvation Army*

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THE CENTRE FOR  
**THEOLOGY  
& COMMUNITY**

# INTRODUCTION

This study guide is aimed at those attending or working at Salvation Army Corps or Centres who are interested in social justice. The four sessions are intended for a group setting (e.g. a home group or staff team meeting) and should be done alongside the reading of the *Marching Towards Justice* (see the 'preparation' section at the top of each session guide for which parts of the pamphlet to read). The relevant sections could be read together at the start of the meeting or given as pre-reading before the group meets.

It is suggested that one or two leaders take the time to go through the material before each session so they can guide the discussion. Each session will vary in length depending on the discussion generated, but generally sessions should take between 45-60 minutes.

For more information, resources and ongoing blog posts on the themes of Marching Towards Justice see [matchfactory.org](http://matchfactory.org)

The Marching Towards Justice pamphlet can be downloaded from the Centre for Theology and Community's website: [theology-centre.org.uk/marching-towards-justice-community-organising-and-the-salvation-army/](http://theology-centre.org.uk/marching-towards-justice-community-organising-and-the-salvation-army/)

# SESSION 1 - HISTORY

**PREPARATION:** Read the introduction and Chapter 1 of *Marching Towards Justice: History* (15 mins)

**REFLECTION:** The history of The Salvation Army is rich and varied and is rightly remembered with some pride by Salvationists all over the world. Yet if we are not careful we can emphasise certain aspects of our history at the expense of others. Chapter 1 of *Marching Towards Justice* reminds us that justice-seeking was a key part of the early Salvationist understanding of the gospel. This thinking inspired history-making actions such as fighting human trafficking, supporting striking dockworkers and the 'Lights in Darkest England' project. The giants of Salvationist history were willing to work with others, risk reputation, agitate and build mutual dependency in their justice-seeking, but it is surely true, too, that these giants on whose shoulders we stand would not want us to be content with simply celebrating past glories. The purpose of remembering such history is not to raise it up as unattainable but to bring it down to earth and expose the elements we can put into practice today. This begins, as the pamphlet suggests, by allowing God to build a similar 'prophetic imagination' in our contemporary vision for our communities and nation as a whole.

**POSSIBLE  
QUESTIONS  
FOR GROUP  
DISCUSSION:**

- What was the one thing that struck you about Chapter 1 of *Marching Towards Justice*?
- Is there a difference between charity and justice, and if so what is it?
- Can you think of a contemporary example of Christians seeking justice?
- What do you think are the most common things that come to mind when Salvationists think of the history of the Salvation Army? How do you think justice-seeking features within this?
- What do you know about the history of your Corps/Centre and local community? How could this impact your corps'/centre's mission today?
- Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6.9-15. What do you think this has to say on issues of justice and the gospel?
- What other biblical texts can you think of which speak of justice-seeking?

**ACTION  
BEFORE THE  
NEXT SESSION:**

Try and find out more about the history of your Corps/Centre and its involvement in your local community. Your Officer(s) and older members may have some information on this, or you could contact The Salvation Army Heritage Centre at William Booth College, London (or equivalent in your territory). Local history archives from the library are also a good source of information on what might have happened in your community over the years.

Take a walk around the neighbourhood where your Corps/Centre is located. As you go, think and pray about the history you have discovered. Consider all the people who have worshipped and lived there in previous generations; all the joy and pain that have been experienced there, and the historic injustices that have faced society as a whole. Thank God for the justice-seekers who have struggled to address many of these and pray for his vision for your community today.

## SESSION 2 - METHODOLOGY (1)

**PREPARATION:** Read sections 2.1 & 2.2 of Chapter 2 of *Marching Towards Justice: Methodology* (10 mins)

**REFLECTION:** Visitation has been at the heart of The Salvation Army's spiritual development. 'Orders and Regulations for Officers' does not restrict the responsibility of carrying out visitation to Officers alone; neither does it specify that only Soldiers and Members of a Corps/Centre should be visited. *Marching Towards Justice* understands that the spiritual growth that comes from visitation should include how faith is lived out and this should be manifested by involvement in justice-seeking activities. These should not be superficial encounters where conversations are limited to small talk. They should be open and honest exchanges about each of the participant's Christian experience and how this impacts their daily living. Because of this openness, such visits should contribute to the development of both parties. Relationships of substance are not limited to individuals and should exist between institutions too.

The ultimate goal is to build relationships of trust that in turn have an influence on the community. Community organising relies upon the power of relationships and defines power as the capacity to act; the capacity to effect change and make a difference. Therefore *Power Analysis* is about understanding how relationships within and between institutions fit to together in order to act.

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

- What struck you most about what *Marching Towards Justice* says about visitation and *Power Analysis*?
- In the context of your Salvation Army Corps/Centre, who takes responsibility for visitation? Can/should this be extended? How can you take part in visitation within the Corps/Centre?
- Is there a difference between one-to-one visitation and networking?
- To what extent should pastoral visitation lead to action?
- Consider the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. To what extent did visitation lead to change and public action?
- Think of issues in your community. Who has the power currently to make a difference? Is it working?
- What relationships do you need to develop in your community in order to build power and contribute to change?
- What are your concerns, hopes, dreams for your family? Your community?

### ACTION BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION:

In the next few weeks take the time to develop a relationship with someone in your Corps/Centre. Remember not to keep the conversation at a superficial level. Share your stories. Find out what makes you both tick. Discuss the world 'as it is' and 'how it should be'. Perhaps you could make a home visit, consider the questions you will ask in advance. For example, 'what are your concerns, hopes, dreams for your family? Your community?'

Think of an issue that is challenging your community. Who has the power to make a difference? Identify specific people and institutions with whom a relationship could be developed in order to start working towards a solution. Remember to pray for them and to ask for God's wisdom and guidance.

## SESSION 3 - METHODOLOGY (2)

**PREPARATION:** Read sections 2.3 & 2.4 of Chapter 2 of *Marching Towards Justice: Methodology* (10 mins)

**REFLECTION:** Community organising is about people. It's about people striving towards 'what should be'. It's about using the power of relationships to bring about lasting change. None of this can happen without proper training and development. It's not training in an ideology. It's not training in advocacy. It's not training in programme delivery. *Marching Towards Justice* highlights the importance of developing leaders - ordinary people who take responsibility for social change and seeing justice established in their communities. These are leaders who have been trained to develop relationships, hold effective meetings, carry out *Power Analysis* and create and sustain an organisation based on relationship. Effective community-based leaders are needed to bring about social and political change.

Salvationists are no strangers to public action and this is where community organising and the methodologies described in *Marching Towards Justice* come into their own! Before any action the appropriate research must be carried out and this means determining not only the problem but the real underlying issue that is at stake. The action itself must be creative and involve people, and a sense of fun goes a long way! However, above all it must be targeted at a person who has the power to effect change and it must provide the opportunity for confrontation. An action is also a learning opportunity and through evaluation future actions can be improved.

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

- What is the one thing that struck you most about the methodologies of Training and Development and of Public Action as described in *Marching Towards Justice*?
- With reference to the difference between justice and charity (discussed in Session 1), to what extent is your Corps/Centre a leader in bringing about change in its community?
- We often talk about giving the voiceless a voice. Is this a helpful phrase? How does it stand up against community organising's understanding of leadership?
- Read the story of Abigail, David and Nabal in 1 Samuel 25. Who is it that shows real leadership on this occasion and how?
- *Marching Towards Justice* highlights the difference between 'problem' and 'issue'. Consider a problem facing your community, what is the real underlying issue?
- Discuss your understanding of confrontation.

### ACTION BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION:

Bearing in mind a specific issue in your community, find out who the 'elite and specialist sources' (p.23) might be that can help you better understand the issue.

Carry out a quick *Power Analysis* of your community. Who holds power? Does your Corps/Centre have a relationship with them? If not, consider how this relationship might be started and pray for wisdom on playing your part.

# SESSION 4 - NEXT STEPS

**PREPARATION:** Read Chapter 3: Stories and the conclusion of *Marching Towards Justice* (25 mins)

**REFLECTION:** In the past three sessions you have considered justice-seeking in the context of Salvationist history and the theory of community organising. While it is vital to spend time reflecting, both Salvationism and organising are eminently practical - as William Booth said to his son, Bramwell, in the light of suffering and injustice: 'Go and do something!' This session is aimed at helping Corps/Centres think about concrete next steps that can be taken on the journey towards community organising. While these sessions are by no means exhaustive and the thought of starting to organise might still seem a little daunting, one of the key lessons from *Marching Towards Justice* is that nothing deep happens overnight. The case studies were the result of years of visitations, prayer, identifying issues, one-to-one conversations, power building and simple visible presence in neighbourhoods. As the case studies show, there is no 'ideal' Corps/Centre for organising – it can take place anywhere within the wonderful variety of expressions of The Salvation Army around the world. We hope that at the end of this session you will be energised to take practical steps appropriate for where your Corps/Centre is on its journey of justice-seeking and organising, some of which are suggested below.

## **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:**

- Can you identify any issues in your Corps/Centre and, or local community that are mentioned in the case studies?
- Can you pick out key recurring lessons in the case studies?
- Where on the journey of justice-seeking is your Corps/Centre? How might the principles discussed in *Marching Towards Justice* contribute to this?
- Consider Micah 6:8. How do the elements of justice, mercy and worship fit together in your life and Corps/Centre?
- Re-read the bullet points at the end of the conclusion. Which most excites you and why?
- What might hinder or get in the way of trying to adopt these principles in your Corps/Centre?
- As a group, what do you think your next steps might be?

If you have decided to begin or continue your journey of community organising you might want to consider the following practical suggestions for action (for additional discussion in the group):

- Do a talk or presentation to your Corps/Centre on what you have learned through *Marching Towards Justice* and these sessions, or invite one of the authors to come and do this.
- Arrange a prayer meeting on the theme of justice. Use it to explore the deep Christian tradition of justice-seeking.
- Community organising is an established theory of bringing about change in a non-party political manner. Often this will be expressed or led in a country by a specific community organising organisation (e.g. in the UK it is Citizens UK: [citizensuk.org](http://citizensuk.org)). Look to see if such an organisation exists in your country and if it does, does it operate in your area? If not, maybe contact them to see if there might be a chance to establish a new alliance. Start building relationships with institutions in your neighbourhood. It's just as simple as sending an email to set up a meeting or knocking on the door. Even at the first meeting you have started to build power together.
- Begin a listening campaign with other local institutions to see what the main issues are that people are facing.

Remember to ensure God is at the heart of all of your plans, as Psalm 127:1 says, 'Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.'