

# Healing at the edges

A reflective activity  
to invite God's healing



*Camilla from CMS with local partner Sam Malish*

## Introduction

I went to Uganda in September 2023 to meet South Sudanese refugees, hear some of their stories and find out about trauma healing work. What I saw made me think of Psalm 147:3 (AMP): “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds [healing their pain and comforting their sorrow].”

I met our local partner there, Sam Malish. A South Sudanese refugee himself, Sam works in the refugee camps in northern Uganda and introduced the New Hope trauma healing programme after meeting many refugees who were held back by their trauma.

Sam inspired me – it's clear that he really loves Jesus, and is truly committed to making a difference in the lives of the people in the camps by helping them step into the true freedom Jesus offers.

The trauma healing sessions were simple but powerful. I was particularly struck to see people make progress in their healing through writing down traumatic events on pieces of paper and standing together to watch them burn.

It's so powerful to give God space to work through a symbolic activity like this – and it's not just for refugees. This is a resource designed to help your church connect with refugees and find freedom from past hurts using some of the same trauma healing activities used by South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. The following pages will guide you through simple reflective

activities for use in your church service, with your children's and youth work and with small groups. We don't all carry trauma like the South Sudanese refugees I met – but many of us have things holding us back: brokenness over unanswered prayer, grief over people we know who have given up on God, unforgiveness towards friends, family or God.

As you use our summer appeal resources to share about CMS and the work of Sam and his team, we'd love to invite you to take a moment as a church family to connect with God in a similar way to those you're hearing about. Bringing our hidden hurts and brokenness to God in the same way as some of our brothers and sisters in Uganda could open the door for healing while also helping your church to connect with refugees in Uganda and in turn with mission.

Please also consider taking the opportunity to take up a collection for Church Mission Society's summer appeal.

Every blessing,

Camilla Lloyd,  
CMS copywriter



# For your church service



If you haven't already watched it as a church, set the scene by showing CMS's video about refugees in Uganda (available at [churchmissionsociety.org/jesus-never-gives-up](https://churchmissionsociety.org/jesus-never-gives-up)).

## YOU WILL NEED:

- ▶ small pieces of paper and pens
- ▶ leaves/sticks
- ▶ fireproof bowl and matches (or wooden cross and drawing pins)

**Focus in on the trauma healing activity** of writing down things that have been holding people back and burning the pieces of paper (1:33–2:19 in the video). If you have a safe place to do so, you can gather up and burn the pieces of paper together outside, just like they do in the refugee camps. Alternatively, you could use a large wooden cross and have each person pin their piece of paper to the cross lay it at the foot of the cross, or place it in a bowl to be burned later.\*

## A reflective activity to bring healing

Make sure to lead this activity at a quiet point in the service when people will be ready to focus and draw near to God. Don't rush – give people space to think and reflect, and engage with what the Holy Spirit might want to do. Once you are ready, we suggest taking people through the process in three simple steps:

- ▶ Provide small pieces of paper and piles of leaves/sticks. Ask each person to pray and ask God to show them the brokenness, unforgiveness or pain in their hearts that they need to bring to Jesus. Invite people to write down what God brings to mind, and fold up their pieces of paper so they are ready to bring their hurts to Jesus, or take a leaf/stick from the pile – one for each issue they want to take to Jesus.
- ▶ Encourage people to get up and place their pieces of paper (or leaves/sticks) in a bowl ready to be burned or pin them to the cross. If burning the pieces of paper as a group, set the paper alight. Pray and ask God to deal with each one of these issues and bring healing to each person present.
- ▶ Allow time for quiet reflection afterwards, either in silence or with a song or hymn in the background. You may want to lead the congregation in a prayer after some quiet reflection, and choose to take up an offering for CMS's summer appeal, supporting refugees in Uganda and others at the edges around the world.



# For your children's/youth work



**Acting out Bible stories** is another key aspect of the trauma healing programme, encouraging people to identify with a character in the Bible and his/her pain, and apply God's Word to their own story.

**We hope the children/young people you are working with are able to connect with the characters in this story and use that connection to consider refugees in Uganda.**

- Read or watch the story of Joseph (Genesis 37 onwards). There are several versions available on YouTube.
- Have the children act out the story (either all of them or just a few of them, depending on the size of your group). The group may act out the story as one person narrates, or each member of the group can say his/her own character's lines.
- Ask the group to act out the story a second time (invite different children to do this if you have a large group), but this time silently. Before they begin, explain to them that you will pause their acting (by e.g. calling out "pause") at specific points in the story. Each time you pause, ask questions such as:
  - a) What is happening in this point in the story (e.g. when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers)?
  - b) How do you as [name of character] feel at this point in the story (e.g. when Joseph forgave his brothers)?
  - c) Can you see God's plan at this stage of the story (e.g. when Joseph is in jail)?

## **Follow-up questions:**

- How did you feel about engaging with a Bible story in this way?
- Is it sometimes hard to forgive?
- How can putting ourselves in this Bible story help us forgive people who have hurt us?

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If you have a safe place to do so, you can gather up and burn the pieces of paper together outside, just like they do in the refugee camps. Alternatively, you could use a large wooden cross and have each child pin their piece of paper to the cross, lay it at the foot of the cross, or place it in a bowl to be burned later.\*

- ▶ If it's helpful, explain briefly about the concept of war and having to flee to another country as a refugee, and the pain people often struggle with afterwards (trauma). Explain that we all carry things in our heart that God wants us to bring to him. Provide small pieces of paper and piles of leaves/sticks. Encourage the children to ask God to show them any way they have been hurt recently, or any way they have hurt someone else, and to write down what God brings to mind. Ask them to fold up their pieces of paper so they are ready to bring these things to Jesus, or take a leaf/stick from the pile – one for each issue they want to take to Jesus.
- ▶ Encourage the children to get up and place their pieces of paper (or leaves/sticks) in a bowl ready to be burned or pin them to the cross. If burning the pieces of paper as a group, set the paper alight. Pray and ask God to deal with each one of these issues and bring healing to each person present.
- ▶ Allow time for quiet reflection, or discuss as a group/in pairs how you felt bringing things to Jesus in this way. Finish by praying for South Sudanese refugees: for more trauma healing facilitators, for healing for every person who needs it, and for peace to come to South Sudan.

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*\*Of course, please take due care and attention if choosing to light a fire for this activity.*



# For your small groups

Go deeper in Scripture



The trauma healing programme used in the South Sudanese refugee camps invites people to go deeper in Scripture, identify with different characters and examine specific details more closely.

- ▶ Read the story of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene: John 20:1–18 and Luke 24:9–11, then John 20:19–23. As trauma healing group participants look at this story, of Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus in the depths of her grief, they are asked to apply it to their own lives and reflect on something beautiful that has happened to them in the midst of great pain.
- ▶ Retell the story as a group without looking at the passage, making sure the group knows the story well enough to tell it again from memory while focusing on the discussion.
- ▶ Now tell the story again having different people tell different parts of the story, but this time pause (by e.g. calling out “pause”) at specific points. Each time you pause, invite discussion around questions such as:
  - a) What was happening in this point in the story (e.g. when Mary didn’t recognise Jesus)?
  - b) How do you think [name of character] felt at this point in the story (e.g. when Jesus tells Mary to tell his followers that he is alive)?
  - c) Why do you think God chose to do things this way (e.g. have a woman tell the disciples about having seen Jesus)?

## Follow-up questions:

- ▶ What do you like in this story?
- ▶ What do you find difficult to accept?
- ▶ What does this story mean for your life this week?

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large wooden cross and have each person pin their piece of paper to the cross, lay it at the foot of the cross, or place it in a bowl to be burned later.\*

- ▶ Provide small pieces of paper and piles of leaves/sticks. Ask each person to pray and ask God to show them the brokenness, unforgiveness or pain in their hearts that they need to bring to Jesus. Invite people to write down what God brings to mind, and fold up their pieces of paper so they are ready to bring their hurts to Jesus, or take a leaf/stick from the pile – one for each issue they want to take to Jesus.
- ▶ If people are comfortable sharing, have them share in pairs what they are bringing to Jesus. Play a quiet worship song in the background as each person places their piece of paper or leaf/stick in a bowl or container ready to be burned (or have each person pin theirs to a cross).
- ▶ If burning the pieces of paper as a group, set the paper alight. Pray and ask God to deal with each one of these issues and bring healing to each person present.

Allow time for quiet reflection, or discuss as a group/in pairs how you felt bringing things to Jesus in this way. Finish by praying for South Sudanese refugees: for more trauma healing facilitators, for healing for every person who needs it, and for peace to come to South Sudan.

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