

# William Booth

Before Jesus came, people lived in 'darkness'. This did not mean that it was dark all the time. It meant that people were suffering from sadness and guilt. They felt guilty for their sin. They felt distant from God because of the original separation that took place in the Garden of Eden.

However the prophets promised that a 'light' was coming. The light was a symbol of hope. The light was to be Jesus. Just as a light lights up the darkness, Jesus would bring hope to a world of sorrow. There would now be a chance for people to be free from guilt. Jesus could forgive them.

When Jesus grew up and started His work, He announced to everyone that He was the light promised from long ago. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world".

Jesus told all those who followed Him that they too could be lights. A Christian can be a light by bringing the Good News to others. Those who do this are called missionaries.

In England in the 19th century lived a man who felt God calling him to bring light to people in darkness. His name was William Booth. In 1855, after marrying his wife Catherine, he decided to become a church minister. However, he soon felt dissatisfied with preaching to the well-dressed people in churches. His heart went out to the poor people on the streets of London. These were the people who really needed to hear God's word. Perhaps they felt too ashamed to enter the beautiful church buildings.

William decided to erect a tent and hold a meeting for them. Many came to see what it was all about. Some were drunk and the meetings were often noisy. William also preached on the streets outside the pubs. Many would leave the pubs to listen to him. In days when there was no TV or radio, many people would come out to hear street preaching. However, some did not like the preaching. They did not want to receive God's forgiveness. They laughed and threw things at William.

William cared particularly for the poor. He knew that he must do more than just tell them the Good News. He must show them God's care by helping them in a practical way. In those days there were many poor people in England. Most people received a very low wage and often one family had to sleep in one room. Many could not afford beds, nor adequate food or clothing. Many were so depressed about their poverty that they turned to drink. Drinking was a huge problem, even for children.

William decided to set up a 'soup kitchen'. He collected unwanted vegetables from the market, and unwanted bones from the butcher. With these ingredients he and his wife made soup and served it to the hungry. Soon William had many

helpers. Together they decided that they were like an army. They were soldiers for God, fighting against a world of poverty and suffering. They became known as the 'Salvation Army' because they preached the Good News...that Jesus came to save people from sadness and guilt. They told people how they could receive God's forgiveness and begin a new life as a follower of Jesus.

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### Activities

1. Make a list of ways in which we can receive news today.
2. How do you think news would have been spread in Bible times?
3. How did people receive news in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
4. How did William proclaim the Good News of Jesus?
5. How did he show the love of Jesus?
6. What is the Good News?
7. Who is the **light to the world**, promised in the Old Testament? (Read Isaiah 42:6-7 and Isaiah 60:1).
8. Read Matthew 5:13-14. How can Christians be lights to the world?
9. Find out what the Bible says about 'feet' which carry the Good News. (Romans 10:14 and Ephesians 6:15).
10. Draw a set of foot-prints and write one of these Bible verses inside the foot-prints. You will need one foot-print for each word.