



Ideas for the Weeks of Self-Denial 2014

The motto for this year's Weeks of Self-Denial is '**School is Fun**'. If I were to show this to my daughter, she would respond in the same way as most young people of her age: a blank look at so much naivety.

I didn't like school either, but today I know that I can be very grateful that I had the chance to enjoy education and training.

But the key to personal wealth, or at least to the prevention of poverty, which lies in the area of education comes at a price.

For the next three issues of 'Ideas for Small Groups', I have slightly modified the theme to 'Giving is Fun'. And it fits. First of all we cringe at this statement and think that it is unrealistic.

Perhaps it is the same with giving as it is with school. We discover the profit only when we look at the whole picture, when we realise what an abundance of blessings is associated with it. And if you've reached the point where you are actually already aware of that, then giving really can be fun.

My mother-in-law loves to give gifts. The 'fun' she gets out of choosing the gifts, wrapping them imaginatively and handing them over is at least as great as the pleasure the recipient feels.

There is a word from Jesus which is not attested in the Gospels but is still found in the Bible. Do you know what it is? Paul quotes an oral tradition here, in which Jesus says: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).

This also works when giving is connected to personal sacrifice, at least when you do it in love.

- Look at Acts 20:22-38 and discover together what the passage says about the following aspects of life:
 - Vocation
 - Sacrifice
 - Evangelisation
 - Fellowship
 - Work and money
 - Contentment
 - Prayer

The Territorial Leader, Colonel Patrick Naud, recalls this year that it was a spiritual exercise for Salvationists, and to some extent still is, to give a week's wages for the Self-Denial Offering. He writes in *Forum* under the heading, 'A Very Great Offering'.

I dream that on 20 April 2014 – after seven weeks of fasting and prayer – a Missionary Offering Sunday will be celebrated worthily together in all our corps in the spirit of prayer. Our employees in the social institutions will also have the possibility, if they would like to organise themselves, to help the worldwide medical, educational and social work of The Salvation Army. For example, how about giving up one week's salary to bring a real sacrificial offering to support people who really have nothing? A week's salary for many of us is certainly a very big sacrifice.



However, even if this challenge is too big, it is important that we participate personally. That means giving a part of what we have for the victims who do not even have the minimum to live on. We are invited to live more simply so that others may simply live!

- What sort of response does this thought trigger in you?

The next three ideas are organised around the following topics:

- **Talking about money – a taboo?**
- **Ideas arising from the General's appeal for this year's Weeks of Self-Denial**
- **Is fasting the same as self-denial?**