

Session 1: My Creative Story

Focus: My story as a patchwork quilt

1 John 5:11

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life;

1.1 Sharing Time

Scripture encourages us in Proverbs 4:23 to “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*” This suggests that in some way our heart needs guarding. The question is - from what? The answer is from some of the experiences in life that have been painful in some way. These painful experiences now form a part of the story of our life. But as well as the pain, the heart stores all the wonderful things that we have experienced also. Both the joys and sorrows of our story are held in our heart.

In this course you are invited to begin to share some of the things stored away in your heart, to share some of your story with us. Card Ministry is one creative approach to get in contact with some of these deeper issues of the heart. We will be using a card set titled [A Patchwork Life](#). This card set is available at **Peoplemaking** (www.peoplemaking.com.au) in Camberwell, Victoria, Australia. In most sessions the cards will be offered and you will be asked to go and choose a card with reference to a particular topic. Then there will be an opportunity to share your response with the larger group or with a partner. Please remember that everything is by invitation and free will. If you feel you are unable to share at this time, then just pass.

So let's start! The participants are now invited to choose a card that tells us something about their life. It can be anything. This is just an introductory session and is very open ended. When everyone is seated again, the participants are invited to share in 2 or 3 sentences about what this card represents about their life. If someone does not yet feel safe to share, they may say “pass”.

1.2 Introduction

A patchwork quilt is made up of a number of individual pieces of material all sewn together to make up the whole. Themes are as wide and varied as life itself. Sometimes new materials are used but then again there is always opportunity to use recycled bits and pieces. Lots of differing types of fabric may also be used, as well as adding objects like beads and buttons to the finished quilt giving depth to what has already been created with the fabric.

This Ministry Manual looks at our own life story through the metaphor of a patchwork quilt. Each piece of the quilt represents one aspect of the story of our life. With each session another piece of the quilt will be added to tell and expand on this story. Some of the pieces will have strong memories attached to them whilst others will be brand new and challenging, with hopes and dreams for the future. As we explore our story through the metaphor of the

patchwork quilt we will have opportunity to reflect upon our own story as well as sharing this journey with others. You do not need to actually make a patchwork quilt to participate in this course!

Our focus verse for this session states that if you have the Son of God, you have life! John in his earlier book also states that *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* (John 10:10). As we take the time to tell the story of our life we will come across quite a variety of patches. Some of the patches will be filled with light and colour, whilst others might carry a greater measure of darkness. Some of the patches will be beautiful; some will need alterations; some will be finished; some will need repairs. There will be patches that are painful and difficult to recount. There might even be some stuck places where we are stuck with one particular patch and cannot move on from it. There will be patches of joy that are filled with laughter and lightness. It is into all these places that we want to invite Jesus to come and show us where He was and what He was doing there.

John reminds us that we have an enemy who has purposefully come against us; to steal from us; to bring death and destruction against us. But we also have a God who loves us so much that He sent His one and only beloved Son so that in Him we may have life in full measure (John 3:16). He has paid the price on our behalf and taken our darkness into Himself. As we look back over some of the patchwork pieces of our life there may be some that we want to make alterations to because Jesus has now given us a new perspective on what took place. We may want to replace some of the darker patches with more light or add a measure of joy to one patch that previously only held sorrow. As we continue to develop our patchwork quilt we will be actively looking for where we can sew in patches of hope that come from the very heart of the Father.

Jesus died so that we might have life – an incredibly full and rich tapestry of life! Let us take the time to be still and listen for Him and see what He is doing in our life. He knows our story really well already, from beginning to end! He was there as each event unfolded. He can look at the back of the patchwork and see all the threads of our life and how they go to make up our story. He can look ahead to the finished piece and see the beauty of a work already completed. We only have the benefit of hindsight and some measure of clarity as to the present. But He already knows. He knows everything! For Him nothing is impossible, or if you like, all things are possible. This leads us to asking ‘What if ...’ What if Jesus did this in my life? What if I responded by doing that? What if this were possible? What if ...

1.3 The Creative Response

Who remembers hearing the family stories? Grandma tells the story of when she first met Grandpa. Grandpa recounts the story of what happened in the war. Mum happily tells us again what she remembers of our birth. Dad reminds us about the time the fire came close to our house. Many of us have been surrounded by family stories: Our own; our family’s; our extended family’s. It is these stories that help to articulate family identity and give meaning to life.

Yet each one of us is our very own expert story teller with regards to our own life. We are the ones who know it so intimately. With our story we articulate our own identity and the meaning of life as we see it. Some of the story is for sharing whilst other parts of it we keep

close to our heart to look at in more private moments. But how best to tell our story? Traditional societies have a legacy of oral story telling – the stories are passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Then over the centuries these stories began to appear as paintings and artworks, also written as books and now we find them on Facebook!

For this course we are going to use the patchwork as yet another form of storytelling, albeit a visual one. Visual images are such a dynamic way to share our story. As we look at each piece we can reflect upon what took place. Others then can be invited to look also. A dialogue begins as we share our story and others become witnesses of how we felt and its impact upon us. The patchwork can be added to or altered as the story continues to unfold and our creativity takes off.

Our creativity is one way in which we image our Father God. We were made in His image, in His likeness, male and female we were created (Genesis 1:26-27). And He is very creative! Just look at what He did in 6 days! It's all recorded for us in Genesis 1 and 2. But did He stop there? No, He rested on the seventh day but He did not stop on the seventh day. He has been and still is intimately involved in our world and continues to create as it is a part of His nature. It is who He is – Creator!

As we are made in the image God, we are all creative. It is part of who we are. Look around your home now. Have you made it your own? If so, what have you brought to it that makes it now your home? How have you poured yourself into it? It is natural for us to want to create. Take a moment to ponder where you pour your creativity out.

After the people of Israel had left Egypt, the Lord instructed them to build a tabernacle. He gave Moses very specific instructions: *“See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts - to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you ...”* (Genesis 31:1-6). Did you notice where the ability to be creative came from? From the very Spirit of God! God poured out His Spirit upon these craftsmen and set them their tasks. Some were to work with precious metals, others wood, and others garments and fine furnishings. It all came from God. Today all those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour have that same Spirit of God living within. We were made in His image and we carry His Spirit within. We were made to be creative!

However that does not mean that we are all alike in the ways we are gifted. We are gifted uniquely and bring our own passions to the task at hand. If patchwork is not your creative outlet, then please feel free not to make one during the course. However we really encourage you to consider other forms. During the teaching time we will be offering lots of different ways in which to tell your story. Try some of them and see how they go for you!

In preparation for the next session, please bring along something from home that tells us a little bit about who you are. There will be an opportunity to share in the large group more of your story with reference to this object.

1.4 Small Group

Small Group is when we can bring our needs before Jesus in prayer. What's been going on in your life lately? Is there anything that you would like prayer for? You could present something that is going on currently in your life or you could bring something that arose from the card ministry earlier on. Some questions to consider are:

- Did the activity or card trigger you in any way? How?
- Where is Jesus in this situation?
- What is He up to?

1.5 Prayers

Release of creativity (Participant)

Lord, I'm so hungry! I want more of You! Lord, I choose to open up more of my heart to You now as You lavishly pour out upon me. Lord, pour out the Spirit of God upon me! I'm so hungry. Lord, open the floodgates of heaven over me and release Your creativity over me! Lord, pour over me out of your glorious riches. I want to be more like You! Come Holy Spirit Come! In Jesus' name. Amen.

1.6 Patchwork # 1

So, who wants to make a patchwork? If that's you, then let's begin! When we ran this course for the first time, we set aside one hour after each session for those who wanted to sit around the kitchen table and work on our patchworks.

We are aiming to create a patchwork that consists of 9 pieces, one piece for every session. However please feel free to make something bigger or smaller as you see fit. It is up to you. It's your patchwork life!

Your task for this week is to make a patch representing yourself:

- The picture can be drawn on with waterproof pen.
- The picture can be embroidered on.
- The picture can be a photo transferred onto material.
- The picture can be anything you choose to represent yourself.

Let's pour our heart and soul into our patchwork, allowing God to direct and speak to us through every stitch!