



# Beauty from brokenness

## Drawing inspiration from women who create good from difficult experiences

Discovering God offers practical ideas for informal services and events where the focus is on creating community and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that the church is available to all.

Underpinning the materials is an intention to gather together and with God, sharing experiences and stories, and learning together by providing resources that give an opportunity to develop:

- ♥ **empathy** – helping to understand others by listening to their stories
- ♥ **resilience** – learning to trust in God, to have a sense of being valued and protected
- ♥ **self-awareness** – developing a knowledge of ourselves, by asking questions, thinking and reflecting in order to grow
- ♥ **faithful living** – a conscious intention about how we act in our daily routines, with eyes open to see where we need to do God's work.

We urge leaders to act as facilitators, limiting time spent leading from the front, and encouraging people to participate and interact together in mixed age groups. The ideas will work in face to face gatherings, and with minimal adaptation for online use. More guidance on using Discovering God is on the [WEB](#) in the Worship and learning support area.

### Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme.

Display a collection of items that are broken or discarded: e.g. cracked crockery, broken jewellery, misshapen fruit and vegetables, packaging, torn or stained clothing, dead flowers, found objects. Ask people to think of as many possible alternative uses for each type of item (you could do this in teams, with a prize for the longest list). Sometimes life leaves us feeling broken or useless; how can we turn that around to create something good?

Mother God,  
sometimes we feel lost, broken, discarded and useless.  
We seek your loving arms to comfort us,  
your strength to keep us going,  
and your creativity to inspire us  
to find beauty from brokenness.  
**Amen.**

### Somewhere to finish

Before you end, come together to gather your thoughts and, if appropriate, to pray.

Listen to the song 'Beauty for Ashes' by Charity Quin ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VSnTXsHPTs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VSnTXsHPTs)). Give everyone a small leaf-shaped card and a pen. Invite people to think of a person who gives them hope, and to write their name on the leaf. On the other side, they could write (or draw) about something good they have experienced out of a difficult time in their life. Invite everyone to hang their leaf on the 'Tree of Hope' (see Banners of hope, featured opposite), along with the mosaic mobiles (if you made them during the *Beauty from brokenness* activity, featured opposite); then sit quietly and listen to the end of the song.



God of hope, bless the people who inspire us.  
God of joy, bless the people who strengthen us.  
God of love, bless the people who care for us.  
May we be a blessing to others.  
**Amen.**

### Follow-up ideas

- Make a mosaic decoration for a woman you know who is a bit of a 'shero' to you. Don't forget to tell her why you think she's so special.
- March 8, 2023 is International Women's Day. Check out their resources to see how you can get involved ([www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)).
- Create a shero poster for your wall or cupboard door. Include images of women you admire, a favourite quote from them, a symbol relating to their field (e.g. sport, human rights, environment), and a list of their qualities.



## Something from the Bible

### Luke 8:1-3 and John 20:1-18

You might have heard different things about Mary Magdalene, but these are the main two stories in the Bible that we know are about her. The first is a brief mention of her among other followers of Jesus, but hints at her back story; in the second, she has a central role.

#### Read and share

Read the passage from John using a story version, such as in *The Book of Books* by Trevor Dennis. Ask people to listen, imagining that they are Mary. What are they (as Mary) thinking and feeling, as the story unfolds? Introduce the short 'back story' from Luke; Mary is someone who has been 'healed of demons'. We don't know what Mary's demons were; nowadays we might call it trauma. Ask people to think of examples of traumatic experiences that call for extreme healing. Then read the Luke passage; how do you imagine Mary feels about Jesus? Does that change our understanding of Mary in the other (John) story?

#### What can we learn from this passage?

People often think of Jesus' disciples as exclusively male, from humble backgrounds; yet here is one of several wealthy women, part of the group of disciples travelling with Jesus and, we are told, supporting him financially. Mary is portrayed as an important female disciple, despite her troubled past. Contrary to what is sometimes said, there is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that Mary did anything wrong; just that she had suffered and been in need of healing. How does this fit with our idea of the disciples? And our image of leaders more generally?

The story of Jesus' resurrection is arguably the most important event in Jesus' life. What does it say about the nature of Mary – and the role of women – that it was she who went to the tomb first, and she who witnesses Jesus, rather than one of the men?

**Kintsugi** is the Japanese art of mending broken pottery with gold. What has helped you to get through difficult times? Where can you see strength or beauty that has come out of adversity you have lived through?



## Explore...beauty from brokenness

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters (see Spiritual styles key) to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God.

#### Transformed lives **E A**

Watch the first 5.10 minutes of *The Chosen: Mary Magdalene: Part II*, ending with the line '...the Bible is God's breath' ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=8O2SppirgWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8O2SppirgWQ)). We often hear stories of men as strong, and women as caring. Do you think men and women deal with adversity differently? Can you think of other examples of women who have overcome adversity? What do you think helped them to be strong? The video clip says the teaching from Bible helped Mary. Is there a story or a verse that inspires you? How can we support each other through adversity?



#### Banners of hope **W E S**

**You will need:** strips of plain cotton fabric and art materials.

Display or print the story of artist Laura Dampney, who created artworks of hope after a diagnosis of breast cancer (<https://breastcancerartproject.wordpress.com/2020/07/18/lift-your-eyes/>), and/or the 'Messages of Hope' handout from the Safe, Seen, Supported project (see the online version of *Beauty from brokenness*: [www.rootsontheweb.com/bfomb](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/bfomb)). Invite people, using the supplied materials, to create their own banners of hope with images and words. They could use Bible verses (e.g. Isaiah 61:3) or make up their own words. Put some bare branches in a large pot to create a 'Tree of Hope' and hang their banners on there.



#### Shero tales **W E**

Source some stories of real life sheroes (she-heroes) who have come through adversity and inspired others (e.g. Malala Yousafzai, Mary Seacole, Greta Thunberg) and give these to volunteers. Invite others



Lift your eyes © Laura Dampney

to question the sheroes (i.e. the volunteers in role) and try to guess who they are. Ask people to make a list of some of the qualities the sheroes share. Which of these qualities would they choose as their 'superpower' and why?

#### Beauty from brokenness **E S**

**You will need:** small lids (e.g. milk or juice bottle tops), tile adhesive, wire, broken jewellery/crockery, etc., thick cord.

Transform some of the broken things you used at the start of the session to make beautiful mosaic mobiles. Add a wire hanging loop to one edge of a jar lid. Fill it with tile adhesive, then decorate with broken tiles, crockery, beads, and found objects. Hang these on the 'Tree of Hope' (see *Banners of hope*). (Full instructions and pictures here: [glitteringshards.com/2010/mosaic-hanging-decorations-and-jewellery-with-recycled-lids/](https://glitteringshards.com/2010/mosaic-hanging-decorations-and-jewellery-with-recycled-lids/))



#### Local sheroes **W E A**

If you can, invite someone from a local project that helps women to speak about their work (e.g. Women's Refuge, Refugee Centre, Girls' project). Alternatively, discuss ideas about local sheroes you could invite. What inspiration can you draw from their work? Plan a way you can support them, e.g. collecting care parcels.