

## WHAT CAN I DO?

**Ciona D. Rouse**

**“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for July 1–7, 2013.**

### MAKING THE CONNECTION

“I was maybe seven when my father introduced my sister and me to a guy named Guy, who lived in a cardboard box on the streets of Greenville, South Carolina. Although we were well fed and we showered daily, Dad instilled in us that we were absolutely no different from Guy, who smelled of cardboard, cigarettes, urine, and sometimes alcohol. Guy became our friend; and because he was our friend, we cared for him.

“As an adult, I have volunteered, traveled to many countries, worked at and created nonprofits, and been present to the needs of friends and family who had HIV, were not sure where they would get their next meal, couldn’t afford medical care, or had no roof over their heads. I followed the example I had seen in my family and in scripture. Living into the answer to the question “What *can* I do?” is a natural extension and outpouring of a relationship with Christ.”  
—Ciona

### MEET THE WRITER

**Ciona D. Rouse** is a writer based in Nashville, Tennessee. She recently launched a website encouraging people to tap into their inner strength and to live into their deepest passions; find “Do the Crazy Thing” at [www.thecrazything.com](http://www.thecrazything.com).

### STUFF YOU WILL NEED

- a computer and Internet access OR large sheets of paper and markers
- Bibles
- copies of **devozine**
- your choice of a discussion starter and a closing prayer from the suggestions in “Plugged In”

## PLUGGED IN

### Discussion Starters:

+ **“A-Team” by Ed Sheeran** (<http://vimeo.com/24867254>)

Ed Sheeran wrote this song after visiting a shelter for the homeless when he was eighteen and hearing the stories of many homeless people, several of whom were drug addicts and prostitutes, friends of Christ. The song tells the story of a woman in this situation. You could discuss with these questions with the group:

**When homeless people in a shelter say, “*The worst things in life come free to us cause we’re just under the upper hand,*” what do they mean?**

**What comes to mind when you think of someone close to your age being homeless? beginning a drug addiction? falling into prostitution? feeling alone and hopeless?**

**Sheeran decided to make the song upbeat because the topic is so heavy. Do we sometimes want to shy away from the pain of heavy situations like poverty, disease, despair, and suffering? Does Jesus shy away from people in these circumstances?**

**Sheeran was eighteen years old when he wrote this song. By doing what he loves and does well—writing songs and performing—he has enabled millions of people to think about the human beings behind topics, such as poverty, addiction, and prostitution. What do you do well? How is God calling you to use what you do well to help others? How can you raise awareness about an issue that is important to you?**

+ ***Pursuit of Happiness*** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htRXyLN1S4w>)

This clip from the movie shows the reality and humanity of homelessness. Have the group explore a few questions such as these:

**What emotions do you see in the scene?**

**What emotions rise up for you when you think that the scene portrays reality for millions of people worldwide?**

**Do you know anyone who has been in a similar situation? If not, why not, when people in extreme poverty live in or near every community?**

**If the father in this film were someone your family knew well or even a member of your family, what would you want to do?**

**Keeping in mind what you would do for a friend or a member of your family, what could you do for anyone in a similar situation?**

+ **“We Are the World 25 for Haiti”** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Glny4jSciVI>)

This song also reminds us of the humanity of suffering. Talking about issues is easy as long as we are disconnected from people in difficult situations. But Jesus went into Samaria when others avoided this region. Jesus called the suffering by name and participated in their healing. “We Are the World” reminds us that we are all a part of God’s family.

This is also a good song to play to discuss the triumph of humanity. We can come together and show up for each other as we did in the 1980s when this song was originally recorded and as we have done more recently in response to tragedies like the earthquake in Haiti when this version of the song was made. Invite group members to think about and to celebrate other times when people have joined forces. What did we do? What can we do on a regular basis to live into the spirit of humanity and the call of Christ?

## Closing Prayer Ideas:

+ **“Give Me Your Eyes” by Brandon Heath**

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5AkNqLuVgY>)

This song might make a wonderful closing prayer and a reminder to serve others by seeing all people with the eyes of Christ

+ **“I Need You to Survive” by Hezekiah Walker**

([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOURfbILVdg&oref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DkOURfbILVdg&has\\_verified=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOURfbILVdg&oref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DkOURfbILVdg&has_verified=1) or <http://tinyurl.com/phg3ql4>)

This song would be a good closing prayer to help the youth realize that everyone needs one another. You could also play this song while showing a slideshow of images of the youth in service—as a celebration of what they have done and a prayer for their continuing service.

## **CHECKING IN**

Bring the group together. Invite group members to tell about one time this week when a friend or family member helped them or made them feel special OR when they helped a friend or made someone else feel special. Hearing about a highlight of each person’s week is a great way to check in.

It also provides a good segue into the topic: What can I do to serve others? You might say something like this: *“We love being cared for by friends and family. The people Jesus called friends and family were often misfits, the downtrodden, and people in need of healing. We are called to be friends and family for them as well and to help them feel loved.”*

## **EXPLORING THE WORD**

**Scripture: John 13:15**

Read aloud John 13:15. Ask group members to think of ways that God has given to them, served them, and been their personal friend. Then invite people to talk about some ways in which Jesus shows us how to love other people.

Ask the group to consider Shane Claiborne’s quotation (from *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*) in the July 5 meditation in **devozine**:

**“When the worlds of poverty and wealth collide, the resulting powerful fusion can change the world. But that collision rarely happens.”**

Discuss how Jesus often spoke about the poor and spent time among the poor. As Katy Steele suggests, Jesus *was* poor even though he was the king of all kings. Jesus didn’t think of the impoverished or those who were suffering as different from him; he simply loved his neighbors.

Invite group members to participate in an exercise using the discussion starter option you chose from the songs and movie clips listed in “Plugged In” above.

[As an alternative or additional exercise, ask people to form small groups. Invite each group to consider a place in the community where a person, an animal, or the earth could use a friend. Ask members of each small group to brainstorm and to list ways they can support or care for their new friend. Encourage the groups to write about how they can serve *this week* (maybe simply by telling friends or family about the situation, donating funds, doing more research) and to develop a *long-term goal* for serving (maybe a group trip, a regular volunteer opportunity, a prayer group that puts prayers into action each month). Remind the group that raising awareness in a powerful and dedicated way is a form of service. Could they create or join a Facebook page? Could they dedicate their profile picture, Tumblr feed, or Twitter status to a cause for a week and conclude the week by serving in person? Encourage group members to be creative.]

### SHARING IN PRAYER

Play Brandon Heath's song "Give Me Your Eyes" or Hezekiah Walker's "I Need You to Survive" as a closing prayer.

### TAKING IT FURTHER

- Invite group members to reread the weekend article, "Charity:Water," by David McCoy. Challenge them to consider starting a fundraising campaign for Charity:Water through [www.mycharitywater.org](http://www.mycharitywater.org).
- Create a plan to include service and mission as part of the group's regular activities.
- Have an adult contact each youth in three or four days to ask how they have served their neighbors since the last meeting or to inquire how the adult might be able to help the youth follow through on their service goals before the next meeting. Remember that the youth need a friend as well; showing them love and support could be the best example you can give of loving your neighbors and wrestling with the question "What can I do?" Continue to show them love as you model for them ways of serving your neighbors and tell them about your experiences.

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