



WEEK OF PRAYER AND SELF-DENIAL
GENERAL CONFERENCE METHODIST WOMEN
2024

1.6.2024

Dear Sisters,

Greetings in the matchless name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. a. Enclosed herewith are the materials for **THE WEEK OF PRAYER AND SELF- DENIAL 2024**. This programme is scheduled to be carried out in the last week of August, namely 26 – 31st August 2024.
b. The theme for this year's Week of Prayer and Self- Denial is *“Lessons from the Women of the Bible”*
c. For this year, I have again added in a **MW project** which can be carried out as a project involving all the women in the local church, young and old, namely ‘*Project Book Donation*’
2. Kindly observe these days prayerfully making use of the materials enclosed. The offering taken for this year will be apportioned as follows: -
 - GCMW – RM 25,000 (Sinking Fund RM 13,000, Expenses : RM 12,000)
 - Methodist Education Fund (MEF) : RM 15,000
 - SIAC MW Centre : RM 5,000
 - SCAC En Ling Elderly Day Care Centre : RM 5,000

(Please refer to the pictures and brief details below of these Centres)

All offerings are to be channelled to GCMW.

3. If there are any queries, please address them through your respective Annual Conference MW Presidents.

Wishing you a meaningful and blessed Week of Prayer and Self Denial 2024!

God Bless You,

‘TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN’

In His service,

Kany Jayapal
Spiritual Life Coordinator
GC Methodist Women



Methodist Education Foundation (MEF)

The Foundation will assist in the provision, fostering, development and improvement of all levels of education, both formal and informal, commercial, vocational or technical, and provide scholarships, and contribute towards scientific research and teaching, providing medical and surgical facilities and services, and organise, carry out and support schemes for the relief of human suffering with the object of encouragement of self-help and rehabilitation.

Since 1988, it has benefitted 626 students and given out a mix of loans and grants amounting to nearly RM600,000. Other than that, the Foundation has also given grants for educational infrastructure development such as libraries and others.

En Ling Daycare Elderly Centre, Sibul, Sarawak (MW SCAC)



It will provide a safe and engaging environment for the elderly of the area.

MW SIAC Centre, Jalan Sukun, Sibul, Sarawak (MW SIAC)



This building needs funds for renovation whereupon it will be used as a Multi-Purpose and MW SIAC Ministry Centre

Week of Prayer and Self-Denial 2024

GCMW Project for 2024

Activity: *Project Book Donation* – gifts for underprivileged communities, individuals for the Christmas season (MW Project 2024)

Each MW Society is encouraged, as we study together, to also undertake a project. This project is designed to join the women, children and menfolk in our church.

Each MW society can carry out a Book Donation drive and collect used books from church members, friends and family. Then they can work on preparing and packing boxes of these donated books, which can then be sent to areas identified beforehand e.g., a nearby schools, orphanages, outreach centres, Orang Asal communities, senior citizen homes etc. It can be a time to remember and extend our blessings to them – especially for the coming Christmas season.

Parents can use this project to teach their children a valuable lesson about giving.

Suggestions:

- i) The MW Society can decide on how to carry out the project for the year and its purpose i.e., packing boxes for *Project Book Donation* for an identified outreach, orphanage, Orang Asal community etc.
- ii) Assign a Coordinator (s) for this project. Announcements are made to the MW and church and friends in general about collecting used books. It can be a great fellowship event for the whole church.
- iii) Suggestions for books which can be donated are :-
 - a. Books with spiritual teachings by reputable authors
 - b. Non - Fiction books from Christian writers on parenting, marriage, prayer, Bible study and much more
 - c. Classics – for children and adults. Cannot go wrong with this.
 - d. Items to avoid : Non-Christian books, Dated Bible Reading Notes, used Sunday School Material or Hymn Books, Magazines, Vinyl Records, CD's, DVD's, Videos or Cassette Tapes
- iv) The MW members are briefed to find suitable boxes (cardboard boxes or even plastic containers)
- v) Fill these cardboard boxes/containers with these donated books . (**Note:** Examine the donated books that have been donated first. Send out only clean, quality books, as our recipients deserve the best)
- vi) The amazing Journey of a *Box of Books* can now begin – starting with each of us and resulting in evangelism, discipleship, and multiplication.

We would love to see your finished project so, please **TAKE A PICTURE** of your finished project of giftboxes and collected books with your ladies, and send it to your respective *Annual Conference Spiritual Coordinator or MW President*. If possible, include a short write-up on how these meditations have helped you personally or your society.



GCMW Project 'Book Donation' 2024 for distribution (for design purposes only)

Day 1: LOT'S WIFE

Read: Genesis 18: 16 – 19; Luke 17: 28 – 33

Her Character: She was a prosperous woman who may have been more attached to the good life than was good for her. Though there is no indication that she participated in the sin of Sodom, her story implies that she had learned to tolerate it and that her heart had become divided as a result

Lot's Wife's Life and Times

Lot's wife is remembered less for who she was – a wife, mother, daughter, sister – than for what she became – a pillar of salt. Just one irresistible but forbidden glance back at what was happening behind her, and she turned into salt. Salt, one of the world's most common, and most used chemical or ingredient.

Palestine, in fact, possesses rich salt depositories, which accounted for such place names such as the Salt Sea (also known as the Dead Sea), the Valley of Salt, and the City of Salt. The Romans probably looked on Israel as a worthy conquest simply because of the salt available there.

The Hebrews used salt to season food: “Is tasteless food eaten without salt?” (Job 6: 6). Hebrew women rubbed their newborn babies with salt or washed them in it: “On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt” (Ezekiel 16: 4) Salt was a required supplement to any Old Testament grain sacrifice: “Season all your grain offerings with salt” (Leviticus 2: 13)

Our Life and Times

The word *salt* surprisingly is used only six times in the entire New Testament, all of them symbolic. Jesus said to remember that as a believer we are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5: 13; Mark 9: 50; Luke 14: 34). Our attitudes and actions can cleanse and season and purify our surroundings. When we respond graciously to someone who is ungracious, we season our world with kindness. When we treat an irritable child with kindness, we season our homes with salt. When we comfort the hurt, console the lonely, encourage the discouraged, or calm the unsettled, we season our world with salt. As followers of Christ, we're saltshakers (we hope full ones), busy sprinkling the world with the salt that flavours life.

Discuss

1. Why do you think Lot hesitated when the angels urged him to leave his home ? (Genesis 19: 15 – 17). What do you think he might have been thinking?
2. Even though warned not to do so, Lot's wife couldn't resist looking back. Why do you think she turned? Was she sad, scared, curious ? (Genesis 19: 26)
3. When have you hesitated even though you knew that God wanted you to do it? Why did you hesitate?
4. In Lot's wife, we can see ourselves looking back, regretting decisions made, mourning lost opportunities, yearning for ended relationships. Because we're looking behind us, we can't see what is before us. We may not turn into a pillar of salt, but we'll end up stuck in one place.
 - i. Do you spend a lot of time looking back?
 - ii. How can you leave the past behind, enjoy the present, and plan for the future ?
 - iii. Give one or more verses in the Bible which urges us to move forward, forgetting about the past.

Activity: Spend some time in prayer for drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes etc. who have left their past lives behind and are striving for a better future. Consider how you can help these Homes and the these people, who are striving to move forward with their lives.

Day 2: MARTHA

Read: Luke 10: 38 – 42; John 11: 1 – 12: 3

Her Character: She was active and pragmatic, and never seemed at a loss for words. Though Jesus chastened her for allowing herself to become worried and upset by small things, she remained his close friend and follower.

Women's Work

The work expected of a woman in Bible times was much more clearly defined than what it is in our culture now. There were things the women did and the things that men did. Women of that time were kept busy from morning to evening with a daunting array of household tasks: -

- Grinding grain for bread, and mixing, kneading and baking the bread for the day
- Purchasing meat at the market, or preparing an animal from the household's flock for meat to eat, then cooking that meat
- Spinning, and weaving threads of various kinds to make cloth for clothing, bedding, and other household uses
- Sewing clothing for household members
- Drawing the water for each day's requirements
- Cleaning the house
- Washing the utensils, dishes used in meal preparation and meals
- Washing the family's clothing
- Teaching, discipling the children in the household etc. etc.

Martha was just doing what she thought was expected of her. She had been raised to take care of her guests, to care for the people in her household. Mary, in her opinion, was the one who had stepped outside of the cultural expectations of her time, sitting at the feet of Jesus with the men rather than working with Martha in the kitchen. When Martha complained, Jesus responded with characteristic boldness, ignoring the dictates of His time and urging Martha to stop and consider the choice Mary had made.

Our Life and Times

The list of activities of women in the modern household can go on and on, and it is not so very different from the lists of many women today in their responsibilities as wives and mothers. The tasks may be overwhelming. They may seem tedious and exhausting, but never unimportant.

Jesus did not mean that 'women's work' should be ignored or left undone. That would be unrealistic. However, such work should never take the place of a daily and intimate contact with the members of our families and the Lord of our lives through regular prayer, Bible reading, meditation etc.

Discuss:

1. Often this story puts Martha in a negative light and Mary in a positive one. Do you think that's fair? Why or why not?
2. Martha was frank with Jesus. What does that tell you about her relationship with Him? Why do you think she complained to Jesus instead of going directly to Mary?
3. What in your life would Jesus think is a distraction from spending more time with Him? Would He think these distractions were any more legitimate than Martha's?

Activity: Hospitality is listed as a gift in 1 Peter 4: 9. Do you, or women in general have the gift of hospitality? How can this gift be used in our church, ministries ?

Day 3: THE WOMAN OF PROVERBS 31

Read: Proverbs 31: 10 – 31

Her character: She represents the fulfilment of a life lived in wisdom.

Spinning and Weaving

The woman of Proverbs 31 was a real pro at working with fabrics. She started by selecting the wool and flax (v. 13), then spun it into threads (v. 19). She wove the woollen threads into rich scarlet clothing to keep her family warm in snowy weather (v. 21). She wove the flax threads into linen for bed coverings, fine clothing for herself, and clothing and sashes to sell (v. 22).

Traditionally women's work, the spinning and weaving of cloth for clothing, bedding, rugs, and other needs occupied a tremendous amount of the time and talents of Hebrew women. Fibres from plants like cotton and flax or wool from sheep were spun and twisted to produce a long thread. That thread could then be used to sew fabrics together with needles made of bone or it could be used to weave new fabric. Weaving, an art that the Hebrews probably perfected while they were in Egypt, was done on a rudimentary loom.

Old Testament families used fabrics for a variety of purposes. The oldest and most common fabric in biblical times was wool. Woolen fabrics were woven from the hair of lambs and sheep and were made into the everyday clothing worn by the common person, even in hot weather, which inner clothing was made. Some linen was so finely woven that it formed a silky, translucent cloth from which the rich made these garments. Heavy cloth woven from goat or camel formed waterproof tents and outer clothing.

Sounds like a lot of work? It was. The women of a household spent virtually every spare moment on one part or another of the task of making fabrics. The 'wife of noble character' in Proverbs 31 works 'eager hands (v. 31), and it seems as if the spindle and distaff never leave her fingers (v. 19). That's why 'she has no fear for her household' (v. 21). Spinning and weaving have kept her busy all the time, but she and her family are ready for the cold weather.

Our Life and Times

Does just reading about the Proverbs 31 woman make you tired? Do you wish that she would just sit down and rest for a moment? Whatever your response to this larger-than-life woman, you can't help but notice that she never wasted the time given to her. In our convenient culture of store-bought clothing and fast-food restaurants, you may not need to weave your own cloth or cook your own meals, but that's not the issue here. The issue is whether we're making good use of the time given to us.

Discuss

1. What do this woman's children and husband do when she comes into the room (31: 28)? Why do you think they are so respectful? What do you think this woman has done to earn such praise from her husband and children?
2. Does the Proverbs 31 woman seem out of touch with reality for nowadays? How can this verse become more of a reality in your life?
3. What is the thing that is most praiseworthy in any woman (v. 30)? What if she isn't much of a housekeeper, or crafts, or cooking, or good looking? What would still make her worthy of praise?

Activity: What can we make or involve ourselves in during our spare time which would bring honour and glory to the Lord?

e.g. Make a sale of things we make with our hands in our spare time for a worthwhile activity. Some items are our gardening produce, craft work like embroidery, crochet, bake sales etc.

Day 4: THE WIDOW WITH TWO COINS

Read: Mark 12: 41 – 44; Luke 21: 1 – 4

Her Character: Though extremely poor, she is one of the most great-hearted people in the Bible. Just after warning his disciples to watch out for the teachers of the law, who devour widows' houses, Jesus caught sight of her in the temple. Jesus may have called attention to her as a case in point.

Money

Two tiny coins. Coins didn't actually come into use in Israel until after the exile between 500 – 400 BC. Before that time people bartered, exchanging produce, animals, and precious metals for goods and services e.g. a flask of oil for a new rove or the wool from a lamb for a new lamp.

The Israelites probably carried Persian and Babylonian coins back to Israel when they returned from exile there. These coins were rather crudely made. Each was individually punched from gold or silver or some other metal, then a design was hammered onto each side. Greek coins most often had images of nature or animals or gods stamped onto them. Later, Roman coins carried the image of the emperor of that time as well as his name. Coins have found with the images of all twelve Roman emperors.

While money is necessary for life in most cultures, the Bible warns against placing more importance on it than it should rightfully have. The widow who gave all she had furnishes us with the best example of recognizing the need for money – she had money, although very little – but also the need to hold it lightly – she willingly and lovingly gave it away.

Peter warns us not to be “greedy for money” (1 Peter 5: 2), and the writer to the Hebrews admonishes us to keep our “lives free from the love of money and be content with what [we] have” (Hebrews 13: 5). When writing to Timothy, Paul penned those famous, and often misquoted words about money: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6: 10). A lover of money would have hung onto it more tightly than the widow and, when giving it away, would have made sure the gift was noisily apparent.

Our Life and Times

The pervasive lure of money and what it can provide – the need to have more and do more and get more – is probably more prevalent in our culture than in any other in history. Christians are just as susceptible to its enticements as anyone else. Money drives an effective and forceful wedge between our Saviour and us. Jesus knew that, and pointedly reminded us of money's power with these words: “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Luke 16: 13)

Discuss:

1. What did Jesus see about the woman that the others in the crowd missed? What might Jesus see about us that others around us might miss?
2. What was significant about the widow's offering? Why do you think Jesus pointed the widow's offering out to His disciples? What did He want them to think, to understand?
3. How does the widow's offering compare to the offering that Jesus was about to make? What was similar, and what was different?

Activity: Give out small Blessing boxes to your members for them to put in their spare change, coins for a specified cause. Collect these boxes at the end of the year and send it to a specific cause.

Day 5: BATHSHEBA

Read: 2 Samuel 11: 1 – 12: 25

Her character : Her beauty made her a victim of a king's desire. Though it is difficult to discern her true character, she seems to have found the courage to endure tragedy, winning the king's confidence and eventually securing the kingdom for her son Solomon.

Cleanliness

When we think of Bathsheba taking a bath, we might be thinking of a warm tub of water with a fragrance of exotic flowers, soaking, eyes closed. That's the image conjured up in most of our minds when it comes to bathing, and in this case of Bathsheba bathing. But in Bathsheba's time, most bathing took place not for the purpose of physical cleanliness – people of that time had little knowledge of the spread of disease and germs through uncleanness. Most bathing took place to become ritually clean after a period of being unclean.

Bathsheba had probably just completed her monthly period. The flow of blood was finished; the seven days prescribed in Leviticus 15: 19 were past, and she now needed to cleanse herself. She probably stood in or near a basin of water, using a sponge or cloth to clean herself, then either squeezing water over herself as a rinse or pouring water from a pitcher over her body.

Scripture mentions cleansing with water hundreds of times, most of them referring to ritual rather than physical cleansing. Cleansing took place after many kinds of skin diseases were healed (Leviticus 14: 8), and after men and women had unusual discharges (Leviticus 15: 13). Men and women both had to wash themselves after sexual intercourse to be ceremonially clean (Leviticus 15: 18) . Priests cleansed themselves before offering sacrifices (Exodus 29: 4; Leviticus 8: 6), and the sacrifices themselves were washed before being offered to God (Leviticus 1: 9).

Physical cleansing more often took the form of washing one's hands before eating or washing one's feet when entering a house. Dirty, dusty roads and open sandals made foot washing something that needed to be done frequently. Since foot washing was commonly the job of the lowest member or servant of a household, Jesus modelled a splendid humility when he bathed his disciples' feet in the Upper Room (John 13: 5)

The Bible sometimes describes the righteous as those with 'clean hands' (Job 17: 9; Psalm 24: 4). Cleanliness is also used in Scriptures as a metaphor for being forgiven: "I am clean and free from guilt" (John 33: 9). "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51: 7). In the end times, the bride of Christ will be dressed in "fine linen, bright and clean" (Revelation 19: 8)

Our life and times

We live in a culture that glorifies outward cleanliness with our soaps, lotions, toothpastes, and disinfectants and our bathing, brushing, washing , wiping and cleaning. But how concerned are we with inner cleanliness? Do we have clean hands but a spirit filthy with hate? Do we have clean-shaven bodies but hearts hardened to the hurts of others? Do we have clean, blemish-free faces that seldom smile? Outward cleanliness is admirable – but only if an inward cleanliness accompanies it.

Discuss

1. What part do you think Bathsheba played in the events outlined in these verses? Totally innocent? Artful seductress and opportunist? Or something in between?
2. What makes us acceptable in God's eyes: the fact that we are sinless, or the fact that we are repentant and forgiven?
3. 2 Samuel 12: 15 – 23 recount David's reaction to the sickness and death of his son. Where was Bathsheba during this time? What was she likely experiencing?

Activity: How can the MW help out during times of bereavement, tragedy etc in the lives of any of the church families?

Day 6: ABIGAIL

Read: 1 Samuel 25: 2 – 42

Her character : Generous, quick-witted and wise, she is one of the Bible's great peacemakers.

Peacemaker

Abigail's story was at the time when Saul was king. Samuel the prophet had just died, and David and his men had travelled down into the Desert of Maon. It was there the conflict began. The Bible describes Abigail as being "an intelligent and beautiful woman," but sadly, her marriage was hard. Nabal was a very wealthy man but is also described as "surly and mean in his dealings." Despite his lack of judgement, Nabal's household seemed to do all they could to keep him, and themselves, out of the trouble he initiated.

David and his 600 men had shown great kindness to Nabal and his workers. They had protected them when the servants had cared for their sheep out in the desert, and they were faithful to never take anything from them. At a time when dangers in the desert lurked all around, this was a huge blessing from David to Nabal and his family.

Their protection gave them the ability to finish their work and to prosper from their business dealings. So when David sent a word of kindness to Nabal, asking him for a simple act of hospitality for his men (which was common in this culture and time), imagine his anger when this hard-hearted man responded with such rudeness and contempt.

Nabal's servants must have immediately feared for their lives, and one of those servants knew exactly where to run for help: to Nabal's wife, Abigail. Of Abigail's history, we only know that she came from Carmel. But we see quick reasoning and sound judgment in her character.

Abigail showed great wisdom in acting quickly, swiftly, and speaking honourably to David. She took control of the situation that was potentially dangerous for them all. She didn't just sit around and blame her husband or remain stuck in fear. She also chose wisely to act alone, without Nabal knowing.

Abigail had the courage and strength to shoulder the blame for something she didn't do. She begged forgiveness on behalf of her entire household. Abigail fought to protect her husband and her house. She was not thinking only of herself, but of all those she loved. She was loyal and honoured God and her family in all she did.

Our Life and Times

Often when we are faced with difficult battles or hard struggles, we may feel like we've been left on our own. But God is always with us, leading us with His Spirit of wisdom and discernment, pouring out His strength and grace, reminding us that He is the greatest power propelling us onward.

We never have to stay stuck in fear or defeat, thinking that our situation will never change. As we are faithful to His word and His leadership, God can do in just a moment what may take years to work through by ourselves. Abigail's story reminds us again that God sees the heart, and He works powerfully on behalf of those who choose to follow Him.

Discuss

1. Are we more like an Abigail or more like a Nabal to those who are in our care? Our coworkers? Our children? My husband, the members of my extended family?
2. How do we react when someone in authority makes a bad choice? If the choice affects us, what would we do?
3. What 'Davids' and 'Nabals' do we have in our lives, and how do we handle them?

Activity: Discuss on how the MW can work out various ministry approaches to various opportunities e.g. approaching various members who have stopped coming to church regularly.

Day 7: THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Read: Matthew 15: 21 – 28; Mark 7: 24 – 30

Her character : Through her persistence and faith, it resulted in deliverance for her daughter.

Persistence, Prayer, Faith

Mark 7:25 reveals that when this woman heard that Jesus was in the area, she came immediately and fell down at his feet. Mark explained that she was a Greek, a Gentile. She kept on asking him to cast forth the demon out of her daughter

Jesus replied by saying, “He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24). “The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.” (v. 25). “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” (Mark 7:27). Jesus used the diminutive form of the term “dogs” (i.e., the little dogs, household pets).

Consider the following observations about this woman of great faith.

This lady had great spiritual insight. She was not asking the Lord to alter the way he was implementing the plan of God i.e. to the Jews first. She was simply asking for a “crumb.” Faith is based upon understanding the will of God. It is founded upon knowledge — not mere emotion.

This mother illustrated the connection between faith and unfavourable circumstances. Great faith will rely upon the Son of God. Faith becomes stronger in times of distress for those who tenaciously depend on God (cf. James 1:2-4).

This woman demonstrated that great faith seeks the welfare of others. Those who trust in God will intercede for others. How much more should we be concerned about the **spiritual welfare** of those we love?

The Gentile lady showed the relationship of faith and humility. Her humble disposition complimented her genuine faith. Great faith is seeing one’s complete dependence upon God.

The Syrophenician woman taught us that great faith endures. She was steadfast and resilient in her request of the Lord. Reminiscent of the woman who pursued the unjust judge, she reminds us to always pray and never give up (cf. Luke 18:1ff).

The distressed mother exemplified that great faith in the Son of God will result in a great deliverance. We need to cultivate great faith so that we may obtain the greater deliverance through the Great Physician — the salvation of our souls.

Our Life and Times

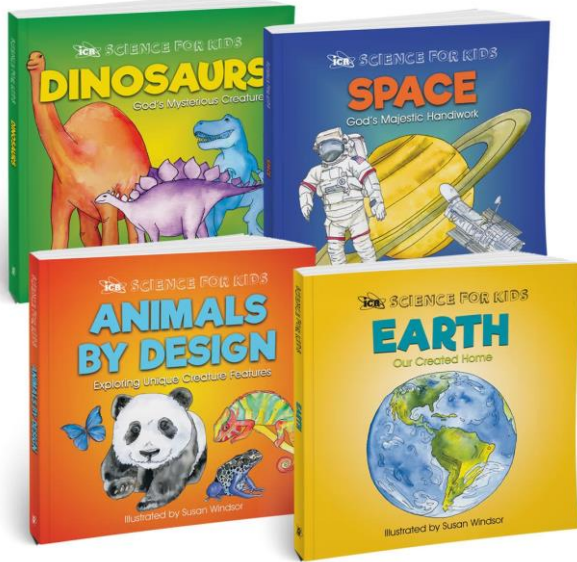
There is much that we can learn from this woman for our own lives and difficult circumstances in our family life. Love was her driving force for all her actions. Love is much more than the feelings and emotions. It is what will keep us standing in the midst of adversity and compels to stay consistent in prayer for all difficult circumstances, for all our loved ones.

Discuss

1. Instead of murmuring, complaining or being bitter about her predicament, what did she do ?
2. Where and who do we run to in times of distress and when challenges of life come?
3. Are we persistent in our prayers for our loved ones, or give up when it seems there is no change?

Activity:

Organise a prayer gathering for all women to come together in prayer for our families – our parents, , our in-laws, our husbands, our siblings, our children by name, one by one. Bring in prayer each and every one of them to the throne of the Lord boldly, in anguish, in heartbreak, in tears, especially for those who have as yet not accepted Christ as their personal saviour in their lives.



**PROJECT BOOK DONATION
GCMW PROJECT 2024**



Family and friends helping in the project



“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ **Matthew 25:40 (NIV)**”