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Editorial Introduction

by Stephen Court

THE JUMBO ISSUE

Thanks for getting the JAC word out to your friends and comrades. We've seen a notable increase in visitors, including sustained hits in the second month of the issue. Praise God. I want to address two issues in the introduction:

The Abortion War

My family went back to school yesterday to do a little Pro-Life protesting at a local university campus. We were involved with a presentation called The GAP (Genocide Awareness Project- see abortionno.org/abortion for information). This project, which graphically compares various genocides through history with abortion, typically provokes emotional backlash from observers. Yesterday, the organized pro-abortionists on hand were scandalized that I brought my 8-month-old son, Zion, to join me. Shouts of 'yuck!' and 'Gross! Get him out of here!' seemed incongruent to the happenings. One woman accosted me and accused me of manipulating and exploiting Zion in the manner of Hitler. My only response was that this was cheaper than babysitting. Afterward, my wife Danielle suggested a better response to the claim that I was exploiting Zion- 'At least I'm not killing him!'

Why does this matter? What has it to do with Aggressive Christianity? I believe one of the key measures by which history will judge this generation is our response to the issue of abortion. Praise God, there are some vocal and effective efforts in various areas in support of the unborn. But as God mobilizes His Church, one of the major social justice issues that we must confront is that of abortion. When the whole Church wakes up and takes a stand beside the faithful (often Catholic) pro-lifers, then maybe God will see fit to bless the manifest unity.

One related, prominent Christian NGO in Canada actually support abortion, meandering, "Termination of a pregnancy may be justified in those rare instances where, in the judgment of competent medical and allied staff, the pregnancy poses a serious threat to the life of the mother or could result in serious physical injury to the mother' and in those instances of proven rape or legally defined incest or where reliable diagnostic procedures determine that a fetal anomaly is present which is incompatible with post natal survival or where there is total or virtual absence of cognitive function.

There is a veritable shopping list of exceptions to the official stance recognizing the 'sanctity of all human life'. You can get an abortion, according to this 130 + year old group, if the mother might die in giving birth, if the mother might be seriously injured by giving birth, if a rape can be proved, if legally defined incest has occurred, if a pregnancy test shows that the baby will not be able to survive, if there is slim to no cognitive functioning, if it has rained three days in a row and the

weather is overcast, if Manchester United has a losing streak of three games or more, or if you can't find a crib that will match the colour of the baby room you are planning.

Okay, I made up the last three. But come on! How ridiculous is that? How does this evangelical group believe in the sanctity of life if it is prepared to give the moral green light to an abortion just because the baby was conceived by rape or incest? That is not a moral position. That is a compromise. And what is with the wording? I mean, this somewhat quaint group is willing to offer the moral write-off if there is 'proven rape or legally defined incest'. What is that? What if the poor rape victim loses her case in court? She HAS to give birth to her baby? No moral covering from this group? Either that or an abortion unsanctioned by this large socially active group? What if the incest is of such a kind that it doesn't quite fit into the legal definition? Too bad for her? She HAS to give birth to the baby? Either that or she can't get the blessing on her abortion by this militant Christian group?

With that kind of support from 'friends' one might understand the confusion of a distraught pregnant woman.

SOLDIERSHIP IN CENTURY 21

No, this is not your usual tame piece about commitment and standards and uniform and all. This is the feature forum for the Jumbo Issue.

One senior SA leader has suggested that a Soldier can fulfill covenant responsibilities without worshipping at The Salvation Army. That seems fairly innocuous until you unpack it a bit. And when you do, you let out several sacred cows. Salvationist from Portland, Melbourne, Vancouver, Sydney, and London (Ontario) take the challenge and address what promises to offend some, stimulate others, and provoke us all.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We don't usually run letters to the editor but that doesn't mean we don't care. If you have comments on JAC as a whole, on articles in this issue, or a response to the points raised in the Feature Forum, write me (sixonefour@lightspeed.ca) and we might throw it up on the site to carry on the conversation.

FEATURE FORUM

(HOW) can a soldier fulfill covenant obligations without regularly attending worship at The Salvation Army?

SOLDIERSHIP IN CENTURY 21

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Contributing Writers:

John Norton - The Problem Revolves around the Meaning of Soldiership and the Mission of The Salvation Army

Richard Munn - Worship is the Central Function of the Church

John Evans - Countless Scenarios

John Cleary - Salvo Worship

Don Copple - Ours is a Postmodern Battlefield

FEATURE FORUM

(HOW) can a soldier fulfill covenant obligations without regularly attending worship at The Salvation Army?

Response by John Norton

- The Problem Revolves Around the Meaning of Soldiership and the Mission of The Salvation Army

When soldiers live in communities without a local Salvation Army they cannot for geographic reasons attend Salvation Army worship. There are examples of soldiers in such situations attending local Christian churches and thereby maintaining a regular worship link to the body of Christ. Or soldiers may have work or family commitments or be infirm or for other understandable reason unable to attend worship at the Army. I doubt very many officers would question such a person's covenant obligations.

What about the person, without other commitments or reason, who attends worship at another church in spite of the availability of local worship at The Salvation Army? Can they still fulfil their soldier's covenant because they want to worship elsewhere? The answer to that question probably depends on how we define soldiership. I feel, however, that we should guard against a legalistic approach to covenant. I don't think parsing apart the soldier's promise to find loopholes to allow a person to attend another church's worship on a regular basis is something we need to do. It seems too Pharisaic. I think God is understanding of our situations and that each individual has needs and circumstances that are unique. I would think normally that soldiers would attend Army worship but respect the decision of friends who have made the decision to go elsewhere.

How do we define soldiership? Is soldiership a sign of membership in the body of Christ (i.e. the Church universal)? Is it membership in a local church? Does it represent the joining of a denomination? Or is it more like joining a mission organization, one that is not a denomination per se but a mission with a specific task and role in the body? Soldiership is all of these things in various stages at various times and in various places in the world, even though these are often mutually exclusive definitions.

A lack of clarity on this issue is making the Army less effective. I found myself paralyzed as an officer because I was unable to understand the purpose of soldiership. I attribute this issue, and its related problems, to the reason I stepped out of officership. I no longer understand the mission of The Salvation Army.

Historically, The Salvation Army understood soldiership as the joining of a mission. The Army saw itself as a mission with a specific task and role to play in the larger Christian church body. Booth originally tried to take his soldiers to attend worship at other local churches. If these soldiers had been accepted into those churches, perhaps today the notion of the Army as a church denomination would not exist.

Perhaps today the Army would be more like a para-church organization, like a missionary movement. With this in mind, the Army has been described as a Protestant order, comparing it to the Jesuit or Franciscan order in the Catholic church. In this way, soldiers would be members of a mission yet worship at and become members, for example, of their local Baptist or Pentecostal churches as they wish.

Today The Salvation Army has developed local churches. Soldiership is in many parts of Canada synonymous with church membership. This may be a commitment to a local congregation or to the larger denomination or both. However, more than in the past, soldiership is probably more membership in a local congregation rather than to the larger Army as a denomination.

Is soldiership a sign of membership in the body of Christ and at the same time membership in the Army (local church and/or denomination)? Most Army leaders, I believe, would say yes to this question. However, I have trouble with the idea that soldiership is a sign of membership in the body when we place so many conditions upon that membership that are non-biblical. I am thinking here of lifestyle and moral conditions that are a product of social values and change over time, e.g. soldiers before 1974 were allowed to smoke, now they are not. Although smoking is certainly not a habit I would encourage anyone to get involved in, I certainly don't think it is any more or less wrong than other habits that were once banned but now allowed, like going to the theatre or dancing. Certainly smoking in and of itself is not going to keep anyone from becoming a Christian. The New Testament message that seems clearest to me is the one that says that we are justified by faith in God alone and that we do not need anything else to come to Christ. To put conditions on membership into the body of Christ is tantamount to heresy. We must therefore accept as members all who come to faith in Jesus as full members of the body of Christ. If soldiership is membership in the body of Christ then we must accept everyone regardless of whether they will follow the Army's list of do's and don'ts. Further, if we are a denomination or church then why not follow the traditional rites of the church, like the sacraments? We talk about not practicing communion and baptism as a prophetic ministry but it largely in the past had to do with our discomfort with seeing ourselves as a church.

The problem with having different understandings of soldiership is that the Army is pulling itself apart, like an elastic band that is getting stretched in different directions. Terms have come to mean different things to different people. We talk using the same language but often the meaning is very different. Mission statements that are said to give clarity are often vague platitudes that can be read to mean that we should be doing almost anything. We have taken the phrase "all things are possible" to new heights! I found in the Eastern Europe Command that there were almost as many different understandings of the meaning of "corps" as there were officers. This was not simply a matter of diversity in the body of Christ or a consequence of a new Army just in its pioneering phase. This was so problematic that corps officers had trouble replacing their predecessors without

breaking the corps down and starting all over again. The problem revolved around the meaning of soldiership.

This problem persists around the world. Leaders cannot agree on how to handle the issue or even if a problem exists. Officers are frustrated. Soldiers are worried and confused. The problem manifests itself in many different debates, from the naming of corps to the role and function of headquarters to the type of music style that should be used in worship. The solution is foundational, driving to the core of our identity. Who are we? What is soldiership? What is officership? What is our purpose?

John Norton is the contributing editor of Journal of Aggressive Christianity.

FEATURE FORUM

(HOW) can a soldier fulfill covenant obligations without regularly attending worship at The Salvation Army?

Response by Richard Munn

- Worship is the Central Function of the Church

My first response is, 'No.' The Articles of War clearly include a commitment to regular worship. Every soldier pledges to:

"[?] Be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship, and witness of the corps [?]"

I believe that worship is the central function of the church. We evangelize, disciple, teach, reach out to the disenfranchised and commit to missions so that ultimately people will worship the triune God. The oft-quoted Westminster Catechism says it well: 'What is the chief end of man? To glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.'

However, where the question gets interesting is if a soldier does not see The Salvation Army as part of the holy catholic church, but as a mission. In other words the Army is perceived as a Para-church arm of the universal church. That could be interpreted as a release from worship at The Salvation Army. If that is the case, the soldier should certainly be worshipping somewhere regularly. To not worship anywhere is a sure indication of spiritual ill health.

If the soldier is an effective soul winner with clear evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit, and contributes positively to the mission of the corps and leadership of the officers, I would embrace those gifts happily and let the worship question work itself out. On a purely sociological level I would have to process the community disequilibrium such an action would produce, and also question the unusual intrapersonal motivations for the behavior.

The individual should not have a prominent leadership or local officer commission.

It is an interesting question, although I do know more and more people (not soldiers) who identify very much with our mission and either worship elsewhere (Catholics, Methodists, devout Jews), or do not worship at all (Secular Humanists, political liberals). These are mostly employees or Advisory Board members. Some of these people exhibit great grace and compassion. They constitute an outer rim of the Salvation Army parish. I enjoy this group very much because they quietly challenge my easy presuppositions prevent me from becoming myopic.

*Richard Munn, Major
Divisional Commander
Northern New England Division*

FEATURE FORUM

(HOW) can a soldier fulfill covenant obligations without regularly attending worship at The Salvation Army?

Response by John Evan - Countless Scenarios

Ahh! A question that's at least worth a couple of cups of coffee, a comfortable lounge and a clock registering the midnight hour.

In proffering answers, it would be easy I guess to take a legalistic approach, reviewing the soldier's covenant, giving ticks for and crosses against, resulting in a clinical and empirical "yes" or "no".

But covenant obligations are more than a list of regulations. It's about character and an interactive relationship with other members of the body of Christ. In relation to a corps, a soldier is not a lone crusader. A soldier's obligations therefore are not simply to himself, but to Christ and the wider Army.

There are countless scenarios in which the question could be played out. These are but two.

Scenario one: You live in a town with stolid worship on Sundays at the Army, no matter which of the 30 corps you attend, so you go to some indie church with a hot preacher and excellent worship. But you wear uniform, fire a cartridge, lead corps cadets, help with the old folks' home meetings, and go pub booming with the War Cry.

(It's my understanding that this scenario is related to the origin of the question itself.)

Nothing constipates the soul like uninspiring worship and preaching that could be marketed as a cure for insomnia. Meaningful community celebration is an essential ingredient for vibrant, healthy soldiers and a vibrant healthy corps.

Having said that, it's hard to picture being intimately and passionately involved in the ministry of a corps without lending support in the form of regular worship attendance.

While interpretation of the above scenario is somewhat subjective, when it comes to the bottom line (as I'm visualising it) I lean towards "no". Ultimately you can't serve in one Christian community and worship in another and successfully uphold the integrity of the soldier's covenant.

Of course it's technically possible, but only in a self-centred sense. The risk of "damage" to people in the wider body of Christ virtually makes it an unacceptable alternative.

Firstly, there is the question of loyalty. Worshipping and serving in different communities will inevitably produce divided loyalties. As I try to place myself in the situation I feel my heart being tugged in two competing directions, crying out in confusion over being 80% committed to one church and 20% committed to another.

Considering the loyalty factor from a CO's perspective. I am not sure I would be 100% comfortable if one my key leaders (and that's what we are describing) was serving in one place and worshipping in another. I guess I would feel betrayed.

Then there is the question of example to others in the corps, especially those you may be discipling and mentoring. If you are committed to discipling a group of say corps cadets, what do you say to them when they show up on Sunday and you are elsewhere? How do you explain to them that the worship and preaching at the Army doesn't cut it for you and therefore you choose for the most part to worship elsewhere?

A "cousin" of the example question, is the evangelism question. Where do you take your friends when you want to introduce to corporate worship of the body of Christ? What happens if you take them to worship at the "worship" church, then somewhere along the line you lead them to Christ, where they go next? Do you invite them to the Army for discipleship and service?

Perhaps the most disturbing question in the scenario relates to one of "calling". Being a soldier is a response to the call of God – it certainly was for me (actually I needed to become a soldier before I could apply for officership, but that's another story). If I don't regularly attend worship at the Army, yet that is where God has called me to be, am I being disobedient?

It's unrealistic, in fact downright wrong, to expect to receive all our spiritual food in an hour on Sunday. To supplement our spiritual diet with other worship and teaching experiences is more than okay, and maybe a more acceptable scenario would be to worship at the Army and the "hot indie church".

I love the Army and I am passionate about its purpose. It is the vehicle in which God has called me to serve. Yet I am not naive or arrogant enough to think that it is the only vehicle for God's mission. If, long-term, worship at the Army is going to constipate your soul, it's better to make a clean break, get an "honourable discharge" and find a church home where you can worship and serve.

Scenario two (based on recent events): "Gail" lives in outback Australia. Her nearest corps is more than 800km away. Influenced by her daughter and son-in-

law's involvement in that corps, and the welcoming reception she received every time she visited, Gail, already a Christian decided to become a soldier. She did her preparation classes via email and was sworn-in late last year at a regional "congress".

In the tiny outback town in which she lives there is only one church, which she attends with her husband (who incidentally is also preparing for soldiership). She wears her Army uniform and is involved in local ministry in the town.

Does Gail fulfil the soldier's covenant even though she doesn't attend the Army. In my mind it's a resounding "yes".

The difference between the two scenarios is not location, but motivation and opportunity.

Captain John Evans an editor and social justice advocate in Melbourne.

FEATURE FORUM

(HOW) can a soldier fulfill covenant obligations without regularly attending worship at The Salvation Army?

Response by John Cleary - Salvo Worship

The question seems to be predicated on the assumption that, as a matter of deliberate choice, rather than through physical circumstance, some soldiers are choosing either to worship somewhere other than at a Salvation Army centre, or are not involving themselves in any worshipping community.

Given that I believe, based on both the teachings of the church and my own experience, active membership of a worshipping community is essential to the maintenance of a healthy and integrated Christian life, I do not propose to canvas whether one needs to participate regularly in public worship.

Can one be a Soldier in good standing and not worship regularly at the Salvation Army? I trust the answer is yes. At a fairly obvious level The Salvation Army is part of the Church Universal, a Salvationist may worship at any mainstream church and feel part of the family of God. However the question is meant to probe a little deeper.

Can a Salvationist regularly be part of a non Salvationist congregation and still be a good soldier? For my own sake I trust the answer is yes. For the past five or six years my work as a professional journalist and broadcaster specialising in religion has put me in many different places of worship on a regular basis, and working every Sunday has restricted my active involvement at a corps level.

This sabbatical from intense Army involvement has for me been a significant event in my life. The result has been a renewed awareness of the significance and continued importance of the foundational insights of The Salvation Army. It has also led me to appreciate both the theological and organisational relevance of the Army to today's world.

Soldiership is a practical calling. It is also a calling to which one must be true to an end or goal. Thus my religious life outside the Army has been constantly assessed through the prism of my soldiership. For me this has proved liberating and exhilarating. It has renewed my faith in the calling of the movement, and given me the confidence to participate in a critical dialogue with aspects of the movement and its internal culture that may require renovation.

Can I make any generalisations from my own experience?

Immersion in and understanding of Christian traditions outside the Salvation Army can be a positive, and indeed useful experience in assuring one of the rightness of

one's calling. I think many who succumb to the 'grass is greener syndrome' and join another tradition, do so as much out of a feeling of freedom and novelty as they do out of theological conviction. Lengthy exposure to the variety of traditions does as much to restore one's confidence in one's tradition as it does to undermine it.

The internal culture of the Salvation Army was for the best part of a century so strong that many Salvationists grew up viewing the world and even other faith traditions with suspicion and even fear. It robbed the Salvation Army of its sense of place in the centre of the marketplace of life and pushed it into a sectarian corner. If the movement is to continue and develop in the 21st Century Salvationists need to recover a balanced and mature sense of their place within the Christian and secular culture.

I believe that for The Salvation Army to have a future its officers and Soldiers must have a secure sense of themselves and the movement. This must be cultural as well as historical and theological. It may be necessary even desirable for some Salvationists to spend some time on the great 'Arcadian Myth' - the journey away from home and security and into the wild world in order to find themselves and the place of their faith. In the traditions of such a journey, the hero returns home, renewed in faith, capable of helping the community confront the challenges of the world. For the soldier the purpose of the reconnaissance out there, is to gain intelligence for the continuing struggle.

The covenant of soldiership is a serious one, it commits one to give a substantial portion of one's life to the work and witness of the movement. If for the sake of the ultimate end, it is necessary for some part of the time to be spent out of the direct influence of the movement then that is not only permissible, it may be essential. This does not however mean a suspension of vows. This includes the vow of abstinence. For me the simple almost daily exercise of declining alcohol is a daily renewal of the covenant. A way of keeping the sacrament of soldiership alive whilst on remote duty.

The Salvation Army has for much of its history been doers rather than thinkers. Our rich Wesleyan and Arminian heritage was absorbed through tradition and the Song Book rather than through preaching and teaching. Today many Salvationists are better educated than the officers who preach to them each week. They are looking for a religious life that fills their spiritual, physical, and intellectual hungers. Hungers the paucity of teaching from Army platforms is simply not able to meet. In my case I came upon the potential richness of Salvationist Wesleyan thought through regular attendance for a time at a church where the minister was steeped in both the theology and practice of his faith, and whose sermons were a weekly theological exposition of the journey we are called to daily.

It was these weekly sermons, worked out in community that, on reflection, gave me a glimpse of the primitive Salvation Army, and gave me some insight into why

it succeeded so brilliantly. The experience has not only renewed my confidence, it has empowered my work and witness and strengthened my commitment to soldiership.

FEATURE FORUM

(HOW) can a soldier fulfill covenant obligations without regularly attending worship at The Salvation Army?

Response by Don Copple - Ours is a Postmodern Battlefield

It is helpful to consider this question in light of the theatre of war in which we fight.

Ours is a post-modern cultural battlefield, influenced by post-modern mores because of which an individual;

- possesses a basic distrust of all bureaucracy
- feels no need for structure
- focuses on inner self and projection of that self into community volunteerism.

These post-modern instincts get operationalized by parallel cultural mores such as;

- the concept of dual citizenship
- the notion of state church as primary church membership with denominational affiliation a secondary issue --- more closely associated with service (function) than membership (belonging).

These cultural developments pose difficult challenges for an Army originally mobilized for a Victorian warfare. While the bedrock issues remain the same, almost everything else has changed. The enemy is the same, but he has thrown out most of his classic corporate tactics in favour of this shockingly new style of warfare. The revolution is tantamount to the impact of gunpowder, of the tank, of the fighter plane, of the atom bomb. Bows and arrows cannot handle rifles. Cavalry cannot face tanks. And yet, without revolutionary change in our philosophy, we are headed for the same end as the arrows and cavalry.

How can we change to fight a 21st century war? How do these cultural truths impact The Salvation Army? Here are some preliminary projections into salvationism to generate discussion:

Premise: We are for salvationist ministry rooted in practical application.

Challenge: While there was a societal notion that the Kingdom of God can be seen, heard, and touched, thus creating the need for a visible, audible, and tangible manifestation (ie The Salvation Army), the current understanding is that the Kingdom of God is within not seen, heard or touched in any physical sense. Thus denominational affiliation may be passe. The inscrutable structure and action of the cell systems (whether terrorist or Christian) may be more adapted to the current warfare.

Solution (?): You can be a member of one denomination while serving in another. For example, be an Anglican by membership and a Salvationist in service. To a degree this already happens with many of our employees. Why not allow uniform wearing for branding and witnessing Denominational duality?

This is not the final word on the subject. I hope that it is the first of many words in discussion, in deliberation, and in prayer, in order for us not to be unaware of the devil's schemes and to provide a conquering answer to the questions posed by the 21st century war.

Lt.Colonel Don Copple leads The Salvation Army in southern British Columbia

Charging the Wrong Guns

by William L. Kean (Major), Twillingate NF

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the Valley of Death
Rode the six hundred....

Not tho' the soldiers knew
Someone had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

The interesting thing about the "Charge of the light Brigade" is that no one could be found to take the responsibility for giving the command that destroyed the best light cavalry brigade ever to exist in England. I am fearful that we may be setting a similar course for our Salvation Army

Now that everything is up for criticism, evaluation and change. Everyone is invited to have ago, and the voice that speaks the loudest, makes the most common sense and gets the most support sets the course. I feel that such a process is flawed, and that it is unscriptural and contrary to church history. It's possible that we could be grieving the Blessed Holy Spirit who wants to be the commander-in-Chief of the Salvation Army. We could be just listening to each other and not to Him. We could be trying to do with facilitators and consensus what only the Spirit of God can do.

All across our Army world our slogans and neat programs lie in dusty binders waiting their time to be thrown out. I can recall now some of the visionings and programs that I have been exposed to: 'Trumpet Call to Action', get ready for a 'Decade of Destiny', many wanted to take me 'Beyond 2000', and 'Claim the Millennium for Christ'. One just said to get up and 'Do something'. And I will never forget the mother of all visionings where at Gander Hotel we were told that visioning was not for senior management, just let the people 'Imagine'! And similar to the charge of the light brigade no one can be found to admit that we were charging the wrong guns!

'The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin

to ward of your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading .

Lam. 2:4

There is a rather sobering truth underlined by John Irving in that old book about General William Booth, God's Soldier, in which he says that children and offspring of the prophets and martyrs quietly go and dig a hole and bury what their forefathers raised up with their toil and life's blood. Some may argue that we are

preserving the wine of the spirit while throwing out the old wineskin of form and rituals. I would have no argument with this present visioning if that were the case but I see this visioning as different. It is not leading us back to brokenness and humility before God, but it is more like fussy mangers focusing on secondary issues like who gets the power or if our uniform is a hindrance. I think we are fighting for the spiritual

Survival of the Army so let's at least identify the issue. The Lamentations 2:14 scripture was given to God's chose people at the bitter end of their national existence and it's a lesson for all church visioning and planning because their condition is the very thing we are trying to avoid.

The truth is, God will use any person, any group, any organization whose vision and purpose

Is to turn is to turn people away from their sins and impurity. His blessed Son was given for this very purpose. Many are the plans in a man's heart but it's the Lord's purpose that prevails.

(Proverbs 19:21).

The issue I believe is one of 'character' (godliness, holiness). To make anything else the issue is to turn away from God's purpose. We have been planning and pondering, visioning and measuring how we could be used of God and do those exploits like the Founders. We've spent no small amount on in-house studies and specialist to tell us what should be paramount when all along the real purpose has become secondary. The conclusion is often drawn that if we can get enough sincere people together, talk and evaluate enough, that the will of God for us will be an automatic result. Our founders learned that this is not the case. Focusing on the character issue they raised up a movement that did great things as a result of getting men and women to submit fully to the Lordship of Christ. Maybe we have forgotten that we are rebels and the way back is always along the humbling road of repentance and setting ourselves squarely against the world. We may chuckle now when we look back and judge just how legalistic they were but we can't deny the fact that they knew the mighty energy of God and they had no problem getting their people together.

E.M. Bounds says 'God can work His wonders if He can get suitable servants. People can work wonders if they can get God to lead them.' This to me is what makes the character issue so

Vital. God is looking for servants and we are looking for God to lead us! Our own Chief Secretary, Colonel Linda Bond expressed our need when she wrote in her article 'Recommitment to Missions', "It is how to carry it out in our culture and time with which we struggle". But I believe the Army's need is for people who will carry out the mission more-so than ways to carry out the mission. That is why our focus must be on the character of those we lead, this is our real work. When God is satisfied that we are the servants we should be, the 'how to' will be an outcome of His approval and pleasure in us. 'Five of you will chase a hundred and a hundred of you will put ten thousand to flight'.(Lev.26:8.NKJV) The early church had no

problem spreading the gospel throughout the hostile Roman world. It was an automatic result of a people who were in touch with the Flame, as were our Founders. The God of Elijah is no rubber stamp, the Christ of burning cleansing flame is only obligated to listen and use people whose character is like that of his own. (Ezekiel 20:2-3) We can be sure and write it on all of our citadel walls, if God is not using us it is not a matter of our visioning being askew but rather Our character.

What has been done can be done again. God is never limited, His grace and new things never end. Didn't Jesus say, "Greater works than these you will do?" But like the early church we must come to the very end of our self-sufficiency and be brought within the moral frontier of our great need . It is not a matter of our planning but His supplying. The history of the church is Witness to the fact that 'New Things' still must stand on old foundations. And that every fresh move of God can be traced back to the source of people of character upon their knees confessing that they are powerless to meet the challenge at hand. Our old arch enemy knows that if he can get us away from the 'character' issue he will have beaten us, and this I believe he has come pretty close to doing. After studying John Wesley and Catherine Booth I notice their most glaring similarity is their incessant preoccupation with character or holiness. I really believe that if we had continued to listen to Brengle and our other Army prophets, we would have been the ones in the front rank seeking to lead the nations back to God, so desperately needed for our culture now. He warned us about neglecting the real issue and what he prophesied has come to pass. He says 'And it's this holiness-the doctrines, the experience the action, that we Salvationist must maintain, else we shall betray our birthright; we shall cease to be a spiritual power in the earth; we shall have a name to live and yet be dead; our glory will depart and like Samson shorn of his locks, shall become as other men. The souls with whom we are trusted will grope in darkness or go elsewhere for soul nourishment and guidance. And while we may still have titles and ranks, which will have become vainglorious, to bestow upon our children, we shall have no heritage of martyr-like sacrifice, of daredevil faith, of pure, deep Joy, of burning love, of holy triumph, to bequeath to them.

I've been expose to enough Army planning and visioning to know that they all fizzle out for want of power. It's great to boil our missions down to Saving, Growing and Serving, but time and experience only proves that it's the 'power'(Christ presence) that we need to do the saving, growing and serving. And this must be our focus and be the theme for all our planning. For every one of us will admit that if we can get the people we now hold in our ranks into the fullness of what Christ Jesus promised us in Ephesians our dear Army will be transformed overnight and our future secured.

Some things I would like to see us do in making sure that we are on God's side.

1. Call a territorial/ international year of repentance for every department of the Army. Let it be known that we are seeking God's face for His empowering upon us. Confess our self-sufficiency and our arrogance at trying to do in the flesh what only the Holy Spirit can do.

Make it an objective that we will teach our people again to pray, see if we can make the prayer meeting the meeting of the week.

2. Do something about our holiness doctrine. Find people who have the experience of the spirit

filled life and send them out into the ranks. Have the program departments produce a discipleship guide that officers could use on Bible study nights.

3. See that every officer takes a refresher course on how to preach our 'Blood' theology.

4. Hold a conference on 'How to exalt the name of Jesus among us and our work.'

5. Overhaul our soldiership rolls. Let the ranks know that we are upping the standards. Maybe we could invest some funds and print a special soldier's Bible and use it as a special renewal award tied to a discipleship program. We just can't lose our soldiership Vision.

Aaron's Priesthood as a Gift

A sermon on holiness and humility^[i] by James Pedlar

In November of 2001 I attended a public lecture by Jacob Neusner, a rabbinics expert who also happens to be the most published living humanities scholar in the world. The lecture was entitled "The Ethical Imperatives of Holiness,"^[ii] and began with the question, 'Does holiness mean, "holier than thou?"' Of course, the question wasn't really open to debate. Holiness should not mean 'holier than thou.' But then, how is it that this seems to be a persistent and common image of holiness among many people?

Neusner could point to the massive corpus of Rabbinic law as a source of such a distortion in his own faith. If these regulations were the only facet of holiness, surely all that would be left would be 'holier than thou.' Yet, he claimed, such minute rules should be seen within a continuum of holiness, on which ritual cleanness was only an initial step, and humility was intricately tied to true holiness and piety. The end of this continuum of holiness, according to the rabbis, was eternal life. Neusner stated that humility cannot be separated from holiness, because God's character is the model for our holiness, and God is the consummate example of a humble person. There is none above Him, and yet he takes note of the poor and needy.

The lecture concluded with the statement that the highest form of sanctification is ethical conduct embodied in self-sacrifice. The extreme example he provided was that of a pimp who sold his bed and gave the money to a poor woman. He was sanctified, according to Neusner. While I don't agree with the example, Neusner's emphasis on humility as a response to the humility of God is compelling. I don't know if we'll ever escape that notion of 'holier than thou,' at least in the way that holiness is perceived by others. But a proper understanding of holiness is truly at odds with any attitude of superiority. Neusner is right to insist that our holiness, if it is to resemble the holiness of God in any way, must be humble.

Of course, Christians should be all the more aware of this connection, having Christ, the ultimate example of God's humility, as our example. Philippians 2:1-11 reminds us of this fact in beautiful fashion. Yet there is another element to holiness that demands a humble response. Holiness cannot be achieved, it must be received. It is not our work, but it is God's work, and his design for humanity, and can only be brought about by His divine power. It can only come by grace, and be claimed by faith in Christ. Holiness is a gift.

The idea that holiness is God's work in us does not begin in the New Testament. The Old Testament also tells the story of a people who are called by God to be a holy people, not because they were particularly worthy themselves, but because it was a loving God's sovereign choice to sanctify them.^[iii] In fact, much of the Old Testament seems to have been written with a view to prove Israel's unworthiness. Examples abound, but we may look to Aaron and his priestly brethren as a chief example.

If anyone ought to have been holy on their own account, it was Aaron. As the first priest of Israel, and the one who would stand before God and bear the guilt of the people, he had an immensely important role to play in maintaining the covenant

relationship of the people with their God. And as we read Exodus 28 and 29, we are tempted to think of Aaron as a truly righteous person. God details to Moses, who is on Sinai alone receiving the law, two chapters worth of honours for Aaron and his sons. We are told of “sacred vestments for the glorious adornment”^[iv] of Aaron; ornate clothing - designed by God himself no less - that would set Aaron apart and honour him above his fellow Israelites. He would have “Holy to the LORD” on his forehead.^[v] Moses was to take him and his sons, “anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them,”^[vi] with an elaborate, seven day long ordination service, outlined in chapter 29. God was choosing to honour Aaron and his sons in a very big way. He was setting them apart from the rest of the Israelites, making them holy for Him.

What was Aaron doing while God was telling Moses of all these honours that he was to lavish on his priest? He was committing idolatry of the worst kind! He helped the people to turn against the God who continually reminded them he was the one who had brought them out of Egypt, and to add insult to injury, he turned them back to the pagan gods of their Egyptian overlords, managing to disobey the first two commandments at once! The very reason that God had brought them out of Egypt was so that they could worship Him.^[vii] Yet Aaron was not willing to take ownership for his sin. His answer to Moses questioning about the sin is almost comical. He says he took their gold, “threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”^[viii] The narrator reminds us of Aaron’s sinfulness with a comment at the end of the chapter, emphasizing that the calf was “the one that Aaron made.”^[ix] It is difficult to imagine a worse sin for Aaron to have committed at this time. It is only Moses’ intercession that saves the people from certain destruction^[x] and the loss of the LORD’s presence.^[xi]

Aaron and his sons are ordained in Leviticus 8 and 9, but, again, the incident seems to underline their total unworthiness for the task, rather than their personal piety. After the ordination, Aaron’s oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, immediately disobey the commandments of God, offering “unholy fire” on the altar, and are consumed by the fire of the LORD.^[xii] Imagine if you were being sworn in as General, and your Chief of Staff (who also happened to be your son) decided to take down the Army flag and stomp on it at the end of the ceremony! It would be more than a little bit embarrassing. Needless to say, there is no possible way that Aaron could have approached his sanctification as priest with anything but humility.

And so, we can say that, although the LORD set him apart, and made him His holy priest, Aaron could in no way be said to have earned this privilege. One more event in the life of Aaron and the people illustrates that Aaron’s holiness was all about God’s action in his life. Numbers 16 is the story of the revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Korah was a Levite, of the Kohathite clan, and if we read the beginning of chapter 4 we get a clue as to his jealousy towards Aaron. The Kohathites were to carry the holy things from the tabernacle when the people broke camp, but they were not permitted to touch the holy things, or look at them, or they would die.^[xiii] Aaron and his sons had to go in and cover these sacred artefacts so that the Kohathites would be able to carry them. This job definitely demanded humility. Korah gathered some non-Levite supporters and made this

complaint to Moses: “You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the LORD is among them. So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”^[xiv]

Moses responded that God “will choose whom he will allow to approach him.”^[xv] The rebels didn’t understand that it was God who was choosing who would be able to approach him, and not Aaron and Moses. Perhaps they couldn’t understand why God would choose Aaron, in light of his grave mistakes, as His priest. They didn’t seem to comprehend that Aaron’s holiness was given by God, and not claimed on his own account. The people had the argument settled for them in a gruesome fashion when the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and his supporters.^[xvi] The people still didn’t understand, for they accused Moses and Aaron of killing the people of the LORD!^[xvii] A plague resulted, killing over fourteen thousand Israelites. Even after all this, the merciful God patiently tried to teach them again in chapter 17. A representative rod is taken from each of the twelve tribes and placed in the tabernacle before the covenant overnight. Aaron’s rod, representing Levi, buds miraculously, while the rods of the other tribes remained dead wood.^[xviii] Now the people finally understand their sin, and cry out to Moses: “We are perishing; we are lost, all of us are lost! Everyone who approaches the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all to perish?”^[xix]

The LORD responded by speaking to Aaron. Listen to His words: “It is I who now take your brother Levites from among the Israelites; they are now yours as a gift, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service of the tent of meeting.”^[xx] Here the LORD reaffirmed the calling of the Levites, which Korah had called into question, emphasizing that this was His sovereign choice. Then He went on to say this, “But you and your sons with you shall diligently perform your priestly duties in all that concerns the altar and the area behind the curtain. I give your priesthood as a gift; any outsider who approaches shall be put to death.”^[xxi] Again, the LORD emphasized to Aaron the fact that he had not earned his role as priest, but that it has been given to him by God. He too, deserved to die when standing before the Holy God, and so every moment that he spent doing his duties in the holy place he would be reminded God’s grace in allowing him to carry out his ministry. God made him holy, and permitted him by grace to stand in his presence.

How often have we thought of Aaron’s priesthood as a gift? It reminds us that his holiness could not have existed except in complete humility. Aaron had seen his own failings, even in the face of God’s rich blessings. He knew there was nothing he could do to earn a place in the holy of holies. And yet God still chose to give him a place of honour in establishing his covenant people. God finally came out and said it to Aaron after all those terrible life-lessons, “I give your priesthood as a gift.” This didn’t mean that Aaron was free to flaunt God’s generosity, of course. He was still required to follow the commandments given him by God. But Aaron did so in the knowledge that every obedient step he took was preceded by God’s grace in allowing him to draw close to His holy presence. Somehow I don’t think Aaron would have had to struggle with that truth at this point in his life. On the contrary, imagine how incredibly humbling this statement was for Aaron the apostate, the one who turned his back on God at Sinai. He

would never be able to put on his priestly vestments with a proud heart, because he knew all too well that this was God's gift to him.

Praise God that under the new covenant, we don't have to worry about being jealous of other believers who are allowed a privileged place in His presence! We have no reason to join Korah's rebellion, because he has made us "a royal priesthood,"^[xxii] and all are able to "approach the throne of grace with boldness"^[xxiii] because we know that we have Christ to intervene on our behalf. But we do well to return to these stories of Aaron and his sons, and remind ourselves of God's judgement on those rebels, so he won't have to open the earth and swallow some of us to get His point across! I prefer the witness of scripture if at all possible!

While we understand holiness in a different light on this side of the cross, its foundation in humility has not changed. The Holy Spirit enables in us a radical regeneration, and the potential to live free from sin's bondage in purity of heart. It is still, and always will be, God's work to make us holy. It was only Christ's victory over death and sin that enables it to happen in the life of the Christian. Human striving will never achieve it, because it requires a new creation.

The verse upon which the text of our tenth doctrine is based makes this very clear to us. Paul uses the emphatic "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely"^[xxiv] when praying for the sanctification of the believers, and he reminds them in the next verse that "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this."^[xxv] He will do it, and we have no way of achieving it apart from letting Him have His way. There is no room for boasting, or jealousy for that matter, because all the glory goes to God when his people are made holy for Him.

I realize that it is a bit of a stretch to call holiness a gift. Especially because we live in a culture where gifts have become quite commonplace, and are often received casually as a matter of routine. Holiness is not a stocking stuffer! I don't mean to cheapen the great struggle for self-denial that must be undertaken in order that the Spirit have its way. But holiness is still a gift in that we can't earn it ourselves. This is where I differ with Jacob Neusner's example of the pimp who sold his bed for the poor woman. We could deny ourselves endlessly and not achieve "the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness,"^[xxvi] which, Paul tells us, is the reason that the new self was created.^[xxvii] God's holy plan for humanity requires regeneration by the Spirit. We must wait for God to give us a holy heart and life, and we must remember that we rely on His gift to continue in obedient faith. Holiness is not simply a measuring stick that we reach for, but a new life that comes by grace to our entire self, "spirit soul and body,"^[xxviii] and roots out sin in our hearts.

Holiness is God's work in us! An unearned gift, but one which is so wonderful and astounding that it shakes us to our very core, and changes us into new creatures. Like Aaron, when we realize our own unworthiness, and God's surpassing mercy and kindness in desiring to make us holy people, we cannot help but be humbled. We don't possess holiness, but it possesses us. It is not a burden, but a source of joy and peace. It is God's great gift to us, not only that we can continue existing in spite of our sin, but that we can participate in his victorious divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in this world.^[xxix] In light of this, let us always seek to

rise above 'holier than thou' legalism, and surrender our lives to the true holiness of God, which is always accompanied by profound humility.

[i] This is adapted from a sermon delivered at Kingston Citadel on June 2, 2002.

[ii] Neusner, J. "The Ethical Imperatives of Holiness", lecture delivered at Ellis Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, November 26, 2001. As he was introduced, they stated that he has published over 800 books!

[iii] see especially Deut. 7.

[iv] Ex. 28:2, all scripture is NRSV.

[v] Ex. 28:38.

[vi] Ex. 28:41.

[vii] This is emphasized in Moses appeals to Pharaoh at 5:1, 7:16, 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, 9:13, and 10:3.

[viii] Ex. 32:24.

[ix] Ex. 32:35.

[x] Ex. 32:10.

[xi] Ex. 33:1-3; 12-17.

[xii] Lev. 10:1-2.

[xiii] Num. 4:1-20.

[xiv] Num. 16:3.

[xv] Num. 16:5.

[xvi] Num. 16:31ff.

[xvii] Num. 16:41.

[xviii] Num. 17:8.

[xix] Num. 17:12-13.

[xx] Num. 18:5.

[xxi] Num. 18:7-8.

[xxii] 1 Pet. 2:9.

[xxiii] Heb. 4:16.

[xxiv] 1 Thess. 5:23, 'Autos de ho Theos tes eirenes...'

[xxv] 1 Thess. 5:24.

[xxvi] Eph. 4:24.

[xxvii] Ibid.

[xxviii] 1 Thess. 5:23.

[xxix] 1 Pet. 2:4.

A New Kind of Power Evangelism is Being Released

by Todd Bentley (freshfire.ca), international evangelist, is the founder of Fresh Fire

A church without walls in Korea, Hundreds converge on mall floors, "not sharing the gospel but doing free God reading's (prophecy over unbelievers) There were 174 souls saved in 2 hours. We had our fresh fire missions team of 8 and several other friends from the USA on the worship team. We hung up a sign in Korean in the mall "Free Spiritual readings" We set up 6 tables, with two people and a translator at each, We did it in the food court. We gave prophetic words over the lost for 2 hours, while hundreds of others went throughout the mall praying and gathering the lost. Several of the souls saved were Buddhists.

PROPHETIC EVANGELISM

(1 Corinthians 14:23-26)

Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

The prophetic anointing carries in it the power to convict, convince and reveal, even if the word is Jesus loves you!! Given as a word from God under the spirit of prophecy it reveals God.

PROPHETIC ACTIVATION

After training, equipping and teaching on the prophetic, how to hear God's voice and prophesy. We activated and released over a 1000 Koreans to all prophesy!! They all prophesied over one another for over 30 min. I said, "if it can work in the church, why not in the market?"

1 Corinthians 14:30-31 - For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

Hearing God is as easy as (Psalm 139:17-18) How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;

All I have to do is ask God for one of his thoughts for a person and go for it. Sometimes you may not know what God is showing you, but they will. You may just have a mental picture. I was in a restaurant once practicing the word of knowledge. I asked God to show me something about the waitress. Then I saw a picture of a young girl around 12 at a catholic summer camp. I did not know what it meant, but I shared it with her and she said "she was sexually abused at a catholic

summer camp at 12. I asked my friend at the table what he saw and he said "I see a bird cage with birds", foolish huh!! When he asked the waitress if it meant anything to her. She said in her apartment she collects birds and keeps them on the balcony.

Most times we cannot operate in the gifts of the spirit in the market place is because we turn off the gift and pressing in for the word outside the four walls of the church. We need a increased prophetic awareness. Lets start asking God for words when in unusual places, especially restaurants.

SAMARITAN WELL ANOINTING

God wants us to make ourselves available to him. Ask where he wants us to go and go!! Its time for the Samaritan well anointing. Jesus shared with this gentile woman in John chapter 4 a word of knowledge about her many husbands and the result was, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I never did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. The whole city came because one woman received a word from God.

God can use anybody. I was teaching on prophetic evangelism in Canada and a business man and his wife decided to make themselves available, gather some prophetic people and go to the market for 10 days, They set up a prophetic booth offering "Free spiritual readings". After each prophetic word they offered salvation and 650 souls came to Jesus.

POWER EVANGELISM STRATEGIES

1. Prophetic booths, market places, flea markets, mall or coffee shops and juice bars are great places. 2. Dream interpretation booths. 3. Free prayer booths. 4. God is going to anointing street preaching again, like in the old time revivals. 5. Servant evangelism-- love acts carry power!!

Lets make ourselves available to God in a new way. Take it to the markets. Jesus had some of his greatest miracles and healings in the market.

Making the Moment

by Phil Wall

Phil Wall is the founder of HOPE/HIV and SIGNIFY, an international leadership and personal development company (bsignificant.com).

Last week I had the privilege of travelling, once again, to the beautiful country of South Africa. The newly named Rainbow Nation is truly a land of contrast; beauty and opulence and the ugly post apartheid legacy of devastating poverty.

Whilst there I had the opportunity to spend some time with the leadership team of the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation. In the midst of our conversation we began to reflect together on who the likes of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela would have been in countries other than their own? Who, for example, would Bishop Desmond Tutu have been in a multi-racial democracy like the UK, where as a Bishop he would have had voting rights on matters of Government policy and national politics? What would have become of the man who was honed and refined through the fires of the apartheid struggle that has such respect and stature right around the world? How else, other than through the path of hardship, would a chuckling Bishop have created such a remarkable global reputation?

I further considered this on my visit to Robben Island. This was a place where Nelson Mandela, and the many others who have created the modern democracy that is South Africa, were incarcerated for many years. I was shown around by Indres Naidoo who was one such political prisoner. He shared the fact that so much of the current constitution was talked through and debated in the quarries on the island during the many hours of hard labour endured by the prisoners. I reflected again as to who Nelson Mandela would have been without the challenges of 27 years of imprisonment? Is it possible that a leader of such stature can emerge without having journeyed through such things?

My reflections were not solely caused by my context but rather through my own deliberations and reading on leadership in recent days. Jim Collins in his book 'Good to Great' (Baker Book House) notes that of the CEO's they studied that were most successful in creating truly great companies, the vast majority of them shared that their leadership and life had been profoundly impacted by some kind of crucible challenge. This has had a significant impact upon who they were and consequently how they led their organisation to success.

In a similar vane, Warren Bennis in his very helpful book 'Geek's and Geezers' (Harvard Business School Press) also notes that many of the leaders that they studied, particularly for the older generation who had gone through the war, talked also of the challenge and the growth that takes place for leaders in the crucible of difficulty.

Also, any of us who reflect on leadership would have noted over this last year since 9/11 that some leaders have been tested in the crucible and have been

found wanting whilst others, from whom little leadership was expected, have emerged as giants. This I think poses some interesting questions for any of us responsible for developing leaders and interested in our own development.

1. For many of us the likelihood of us confronting significant hardships in our day-to-day lives is unlikely. From where then do the opportunities come to grow in the ways that many of the great leaders we have talked about have done, to create the depth and substance of truly significant leadership?

2. If we do find ourselves as leaders within the crucible what do we do with it? Do we flee or do we confront it, embrace it and grow through it? The lesson of history would encourage us to embrace. In spite of the obvious difficulties that come when we find ourselves in the crucible of hardship, there is often a richness to be found there which should not be wasted.

3. Finally, I was left pondering again the age-old question as I thought about these leadership icons of our day. 'Does the leader make the moment or does the moment make the leader'? In truth it's almost impossible to answer and maybe for those of us in leadership positions, maybe even facing something of our own crucibles, the only important question is, "What will I, as a leader, make of this moment?"

To Be or Not To Be

by Mark Dowds

Mark Dowds is the founder of Fresh Resource, an exciting, relevant ministry to youth in Canada. (freshresource.com)

Photographs and scenarios. Skin color and clothing. Friends and alibis. All of these and many more make up the investigation towards the discovery of a criminal's positive ID. But is the collection of data enough to discover the identity of any person? After all, who is Harry Crumb?

Some of the most gripping thrillers and rib tickling comedies revolve around hidden personas and disguised personalities. One of my favorites was Fletch. Fletch was an undercover investigator of the Clouseau family. Stick-on beards and crazy wigs were the least of his toys of disguise. He carried reams of plastic cards to match every person he became. He had different voices and different wardrobes. He was a master of hiding his true self. With ease he shifted from being one man to becoming another. He was a Jack-of-all-trades as well as the biggest joker in the pack. He'd learned the art of the chameleon, shifting and changing, as the situation required. Who he was would determine who he would be.

Underneath the varied attire there was an unchanging man. When the set ended and the spotlights were switched off, the sunlight of reality shone on the true man, Chevy Chase. But who is Chevy Chase? I suppose it all depends on who he is acting with.

Who are you in reality? Who are you and what do you become as you play out the many scenes of life? What is reality or can it really be determined? Is it enough to say that who you are depends on whom you're with? Many say things like, "what you see is what you get," but I suppose this is even subject to who sees or chooses to observe them.

For many years we have tried to become what has been labeled as "authentic." We have attempted to be the same to every person we encounter. We don't want the supposedly negative badge of being different with every group of people we hang out with. We are asked to be constant and unchanging in who we are in every scenario. But I would suggest that this is a vain pursuit, not to mention unachievable.

We are not isolated observable machines. We are living, growing, relational beings. It is not sinful to act differently with different people. It is normal. It is how we were created. Fletch may be a far-fetched stereotype but there is some truth in the fact that we create reality. It is what we choose it to be. Paul was not deceived when he said that he desired to be all things to all people. He wasn't paranoid of someone calling him a hypocrite because he knew who he was and was true to it.

We are made up of a growing inter-connection of relationships and we change as frequently as we learn from one another. We become who we need to be within each scenario. The wiser we become, the more we analyze each situation uniquely. Does this person need me to laugh with them or be quiet and listen? Does this church need my prophetic gift or my plumbing one? Would it not be awful to be the same all the time? Boxed in, good at one thing in one scenario. We would lose the spontaneity of life and the fun of new discovery.

Look at yourself and blur the lines. Squint your eyes until one thing runs into another; until you lose the definition. Now begin to realize that you can do all things through Christ who gives you the strength. Resist your identity getting tied to a job, title or place. You are much more than you do.

This is not an article to be rushed or you may reach the wrong conclusion. Do not be quick to judge. This is not a license to live a life of people pleasing. In fact, it is the complete opposite. Its aim is to set you free from this. This is an argument to say that when you are secure in who you are you can be whoever you want.

Jesus knew he was seated with his Father in heaven. He knew he was the Son of God. He knew there was no higher place to attain. No loftier title. No higher ladder to climb. And because he knew who he was, he was able to choose to become the servant of all. His motive was not for attention; his pure desire was to serve and lift others up to reach their highest goal.

If we as children of God want to serve like Jesus and imitate him, we need to recognize that we have nothing we need to prove. We are already chosen. We need to see our identity as being a child of God. We need to realize that we are seated in the heavenly places with Christ. What else do you want? Who else do you need to look to for significance? We are royalty. We are priests. We have been given everything. All the riches of heaven are at our disposal. When we eventually accept who we are we will have the confidence to serve with a pure heart. We will be able to live a life that prefers others before ourselves. We will not be ashamed when we fail. We will not be moved in the face of insults and putdowns. In the depths of our being there will be a quietness and peace that resonates "I am a prince, a son of the King of Kings." Then we will learn to be content in any and every situation we find ourselves in. Ask for the Spirit of sonship to make himself present in your life.

Battle Lines: Mirrors into Windows

by Commissioner Wesley Harris

THERE is scriptural warrant for self-examination both corporate and individual. Certainly, recent decades in the Army have seen a great deal of examination of time-honoured methods, structures, procedures and the like. All kinds of questions have been asked and numerous commissions have been set up. Fair enough! We cannot afford to take the way we do things for granted. What was once relevant may have become outdated. The fact that 'we have always done it this way' may be no justification for continuing a practice.

But also, an over preoccupation with our beloved movement - continuous denominational navel gazing - could get us no where. By all means let us consult the mirrors (as long as they are not of the distorting variety!) but then we should turn some of them into windows and look out on the world for which we were raised up - a world that is hurting and sorely in need of Christ. And the gospel paradox is that in forgetting ourselves we will be likely to find ourselves; even in dying to corporate self interest we may truly come alive. For that reason I welcome the increasing focus on mission. We began as a Christian Mission and essentially that is still what we are meant to be. The helpful change of name didn't change the nature of what we are all about.

What is true in a corporate sense may also obtain for us as individuals. We live in what has been called the 'me generation' and we can become overly concerned with our fads and feelings and allow questions about our creature comforts to loom too large for people called to follow the Man for others.

I once met a group of corps officers to consider outstanding concerns and hoped that we might address such matters as the dearth in soul saving. Unfortunately, and un-typically, the preoccupations were with the range of official cars available and home comforts provided.

Now I am not arguing that there would necessarily be any virtue in officers or Salvationists generally living in shacks, wearing hair shirts or riding in unreliable vehicles. But Jesus warned against giving too much thought to material things and forgetting the prior claims of the Kingdom of right relationships and the needs of others. In connection with material provisions I remember the late Commissioner Roy Calvert asking, 'How much is too much?' It is a point to ponder.

I would stress the importance of pastoral care for both officers and soldiers in the Army and of course, Scripture urges that we take care of the flock of God. But again, this could get out of balance and we could forget that The Salvation Army was raised up for the people who don't belong to it as well as those who do. We could become an inward looking club instead of an outgoing movement of the Spirit. Our concern should not merely be for the coddling of the saints (ourselves in particular!) but for the collaring of the sinners!

Becoming an officer used to be quaintly described as 'going into the work' and the phrase may have described the priorities involved. To some extent those same priorities obtain for all Salvationists. We are 'people people' and working to woo and win others for Christ is our mission and our destiny.

Dynamite! Thoughts on Renewal

by Captain Stephen Poxon

Prepared to risk the accusation of sycophancy, I have to say that General Larsson is a brave man! To write in *The Officer* (September/October 2002), and to preach at Docklands Arena in London (on the occasion of the retirement of General John Gowans and Commissioner Gisele Gowans) that

'The concept of our corps being predominantly a force led by a captain and not a flock led by a pastor lies at the very heart of the Army'

takes guts, and I for one admire him for that. I just hope his tin hat is securely in place, for such a comment will inevitably to attract a fair (unfair?) amount of flack, even so soon into his term of office! Personally speaking, I think it's a great statement. Not only great, but long overdue.

Following on from that statement is another, which for my money can also be filed under Great and Long Overdue;

'A corps is meant to be a mission team!'

I make no hesitation in linking this latter statement with an article by Canada's Captain Geoff Ryan that appeared in *Salvationist* (the United Kingdom's weekly in-house paper) dated 7/12/02, entitled, 'Every soldier a missionary!' and including the quotations,

'There is no room for passive membership'
and 'Every soldier needs to understand his or her soldiership as a call to mission'.

My friend and colleague, Major Barry Willson (UKT), once pointed out to me something which had probably occurred to most other officers a long time ago - that the initials of a brand of dynamite, TNT, also stood for The New Testament; the correlation being, of course, that the gospel is explosive, dynamic (from the Greek, *dunamis*, meaning power) and, to put it bluntly, able to shift things (for which read hard hearts, plugged ears, stiff necks, closed wallets, and modern versions of the law of the Medes and Persians).

When I ponder General Larsson's words, I feel as though I am handling dynamite. It is an uncomfortable feeling, because dynamite is dangerous, but it is also a wonderful feeling, because dynamite releases untold potential. I want to be an officer in an Army that is responsible for exploding barriers to potential. I want to serve/fight in an Army that blasts Satan to Hell, which blows prison doors wide apart and then finds gems amongst the rubble. I want to command corps that specialise and revel in the ministry of holy detonation.

There will be those who will insist that an officer is there to tend his flock, and will ask us to consider the example of the Good Shepherd.

Such an insistence would be true and valid, but only partly true and only partly valid. Correct me if I am mistaken, but I think the best officers are those who care for their flocks but also get stuck in to community mission, to sharing the gospel with the lost as well as preaching to the converted. Is not an officer called to the town and community in which he or she lives, as well as to the corps he or she is sent to? Allow me to quote from an article by the then Lieutenant Stephen Court (Canada), in *The Officer* dated November 1996,

"Commissioner Don Kerr appointed my wife Danielle and me to Williams Lake last September.

He didn't send us to coddle the saints of our small congregation;

he sent us to collar the sinners of the growing region.

We weren't sent to take care of the corps; we were sent to win the town."

I can only speak from corps experience, but that is what I have always thought an officer should be about. To be sure, the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) is our example, but references to proof texts should always be checked and balanced, and we need look no further than Joshua 5:14 to realise the inherent duality of an officer's calling, with Jesus Christ as Mentor;

"...as captain of the host I am now come" (KJV).

Someone whose name I regret being unable to recall once coined the wonderful phrase '*Militant shepherds*'. Surely, that is what we are, or should be?

Didn't Nehemiah build and fight at the same time (Nehemiah 4:18)? For building read pastoring/shepherding. For fighting read missioning (or as Stephen Court puts it, quite marvellously, collaring). For Nehemiah read Salvation Army officer.

General Larsson, then, it seems, is merely dusting down the mandate that God gave thousands of years ago, and reminding us of our roots and responsibilities.

Let us then follow the ancient example of Mary and ponder these things in our hearts!

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The Psyche of Poverty

by Captain Charles Roberts,

Divisional Secretary, Evangelism Secretary, Men's Ministries Secretary for the
Greater New York Division (USA East)

At the outset of this discussion, it is important to ask a few guiding questions: How do we experience poverty? Is the condition identical for all peoples? Or is the experience of poverty as relative as the variety of cultures and people groups? It is important to note that there is not a unitive conception within psychological constructs of poverty. There are myriad "psyches" of poverty, as many as there are persons in the world. There is not a singular psyche of poverty, but a host of emotions, experiences, systemic and personological blockages to advocacy and development opportunities that occur in differing degrees to folks who experience poverty. There are unique psycho-social dynamics concerning those transitioning out of poverty. In addition, individuals who of the landed gentry have their own understanding of poverty.

In his keynote address (to the International Conference on Poverty), General Gowans referred to understanding the language of the poor, even if one has never experienced poverty. I believe that as Salvationists we must do more than that. We **MUST** develop our own language of poverty, borne out of our own experience, despite our station or our birth or our lineage. Since as a branch of the universal church, The Salvation Army is married to those who experience poverty, we must have our own personal lexicon of reference, even if it is borne out of our universal poverty of spirit. It may be much easier in the so-called developing world to be so dissociative in our thinking, since in many developing countries, the goal of persons experiencing poverty is to move out of the neighborhood, into a "nice" place.

Among the inner-cities of the United States, clergy from all denominations search for those who are from the city to minister those who remain. But the concept of "redemption and lift" introduced by McGavran and others is translated by those transitioning out of poverty as the need to relocate and adopt middle-class values and structures. In the States, once many immigrant peoples adopt middle-class values, they jettison the contacts from The Salvation Army and attend more "respectable" churches. It is clear that many of these folks no longer want to be associated with the church of the poor. In many urban centers where "white flight" was tagged as the major cause of urban blight, we now see "black flight", as suburban sprawl creates new suburbs for up-and-comers, resulting in the further abandonment of the city, and mission as well.

I was just recently conducting a corps programme review with an officer whose corps is experiencing declining growth. According to the officer, the sources for this negative growth are quite intriguing: many of their congregants are marginally employed, and as they seek the LORD in prayer for help in this area, these seekers get jobs that preclude them from Corps participation.

In my experience, the “diamond in the rough” is the hardest to find: someone who is presently experiencing poverty but with enough emotional strength to provide peer advocacy to her neighbors and friends. I think of Linda, a mother of two daughters I met during a recent visitation. She had all the natural skills of a community advocate: bright, articulate, funny, with a good-natured way to close a deal, etc. Her daughters were both artistic and brilliant in their own ways. The family was living in transitional housing, and time was closing in on their lease agreement for this apartment. Linda said frankly, “If I didn’t have my own problems, I would be able to help someone else.” Here was a perfect advocate, yet so consumed with her own situation that she was unable to use her talents to help others.

Many of our soldiers are in that condition as well. Even while trapped in the stronghold of hopelessness, many are refusing the discipleship and mentoring available to gain strength and strategies for continued help and healing. However, our band of saints were a poor lot, transformed with the Holy Spirit and with fire to seek and to save those who were lost. Our early troops were women at the well and men who were up a tree, revolutionized by Jesus into advocates of the new and living way.

Jesus said, “The poor you will have always, but you will not always have Me.” He said this in reply to Judas’ remark as to the expense of the anointing oil that Mary of Bethany lavished on Jesus. In this realm, we only have so much time to minister unto Jesus. Elsewhere, Jesus makes it very clear that caring for the least of these was tantamount to ministering unto Him. We need to develop a concept of “redemption and lift” that honors return to and investment in our communities of origin. We need to honor and embrace those who remain in urban centers, and mine the gold in human and social capital that is there. We have got to lavish the Marys/prayer warriors that remain with the competencies and resources for social and spiritual change. We have to show them a Jesus who cannot only save a soul but save a house from foreclosure or save a young boy from gang life!

It seems clear that we need a psyche of transformation. The needs of the world are staggering; even the dark curtains in Victorian church halls for the poor to hide behind was but a poor attempt to deal with the overwhelming needs. We need a new psyche of ministering unto Jesus that does not require the sacred music of the quiet sanctity of the sanctuary. We need to see Jesus in the street. As we see Jesus there, pushing a wagon filled with scrap metal, we need to join with him and embrace the grace that is present. For Almighty God is always previous; He was there long before we got there!

This Jesus will require new wineskins for new wine: new and different resources for transformation; new redistributions of human resources and fiscal investments in transformative activities. This Jesus does not require your voucher book, He requires YOU to actually engage in the world—to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. This Jesus needs you to have a cup of coffee in the

living room of poverty, so that its reference becomes your reference. This Jesus needs us to roll up our sleeves, recall our personal poverty and spiritual bankruptcy in order to become Him and meet Him in slums, embracing Him in squalor, and lifting His people to the proper dignity as children of a transforming God.

We pray that those “diamonds in the rough” will emerge and remain, as we remain committed to the cause of saving souls and serving suffering humanity.

Ministering Under An Open Heaven

by Todd Bentley (freshfire.ca), international evangelist, is the founder of Fresh Fire

****HOLY VISITATIONS****

Isa 64:1-2

"Oh that you would rend the heavens! That you would come down! That the mountains may shake at your Presence."

When heaven tears open then God comes down in holy visitation that not only affects you but also the nation.

"As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence."

God is about to rend the heavens and make His self known to whole cities and also nations. My prayer is that God will open the heavens and come down in an extended visitation of presence in your life.

I want to start this teaching with my testimony of a holy visitation and how an open heaven was the beginning of our ministry. Everything that we have need of in our families, ministries, life, new levels of power and provision comes out of the presence of God. I have been traveling now for several years and everything that has been done in this ministry, all the favor, souls, miracles and healing was birthed out of His presence. Several years ago, many of you already have heard my testimony as shared in our 3 tape series "The Secret Place" a must for those who you hungering for what I am about to share in these first two paragraphs of how I had a holy visitation from the Holy Spirit. As a result, at different times during the span of about three months. I would be laid out (slain in the spirit) or as I would rather put it. I was so overwhelmed with God's manifest presence like a thick honey cloud. I could do nothing most days but "BE Still" or "Wait on the Lord" I was blessed from heaven with such an awareness of His divine presence I was forced to the floor and would simply lie in His glory. I call it forced by the weight of His glory into a place of contemplation, times of solitude or just sitting at His feet like Mary. For four to twelve hours a day, I would simply gaze at the Lord's beauty or as Paul describes in Heb 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith," the word "looking" is translated to Gaze or stargazer.

Gaze: to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something, properly, to stare at,

- 1) to see with the eyes
- 2) to see with the mind, to perceive to know
- 3) to see, i.e. become acquainted with by experience, to experience

4) to see, to look to or study intently.

During these extended times of soaking I would receive at times, numerous kinds of visions, dreams, prophetic experiences and visitations of angels sometimes. I often refer to that time in my life as my "soaking season".

God taught me how to dwell and abide in the secret place of His presence (Ps 91:1) I came to understand the power of stillness, quietness, basking, bathing and drinking in His love. I was in a place of surrender and meditation in His presence. I understood here some of the secrets of Brother Lawrence's life and practicing the presence of God. This is better known today as the silent prayer of the heart or meditation and contemplation.

It was after that soaking season that God called me out into full-time ministry. I received a divine visitation of the Lord. It was as if a person walked in to the room and stood behind me. I could feel His presence over me and heard distinctly, the audible voice of the Lord. I was told exactly how I would be called out and prophesied over in a meeting that evening, deeming that time as my commissioning for ministry and shown in open vision numerous events in the meeting that night as a sign. You could say it happened overnight. In fact that night, that the intensity of the soaking

season and times of almost daily revelation ended, though I still continue to live a lifestyle of soaking. This was when God spoke to me. This same evening it happened just like God said that it would. In a public meeting over four years ago a dear woman I had almost no relationship with at that time, and now friend and one of many prophetic voices to our ministry. She received publicly a word from the Lord as I already saw and heard in the morning visitation of the Lord. I was to quit my job and immediately go into the ministry. Here we are some years later, over 20 nations, numerous staff, offices in the USA and Canada and even our missions base for all Africa in Uganda, a multi-million dollar mandate, ministry and vision, crusades of hundreds to hundreds of thousands and numerous blessings and

favor of the Lord. I believe we can all experience in diverse ways of course more of God's blessing, presence and favor. What is the secret to all of us living a prosperous, abundant life, ministry and business? The answer is "The Open heavens" living and ministering under a heaven that's open above and beneath our feet and lives.

WHAT IS THE OPEN HEAVEN?

Definition: When the heavens are open we have free access to everything in heavenly realms, a free flowing of Gods abundant graces and ministry power. Ministering under an open heaven is like toiling the soil without labor or sweat on the brow. When heaven is open for you God will be near and heaven will be manifest in the natural " as it is in heaven".

****OPEN HEAVENS & FINANCIAL BLESSING****

Deuteronomy 28:12

"The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow."

What are some of the blessings on a life when the heavens open? Look at the first eleven verses of Deut 28:1-11

****THE BLESSINGS****

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.

Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. The LORD shall establish thee a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land, which he LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee."

When we have heaven open above, we prosper in the earth beneath and receive abundance for others and ourselves. An open heaven is the Lord's good treasure open to us in everything we do with our hands and property in material things.

Malachi 3:8-11

8) Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me! But you say, "In what way have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings.

9) You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

10) Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

11) And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes."

These scriptures are not just speaking of financial prosperity but as the heavens are opened, we also receive favor and protection for all our goods and storehouses in the natural and spiritual. "I will rebuke the devour for your sakes."

God's rain is more than just stuff but also revival and the bread of His presence. He is the true hidden manna of heaven.

****REVIVAL AND HIDDEN MANNA****

Genesis 7:11-12

11) In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12) And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights."

When the heavens above are open to us, simultaneously the fountains of the deep are open. God will release the rivers and floods of revival and His presence.

Psalms 78:23-25

23) Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24) Had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven.

25) Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full."

When the heavens above are open to us, God will rain down the hot fresh bread of manna, His presence, revelation, secrets of the Lord and wisdom above. Yum yum to the bread of life! In the same way that heaven can be open to us it can be closed and when it is the earth will be like iron and heaven above like bronze. Not only will this effect prosperity in the work of our hands, effect success and the abundant blessing but prayer, revelation, revival, God's power and more.

****BRASS HEAVEN****

Have you ever prayed and it was like God was a million miles away and your prayers bounced off the ceiling and everything was dead and lifeless. Have you ever found yourself like the psalmist David? "Where are you God, Be not far from me nor turn a deaf ear to my cry." This is a bronze heaven and when the earth beneath fails to yield increase and fruitfulness and everything seems to dry up financially, you can't find a job. What about when the ground is hard in ministry and you're plowing to get a breakthrough, it can be as if the earth beneath is iron. This happens at times when the heavens are closed. I also want to be clear that I also believe that at times for testing and character God will allow us to walk in the wilderness or maybe even hide his presence and revelation from us. God wants to see how hungry we are for him and if we can walk by faith and not just feelings and all the other good stuff.

Deuteronomy 28:15; 23

15) But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: 23) And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron."

Another example as in the English translation. The Lord will make the sky overhead seem like a bronze roof that keeps out the rain, and the ground under your feet will become as hard as iron.

****THE POWER OF GOD****

I remember one of the first times I saw in the spirit an open heaven. I was ministering in a Vineyard church in Albany Oregon. We were experiencing a tremendous outpouring open heaven of healings and miracles for several weeks already. People were traveling from all over the USA and coming from different countries. Hundreds were healed and there were numerous salvations, re-dedications to Christ and water baptisms. We would on some nights baptize 40-50 new souls in an old horse watering trough. It was a tremendous open heaven of God's power, healing and deliverance that continues to be an oasis today. In one service I saw heaven open, it was like a hole tore open in the air and I saw a glory light like a pillar come out of this portal. Then I saw a 14-20 foot angel in the pulpit by the name of healing revival. At that time God spoke to me that this Angel was like the Angel (John 5: 1-4) that came down at a certain season to stir the waters of the pool of Bethesda. It was in this healing pool in Israel over 2,000 years ago that great multitudes of lame, blind, sick and paralysed came to be healed. Whoever stepped into the waters first was healed of whatever sickness he had. Bethesda in Israel, Albany was an open heaven as Toronto, Pensacola, and many

other places have been today and throughout history we can see open heavens of Gods power affecting geographical regions and even whole nations. The welsh revival, Azusa street, Jesus movement and the healing outpouring called the Voice of healing of the 1940's-60's.

Do you want lay hands on the sick and they are healed, cast out demons, preach under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, see transformation of whole cities, revival and produce, be successful and increase in the things of ministry. I want fruitful ground in ministry. Jesus ministered in some of the hardest soil any ministry has labored in. Think about the spiritual climate and receptivity in Israel and the constant battle with the religious spirit, mindsets, unbelief and skepticism. What was the secret to His ministry? It was an open heaven that He carried everywhere He went. There can be an open heaven over a nation, city, geographical location, church, and over your individual life. If one heaven is closed and the heaven over your life is open, then you will have a breaker anointing that you need for any ground and will carry an open heaven with you everywhere you go.

The power of God begun to function in the ministry of Jesus after heaven opened in (Matt 3:16-17) "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(Acts 10:38) "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

It continued throughout his whole ministry. One key to an open heaven in your life is in the ministry of Jesus. The heavens opened for Jesus through repentance and stayed open through perfect obedience.

****OPEN HEAVENS AND REVELATION****

I have been in several different areas of ministry over these last few years and I have been able to discern an open heaven or a difficult spiritual climate. I was in one place in North Carolina like no other where the heavens were so open for receiving revelation that for three days and even as I slept by night constant dreams and visions. There was much angelic activity and I remember visitations by 4 different angels. Some of my prophetic friend's won't even sleep there because they receive so much revelation they can't get their proper rest.

One of the most common manifestations of living under an open heaven is constant revelation. We will see here in several verses that when heaven opened, then revelation was released in the earth like in the case of Ezekiel the prophet when the heavens were opened he saw visions of God.

Rev 4:1-2

1) After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2) And immediately I was in the spirit: This is the beginning of revelations for John after heaven opened.

Rev 19:11

11) And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Eze 1: 1

1) Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Gen 28:12

12) And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

Acts 10:9-11

9) Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10) And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11) And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners.

We see that Peter had a trance when heaven opened, Jacob received angelic visitation and John received the revelation of the book of Revelation when heaven was opened, immediately I was in the spirit. If we want more of the word of the Lord and revelation we need to learn how to live in an open heaven.

I know that many of you are ready to learn how can I open heaven in my life more? And walk in greater power and revelation. We will continue this teaching in the second part.

PART 2 OF 3

HOW TO OPEN THE WINDOW OF HEAVEN

In this second article on how to open the windows of heaven, we will learn more about the open heaven, and how we can open the windows of heaven in our life, ministry and experience living in the increase of the supernatural.

**** WAITING****

The first real key to living in an increase of supernatural wisdom and revelation is found in Psalm 106:13-15.

Psalm 106:13-15

13) They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel,

14) But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert.

15) And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. Or as in another translation God sent a wasting disease in the soul.

People ask me all the time how did you become so sensitive to the spirit?

Really I have two answers. The first is found in the book of

Hebrews 5:14

14) But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. The key to more spiritual sensitivity is the reason of use, through exercise and practice. The old law of use it or lose it.

Secondly as you heard me briefly share in the first teaching, I would soak or wait on the Lord in absolute stillness. Day after day I positioned myself in stillness and quietness, listening prayer and meditation on the Lord's presence. I learned to quiet my mind of all business and when my mind did wander I would simply refocus on thinking about Jesus. After some time I began to receive visions and different prophetic experiences sometimes several times a day and many times everyday. I simply began to expect it when I came into the Lord's presence. Did I pray and worship or do any other kind of prayer? Yes! but when I began to feel the Lord's glory. I would simply lie on the floor and just "be there" in the presence, focused on Him in quietness and total surrender. After weeks of practicing this kind of silent prayer I noticed much more increase of revelation. The more I wait the more I receive. I wait as much as I can now. It is a lifestyle, sometimes 1-3 hours a day of quiet prayer and soaking.

In first Samuel chapter 3 we have the story of Eli a closed heaven and waiting. Lets look at it.

1 Sam 3: 1-8

1) And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

- 2) And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;
- 3) And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;
- 4) That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.
- 5) And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.
- 6) And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.
- 7) Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.
- 8) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

You will notice in this passage several things. 1. There was no open vision, 2. Eli was laid down in his place, 3. His eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see 4. The lamp of God went out in the temple, 5 where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep.

What happened to the word of the Lord and revelation? One priest of the Lord got into his own place, which was a much different position from Samuel lying down where the ark of God was. Why was Eli's eyes so dim he could not see and there was no open vision? He moved out of a position of lying or resting in the glory ark of Gods presence. He no longer waited in prayer for counsel and direction so God put a wasting disease in his soul and he lost his natural and spiritual sight. It was only when the boy Samuel waited in the glory did he receive the word of the Lord.

****PRAYER****

Prayer or prayer and fasting of course is always one of the most powerful tools to open heaven. Look at (2 Chron 7: 13-14)

If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Look what happened when God closed the heavens in (Joel 1 1-13). We have no revival, fruitfulness, harvest or blessing of the Lord.

We have the Locust Famine, the fig tree he hath made it clean and bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white, The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth, the

wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men. Until verse 13-14 and God calls them to pray and fast.

13) Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. 14) Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD.

When heaven is closed it takes desperate prayer for God to restore like He did in Joel 2:23-25.

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24) And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25) And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

****TITHES AND OFFERINGS****

Can our faithfulness in giving really be a part of revival and the open heaven? (Mal 3:10)

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

What about Cornelius and the revival that came by Peter to his house? This outpouring was triggered by more than just a tenth of our tithe but offerings for the poor.

Acts 10:3-4

3) He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4) And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord?

And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms (charitable giving) are come up for a memorial before God.

In the revival in the book of Acts one of the first manifestations is giving and genoursousity. Why wait for revival to come lets sow our lives into a revival and open the windows of heaven and see if there will be room to contain it.

Acts 2:44-45

44) And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45) And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

****HEAVENLY MINDED****

Colossians 3:1

1) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

I believe that it is important in receiving an increase of revelation and seeing into the spirit to exercise our spiritual eyes. In Ephesians 1:18 the bible talks about our spiritual eyes. Paul prays that: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, What are the eyes of your understanding? In the Greek understanding is translated the mind and imagination. Let's learn to set our mind on things above and seek those things above including that we might see in the spirit. One way we can exercise our spiritual eyes is to look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. I encourage you to take every time God has been seen in the scripture and described by the prophets in heavenly glory and read it. We need to get a glimpse in our spirit of what the heavens look like. We need to have a vision of Jesus describe in heavenly glory.

Lets read Rev 4:1-11 about the throne and Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 10: 1-22 about the glory. The visions of Jesus in Rev ch 1: 9-18 and 19:11-16, Isaiah the prophets visitation in chapter Isa 6:1-8. What about the Ancient of days visions in: Dan 7:9-10, 13-14, 18, 21-22,24-27* Then we have the glorified

Son of man in Dan 10:1-11:1 and 12:8-10, Yahweh and the ten commandments

Exodus 19:16-20, 24-25, ch 20:1-21 and show me your glory in Ex 33:15-19,

ch 34:5-8 and v 29.

Sometimes when we have not seen the unseen, hearing descriptions of other people's experiences and the revelation of God in scripture is a good way to exercise our spiritual senses. Thanks Wesley Campbell for organizing in your book "praying the bible" the verses for when God was seen. I encourage everyone to get a copy.

****REPENTANCE AND OBEDIENCE****

Waters of Baptism There were two things that opened heaven for Jesus we need to practice as a lifestyle. The first was repentance and the second was obedience. When the heavens opened for Jesus after the waters of baptism, which was a baptism of repentance under John's ministry. What kept heaven opened was obedience. The bible says he learned obedience by the things he suffered. We have to make a constant choice to obey God.

- 15) But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes
23) And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron.

Another example as in the English translation. The Lord will make the sky overhead seem like a bronze roof that keeps out the rain, and the ground under your feet will become as hard as iron.

****WORD MEDITATION PRINCIPLE****

2 Peter 1:19

- 19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

One sure way to increase revelation in your life is Meditation. Meditation brings revelation and revelation the manifestation of what's been revealed. In this verse every word that's come from God is to be received as a light that shineth in a dark place, "until". There is a process of becoming revelation.

When we read a scripture it is as a light that shineth in a dark place "until" the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. That is revelation, we meditate, speak out loud, re read and speak out loud over and over the same verse "until" the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

****SERVANT EVANGELISM****

I remember one of the first time's I was a part of an extended revival. I was ministering in a Vineyard church in Albany Oregon. We were experiencing a tremendous outpouring open heaven of healings and miracles for several weeks already. People were traveling from all over the USA and coming from different countries. Hundreds were healed and there were numerous salvations, re-dedications to Christ and water baptisms. We would on some nights baptize 40-50 new souls in an old horse watering trough. It was a tremendous open heaven of God's power, healing and deliverance that continues to be an oasis today.

People have been asking me Todd what do you think contributed to an open heaven in Albany? I believe that is because they had been doing servant evangelism: washing cars, giving out free gas vouchers, free hot dogs to the skateboarders and giving away cokes during the day and cleaning yards for free. They did all that just to show the love of God to their community. That really opened up the heavens because faith brings wonders and power but faith worketh by love, Galatians 5:6 Loving the city and blessing the city in compassion opened the heavens and God gave us an unprecedented miracle outpouring.

PART 3 OF 3

REVELATION AND THE THIRD HEAVEN

In this third part of our teaching on ministering under an open heaven I will talk about different levels of revelation and the third heaven.

Please be sure to share this and part 1 and 2 with your friends.

SUPERNATURAL TIMES

I believe that God wants to open up to His church the reality of the spiritual realm. I also believe He wants to move in His church in a supernatural way. Having said that, what we call the "supernatural" should really be natural and common to believers. In the beginning of the bible to the end it was common for normal men and woman like us to have had supernatural encounters and visitations, many of the Lord himself. Abraham had angels at his house, Jacob had the vision of the ladder set up to heaven and angels of God ascending and descending, Gideon had the angel in the winepress, God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and glory revelations, Elisha and Gehazi saw in the spirit the angels and chariots in the heavens. What about all the experiences of the prophets? The visions of Daniel

and how Ezekiel was taken into visions of God? Peter fell into a trance before going to Cornelius's house, Paul was given a throne in the flesh because of the abundance of visions and revelations, John and all the visions recorded in the book of revelation when he was taken into the spirit on the Lords day. What about the angels and dreams that directed Mary and Joseph? Then we have how Philip, Ezekiel and Elijah were transported in the spirit, old men that dream dreams and young men that see visions. The bible records all kinds of different ways God spoke to his people and not just the prophets. I do believe in the office of the prophet and an obvious difference between a seer prophet, prophet and one who sees in the spirit using their spiritual eyes. I do believe we are all to see, use our spiritual senses and have prophetic experiences and revelation of Jesus. Some would say; well that's because those are the saints that they had all those encounters. Who are the saints today? The bible say's Elijah was a man like us and so was every other man in the bible.

Remember how Paul prays:

Ephesians 1:17

17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

Every spiritual encounter is about intimacy with Jesus. Our motives for a spiritual experience need to be about knowing, experiencing and seeing him.

God can take the spookiness out of our idea of the spirit realm, and spiritual visitations and help us to see how natural it is to communicate out of the heavenly realm. I believe this is where the church is headed.

Joel 2:28-29

28) And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. 29) And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT-REALM

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about Acts 2, or the day of Pentecost? For most of us, it is a group of people assembled together who began to speak in tongues; there was a rushing wind and tongues of fire on their heads. In reality, the experience at Pentecost was not about being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as much as it was about signs, wonders, visions, dreams, and prophetic experiences, an open heaven. God now making an opening, if you will, to communicate the deep things of His Spirit and the mind of Christ through the Holy Ghost.

When God pours out His Spirit many things can and have happened. At times in biblical days people would begin to prophesy for days, as well as have visions and dreams. That is not to say that speaking in tongues cannot happen as a result of the Holy Spirit coming upon a person. It is to say that speaking in tongues is not the only evidence or result of the Holy Spirit being poured out. The reason why we do not see these things more present in the church today, at least on the level that we should, is because we have a hard time believing that God allows people to have encounters with angels or to see angels or demons. When someone has a prophetic experience, visitation, trance or is translated in the spirit, taken into heaven or talks about hearing the audible voice of God. We relate these experiences to witchcraft, new age, astro-travel, physics and the occult because we are afraid of being deceived. Sometimes we believe in the devil's ability to deceive us more than the ability of God to protect us. That is not to say that we are not to use wisdom, but that in every counterfeit that the devil has there is a genuine experience in God. All of the while, we are missing out on what is available to us if we just ask and trust that God will not let us be deceived when in right relationship with him and his word as a basis for all experience. God is supernatural and He has always communicated with His people supernaturally.

****TWO WORLDS****

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1). God made man of both worlds.

Corinthians 4:16-18

16) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

God took the dust of the earth a natural element and breathed into us the breath of life, a spiritual element, thus creating a living being – a spirit/natural being.

Genesis 1:26, 2:7

26) And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:

7) And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

We were created with five natural and five spiritual senses including touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing. In the same way that I am familiar with these five senses in the natural, why not in the spirit? Can we touch, taste, sight, smell and hear heavenly things now? According to Eph 1:18 God has created us with spiritual

eyes called understanding. The bible also says I am a citizen of heaven now. In (Eph 2:6) He has hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: Why not enjoy that world now by the spirit. When we die we are immediately carried into the presence of the Lord and we will see as heaven is. The bible says the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus said; it is within you. We also have a new and living way to come boldly before the throne of grace.

Heb 9:12

12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Heb 4:16

16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

What does the throne look like had I been using my eyes in the spirit? Read Rev 4 1-11. Why can't we expect and ask for God to show us "as it is in heaven" now? ASK FOR IT!!!

2 Kings 6:14-17

14) Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

15) And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

16) So he answered "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

17) And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

I believe it is time for us to pray like this; that we may see beyond that which we can see in our natural world. Imagine how normal it was for Elisha to see in the spirit realm and for him to pray that Gehazi his servant would see that those that were for them were more than those against them. Many times the heavenly vision is right before our eyes but as was in the case of Gehazi we don't see or many of us don't believe we can. This was a practical, natural circumstance that Elisha was in and trusted in the unseen realms view of natural circumstances more. We should tune our senses to touch, taste, see, hear and smell what the reality of the heavenly realm is, so that we can call forth things that are not as though they were. If we can touch heaven, we can change earth. Everything that happens in the natural realm is connected to that which is in heaven. That is why Paul said that we wrestle against demonic powers, principalities, and spiritual hosts of wickedness, and not against flesh and blood. In terms of intercession, we are only taking shots in the dark if we are not able to discern or see what spirit we are

warring against. We need to say more than ever as a church, "God, enlighten the eyes of my understanding, open my eyes, give me ears to hear, give me discernment!" I want it to be just as easy for me to communicate supernaturally as it is to breathe.

VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE LORD

2 Corinthians 12:1

1) It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

When Paul talks about visions and revelations of the Lord he makes it clear there are visions and revelations in the plural sense. There are many different kinds of visions and ways God reveals himself. Look at this verse:

Hebrews 1:1

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.

Paul also makes it clear that for him it wasn't just a once and awhile experience but an abundance of revelations.

2 Corinthians 12:7

7) And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations,

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF REVELATION

I want to share with you some of the ways God reveals himself and some different experiences I have had in the prophetic. One of the first experiences I ever had with revelation was through the scent sense.

Smells: We should be aware of what we smell. Sometimes He wants to minister His presence on His people's lives and we can smell the fragrant touch. At times I have smelled cinnamon, vanilla, roses and even oil, such as oil that one would use to polish boots. One of the first times I discerned an evil spirit was with my scent sense. I just got saved but a few weeks and had led the town drunk to Jesus who had been sober for three days. After getting him cleaned up and in the bible. I was at a friend's home and this once town drunk for over 25 years named Pat was there. I began to smell a disgusting aroma like a swamp or marsh. I thought something like oh the sewer line must of broke until the Lord spoke to rebuke the spirit of death. In that moment my eyes were also opened in the spirit and I saw Pat's face become the face of a skeleton and his face again. The man sadly did die three days later but to be with the Lord.

Visions: In the bible there are many different kinds of visions, here a few examples.

Open visions: Open visions are like watching a scene open as if it is happening right before your eyes it can be divine, you literally see it or it can be eyes open and you see it in the spirit.

Closed visions: Closed visions are like pictures or moving pictures that you have on the inside of you eyes open or closed. I see it in the spirit.

Pictorial visions: A picture flashes in your spirit or mind, like a still photo.

Panoramic visions: A movie screen type vision where the pictures are moving.

We also have Dreams in the vision realm and trances.

Sometimes the pictures in a vision will come, as colors, signs, symbols or numbers and this must be interpreted. This usually happens more in the dream realm.

Trances: I would describe a trance as a dream like state but you are still awake. I remember one time I was in prayer and immediately I was in a vision that was like a dream. Have you ever woke up from a dream and it was like it really happened? Or its just so vivid and impacting it just stays with you? This is also one key on how we can know if a dream is from the Lord. I found all my senses working. A woman violently grabbed and shook me three times and repeated the boy will come out of the coma, headlines read boy comes out of the coma. Then I was in prayer again still sitting up and I knew I never even laid down to sleep. I though hours had passed but it was but minutes. This happens to me often when individuals at times before meetings come to me in the hotel and tell me about their case or another person attending the service in the evening. When in this vision state it is more than as if I am watching a movie picture or something alive like TV. All my senses still work.

Acts 10:9-16

9) Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

10) And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11) And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12) Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13) And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14) But Peter said, not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15) And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Acts 22:17-21

17) And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18) And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19) And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

Angelic Visitations: We know in scripture that angels are referred to as ministering spirits and messengers. Through out the bible we see numerous directions given, messages and intervention by angels. Why not today?

Visitations Of the Lord: This is simply when Jesus visits his servants as when Moses and Elijah visited Jesus on the mountain. I know that the Lord comes to his people today. Yes if he came to the disciples for 40 days and 40 nights after his death and resurrection. He can make selected visits now and has.

Translations and transportations: I want to make a difference here between translations and transportations. Translations are when the spirit is when one goes in spirit but transportations are when the body, soul and spirit go.

Acts 8:39

39) And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

We also have Elijah the prophet in 2 Kings 2 and an example of Enoch be transported right into heaven. For Enoch walked with God and he was not.

Out of the body Experience:

Ezekiel 3:12-14

12) Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.

13) I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

14) So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Ezekiel 8:3

3) And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the

visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north;

When Paul describes in 2 Cor 12:2 his experience in the third heaven, we will look at this more in detail later. He describes the experience and that he does not know whether he is in the body or not. This may have been an out of the body experience.

Impressions in the body: This is another way that God speaks. Sometimes I will feel pain in a certain part of my body and I will know that God wants to touch someone in that area. A word of knowledge then results from that impression. Then there also is here in impressions the knowing realm where we just know things especially the witness in your spirit. Some may call it ESP or dejavu but is better called the gut instinct or check in your spirit. This realm works strong in the sense or feeling realm. Sometimes we have to discern our own pain and our own burdens or burdens of intercession.

Audibly Voice: The audible voice of God can come in two ways. One will be the outer and the other inner. In hearing the audible voice of God outside will be as you hear with your natural ear. It will carry tremendous power. The inner audible voice of God is so loud inside of you your spirit that it was as if He spoke like you and I speak out loud and your whole man trembles. It is like a well within you explodes every atom in your being.

God thoughts: Another way that God speaks is in your thoughts or mind. Discerning a thought from God and yours can be difficult but let me share with you a couple keys. One usually when we say WoW I think I just heard God and we say is this me or God? Most often it will be the Lord. Second when a thought from God comes it is usually abstract, out of nowhere and different from your train of thinking at that moment. You may be thinking about one thing and pops in another. God likes to pop in things. He might even bring a scripture to your mind.

Flashbacks: Sometimes we will have known a person in the past who was under a certain bondage to sickness or in a certain situation. God will show us that persons face again or we will remember ministering in a certain place and what the Lords word was then. While we are ministering to someone else or in another place at a later date. God will give us a flashback in our memory of that situation and it's like God is saying, "this is what you need to do" or say in this situation. By reminding us of another time we faced or overcame in a situation we receive direction and wisdom for the present. For example you may have need of a key word from God in breaking a demonic power. Just then you remember how God used you years previous and what you said to cast out that demon. You speak it again and follow that Lords direction and plan according to the last time and it works again. God speaks quite often through our past failures and victories.

THE THIRD HEAVEN

2 Corinthians 12:1-4

- 1) It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.
- 2) I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.
- 3) And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)
- 4) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words.

According to this verse the third heaven is Paradise. This is the immediate presence of God. Remember what Jesus said to the thief on the cross? Today you will be with me in paradise. This is the only reference in the bible that actually talks about the term third heaven. Though we can see many different examples of the same thing.

Revelation 4:1-2

- 1) After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.
- 2) And immediately I was in the spirit:

Isaiah 6:1-4

- 1) In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.
- 2) Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.
- 3) And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"
- 4) And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

Genesis 28:10-12 This is an invitation into the spirit parallel with Rev 4 1-11. 10) And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

- 11) And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.
- 12) And he dreamed, and beholds a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

We can also only assume that is there is a third heaven, and then there must be a first and second heaven. In Gen 1:1 the bible declares: In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth. Heavens is plural, more than one heaven. The

bible also says Jesus ascended to the highest heights of heaven. I would describe the first heaven as the natural realm. The second heaven is the realm where angelic and demonic activity takes place and is recorded in Eph 6. The third heaven is the realm where God dwells, the immediate presence of God or paradise. The third heaven is one of if not the highest level of revelation and prophetic experience. When we are taken into this place it is more than a vision where I know I was still in my home or church while I had it. When taken into the spirit or caught up, you know you are in another place and it is so real that when you are aware of your natural surroundings again. You find yourself like Paul "Whether or not I was in my Body or not I do not know". He said that twice in a few verses. You will ask yourself did I really go? Or was it in the mind and its impact will never fade. I was taken into the spirit several times and quite I will feel my body be sucked up like a vacuum. I will immediately shake and feel myself hurled through space and time. I have even seen and felt myself leave the earth, travel through the stars and flash of bright light and I am somewhere. Did my physical body go? Never that I know but when I find myself aware of where I was before I went I know I was in another place. All my emotions are heighten and involved in a caught up experience and most times I feel my self go.

Commune:Unity by Captain Stephen Court

commune v.i. to talk together intimately

commune n. a small group of persons living together and sharing

unity n. oneness; concord, harmony, agreement

community n. a group of people associated by common status, pursuits, character

Most of us will agree intellectually that community is important. Most of us will admit to a deep driving motivation to achieve some sense of belonging, whether through being picked in childhood games, joining the chess club, or signing up as soldiers in The Salvation Army.

I am convinced that God tucked a little desire in our DNA called 'belong'. We've aimed at it ever since.

We're looking for community.

We live in a time when most of us don't even know our neighbours. And we're looking to belong.

You'd think that our salvation and the birth into God's family that is concomitant with it should solve forever this conundrum. We belong! We're part of the family of God!

You'd think that'd be enough. But the reality is much less than advertised. It consists, often, of showing up on Sunday morning, making an appearance at band practice or Home League, and maybe being involved in a study group of some kind.

There's more to it than that. But since we can't find it, we rationalize that maybe God doesn't offer it to and expect it from everyone today, or that maybe it is the fault of our system, or that maybe this is all there really is until we reach heaven, or that other legitimate demands on our time like family and employment preclude it.

We settle. We settle for little worlds with a few friends. We settle with leaving everyone else as merely machines (those who help or serve us in our daily endeavours) or landscape (the extras in the movie of our lives). We treat people like programmes. We think a night of fellowship is sitting in the dark beside a friend and staring at a huge screen. We settle for spectator Christianity, showing up on a Sunday to listen, with a crowd of veritable strangers, to someone we hardly know. We settle for bald-spot Christianity, facing in the same direction with that crowd, focused on the bald spot in front of us. We settle for the culture's imperative of

independence (in the West, this is drummed into us from pre-school). We settle for the Church's reliance on programme. We settle.

Friends, this is not Christian community.

Look at those definitions at the top. The elusive authentic Christian community consists of these things: a small group of persons living together and sharing; talking together intimately; enjoying a oneness- a concord, harmony, agreement; being associated by common pursuits and common character.

This is authentic Christian community. Doesn't it sound absolutely magnetic? Doesn't it sound complete fantasy?

I'm convinced that it is not the latter, and we're finding that it is pretty much the former.

We're aiming at it in our current appointment. God has gathered a dozen or so leaders to join us in this pursuit. As we seek authentic cell-based Christian community, others are drawn by the attraction of caring and belonging. It is really as John pointed out in 1 John 1:3: "We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (Message)." Without communion with God there IS no fellowship.

There are costs. The costs are all measured in physics: space, time, and shape: Space- Our quarters resembles, somewhat, Grand Central Station. There is sometimes free-flow traffic into a place that we prayed would be a comfortable, safe place in the broken heart of the city. So it is working.

Time- When you get into people's lives then they have a claim on your time (not a comprehensive claim- there is a line there somewhere, although it is pretty tough to discern sometimes).

Shape- Just as with the 33AD Salvos in Acts 2, there is a lot of eating happening in authentic Christian community, and that definitely affects your shape!

We've been fairly ruthless in cutting other things from our agendas. We're all about establishing this authentic Christian community where we live. So we don't run programmes. We don't get tied into other responsibilities (as able). We just make friends and develop cells. It sounds fairly slacking, but it is hard.

How does it look for a normal family? For those involved with us it means a good balancing act with the schedule that allows for significant family time around employment. But the regular week is punctuated by times with friends, time in cell, meals together, running errands together, praying together. It is a different kind of life, one reminiscent of Acts 2. This is not a call to work harder or sign up for more programmes. This is a challenge to intentionally develop commune:unity.

Here are a few keys for us:

a. Impact Through Contact: we're finding that it is hard to impact people when you are not in contact with them. Rarely do Machine people and Landscape people start transformative relationships with Jesus through us.

b. The Word Became Flesh And Blood, And Moved Into The Neighbourhood (John 1:14 Message): As Jonathan Evans, one of our leaders, says, "Jesus could have gone home every night." As good as the excursion/incursion ministries are (in and out), there is a cynical attitude toward them. So we live there.

c. The Fellowship Is In The Fight: This is not some bloated, inward-looking, self-satisfied, self-help, feel-good club. Our mission is to win the world for Jesus. And as people slide into relationship with us, and catch the vision and the burden, and as they load up and start firing away at the enemy with us, we experience fellowship.

We're looking forward to God accomplishing His purposes through the hearts committed to this system. I think that it will work where you live, too.

Rescue Operation Frees Kidnapped Aid Worker in Chechnya

Europe - VOA News - 10 Jan 2003, 00:11 UTC

Officials from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) say an aid worker kidnapped in the breakaway republic of Chechnya last July has been freed during a special rescue operation.

The officials say that Nina Davydovich, head of the Russian non-governmental organization Druzhba, a charity working with the U.N. Children's Fund, was held in harsh conditions while her captors demanded a \$1-million ransom. The Interfax news agency says Ms Davydovich told reporters at a news conference in Pyatigorsk in the Stavropol region Thursday, that she was kept chained in a pit and only fed once a day. No details were immediately available on the operation to secure Ms. Davydovich's release. The United Nations suspended humanitarian aid operations in Chechnya after Ms. Davydovich's abduction on July 23.