

**JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE
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Editorial Introduction

Major Willis Howell and Cadet Aaron Abram

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

This issue of JAC may look and read a little differently to you than past issues. Why? In a JAC first, Issue 61 features writers from the USA Southern Territory.

As you will notice, the topics covered span a wide range of current discussions across the Salvosphere. And as you look over the names of the various authors, we think you will enjoy the blend of several familiar names mixed in with some exciting new contributors who add their thoughts and voices to the ongoing Army dialogue.

Regular readers of the JAC will know that current thoughts on *Salvationism* are frequently presented in the Journal. Various aspects of this topic put forward in this issue by Major Willis Howell, Captain Kelly Goldfarb, Captain Marion Platt and Kelly Pope. Lieutenant Jimmy Taylor wonders about the balance between “Blood,” and “Fire.”

Do your interests include expressions of *incarnational ministry*, or the *prophetic role* of the Army? Captain Sandra Pobjie-Pawar gives us an unvarnished view of ministry from her inner-city, frontline vantage point, while Captain Anthony Juliana speaks to the importance of the Army’s prophetic voice in today’s world. Cadet Andrea Hoover shares her thoughts on *Women in Leadership*, and Cadet Michal Chapman offers an interesting perspective on *dependence*.

Captain Jonathan Gainey, Captain Melanie Falin, and Jason Pope put *missions* and *evangelism* in the spotlight, Cadet Aaron Abram debates *status-quo vs. adaptation in Salvation Army programs*, Gabriella Broome gives a timely reminder of our responsibility to *pass on a deep faith to the next generation* and Sergeant Cory Harrison shines an interestingly different light on *tithing*.

Let me offer my thanks to Captain Stephen Court for taking us up on our idea of an entire issue of the JAC coming from one territory. Wouldn't it be something if the idea caught on?! And an extra special word of appreciation also goes to Cadet Aaron Abram for his excellent work in tending to the details and layout that have brought this project through to completion. You have a fine mind and a passionate heart, Aaron. Continue to use them both in service to God to communicate life-changing truth in a compelling way.

Read, enjoy, and be encouraged. And may God fan the flame of Salvationist mission as you continue to fight on your front!

Hallelujah!

Willis

“Rekindling the Passion”

1st Generation, Blood and Fire Salvationist, Captain Marion Platt is the Corps Officer of The South Atlanta Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center.

In the early days of The Salvation Army, all of the flammable elements were present in one place. There existed in the East End of London the tinder of human suffering and brokenness; in every bar, factory, and on every street corner, cords of combustible humanity lay exposed and captive to the power of sin. Nevertheless, the rich wind of God had already begun to fill the streets, preparing the atmosphere for revival. And in the heart of William Booth, passion and vision began to strike and scrape against one another like flint and steel, producing a spark which eventually ignited the desperately dry kindling of humanity, and was blown into a flame which spread around the world in just a few years.

The Salvation Army came into being in an era when the urban church was, for the most part, neglecting its missionary calling¹. The Victorian church establishment of that day had become an exclusive group of respectable church-goers, unconcerned (at least in practice) with seeking the lost, or welcoming them into their communities of faith. Church congregations in that day were largely unprepared or *unwilling* to accept “riff-raff, derelicts, prostitutes, and other undesirables” into their fellowship. Sunday worship was for the *respectable* in society, and those who were disconnected and disenfranchised were rarely welcomed into church rituals and membership.

William Booth set out to remedy this situation by inviting those who were shoo-ed from the church, to give their lives to Christ and become “soldiers” in his movement. Fueled by a passion to make disciples of men, women, and children, Booth’s soldiers intentionally “invaded” neighborhoods where social evils were prominent, built relationships with the population, and engaged injustice on its own turf. The early Army was committed to Kingdom growth; not only did this “unchurchly church” gather for worship, but the soldiers of the early Army deployed into the streets of their communities to thrust the Gospel message upon humanity, and to put compassion into action in practical ways. William Booth was once quoted as saying, “What is the use of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad, desperate struggle to keep themselves alive?” Thus the early Army’s

pragmatic approach to presenting the Gospel, and its desire to provide basic human needs to the impoverished, led to the establishment of many charitable ministries, to include soup kitchens, shelters, schools, and children's homes.

In American culture, the church of today may be guilty of many of the same sins of the 19th century church, and even now, struggles with a poor reputation. Congregations have fled impoverished, inner-city communities in favor of wealthy, tidy suburbs, or "walled themselves in" to their church buildings. Here's a question to consider: what would inner-city communities be like today, if we had stayed the course? Would we appear to be "insignificant, out-of-touch, and irrelevant", as we are accused of being today? The Western Church in this age appears, to the outside observer, to be preoccupied with organizational prosperity and slick marketing and media, and not overly concerned with the salvation of men, women, and children.

In many communities, Army corps congregations have succumbed to this kind of neglect, yet gravitate toward a preoccupation with Sunday Worship attendance and statistics, leading exhausted officers to embrace an "any and all means necessary" approach to get people behind the doors of the church on a Sunday morning, and their appointments on the "Top Ten" report. According to Reggie McNeal, author of *The Present Future*, "You can build the perfect church—and they still won't come."

Is Sunday Church attendance the litmus for success? It definitely was not for the early Church, or for the early Army; it's probably not a good success indicator for today's Army, either. I would say that the *early* Army's success was due in part to their reluctance to *confine their worship and witness* to a particular time and place. A study of history seems to suggest that early success was based on how many soldiers, moved by compassion and a Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19), got *outside* the church building, and into the streets and homes of the people of their community. Catherine Booth, in her lectures on *Practical Religion*, spoke of Jesus' Kingdom-building strategy this way: "He chose men from amongst the people to be workers together with Himself, and sent them out into the byways and hedges, the fields, the marketplace, the seashore, and the hillside; in short, He sent them wherever the people were to be got at. Oh! if the Church had steadily adhered to the tactics of our Lord, who can tell whether the kingdoms of this world would not long since have been subjected to His sway?"

Jesus came preaching a gospel of reclamation. In the first chapter of Acts, He reiterated His intention to send the church beyond their known world, saying to His followers, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."² The early church was successful as they were *empowered* by the Holy Spirit, and sent out into the world around them. In the same lecture, Catherine Booth challenged soldiers to "become all things to [the people] in order to win them. If they will not come inside our consecrated buildings, we must get at them in unconsecrated ones."

Our movement wasn't called into being just to *imitate an ineffective church model*; it seems that the Lord raised up The Salvation Army as a *remedy to that*. Nevertheless, "We have stood to our stereotyped forms, refusing to come down from the routine of our forefathers, although this routine has ceased to be attractive to the people, and may, in many instances, be the very thing that drives them away."³ In this age of fancy Army facilities, slick church-growth campaigns, and "40 days of This, That, or the Other Thing", I wonder if the present-day Army is neglecting its rich heritage of soul-reclamation and Kingdom-building.

Human suffering, Godlessness, and all manner of social evils are normative in communities surrounding Salvation Army worship halls; there's a high probability that all of the combustive elements which were present in the East End of London in the mid-1800's, are present in Army communities today. Fortunately, the richness of God's grace and mercy is there, too. The present day Army's challenge is to allow the Holy Spirit to rekindle the passion in our hearts (He's the only one who can do it), to rediscover the vision of the early Army (through courageous and thoughtful dialogue), to get ourselves and our comrades into the community, and to fan those 144 year old sparks and embers back into flame.

¹ Needham, Phil. *Community In Mission: A Salvationist Ecclesiology*. (The Campfield Press, 1987) 4.

² Peterson, Eugene. *The Message Bible*. (Navpress, 2003) Acts 1:8.

³ Booth, Catherine. *Lecture. Practical Religion: Aggression*. 101, Queen Victoria St. London. 1879

The Problem With Cave-Dwelling Prophets

Captain Anthony Juliana, Director of Personnel at The Evangeline Booth College, School for Officer Training in Atlanta, GA, considers the prophetic role of the Army today.

You know the picture; clothing made from burlap, a neglected, shaggy beard, sandals tied together with old string, and a piece of cardboard handwritten with the words, "The End Is Near!" This is how we imagine modern day prophets. While nothing could be further from the Biblical picture of ancient prophets, we are hard pressed to erase that image from our minds when we hear about modern day prophets. We think of people who stand in the town square calling down damnation and predicting an apocalyptic future that is closer than any of us realize. To even suggest the thought that prophets could, or worse yet, should exist in The Salvation Army today, sends our minds reeling. "Surely, that is not the role of soldiers and officers of The Salvation Army today. Is it?"

The hurdle we are facing is one of Biblical perspective. The Old Testament concept of a prophet was not one who predicted the future, as much as it was one who spoke on behalf of Yahweh. The Hebrew word "nabi," which we translate into English as "prophet," paints a significant word picture. It means "the mouth." A prophet of God is literally a person who serves as "the mouth of God." This has the potential to change our image of modern day prophets. Foundationally, it places those who stand before a group of people; whether on Sunday morning in a chapel or hall or whether on a Sunday afternoon around the bass drum in the city park and proclaim, "this is what God says..." into very real prophetic ministry.

Where Have All The Prophets Gone?

This is not a new question. It has been asked before, but apparently it still begs an answer. In the Old Testament book of First Kings we find the story of a prophet who proclaims a message of drought. Elijah pronounces a drought that will last until he says it is finished. King Ahab has enough sense not to kill the prophet right there on the spot, as to not quiet the very voice that could bring back the rain, should Baal fail. Elijah goes camping in the wilderness. But, the queen goes on a killing spree. Every prophet of Yahweh she can find is put to death. A trusted servant in the palace who is also a God-fearing man,

Obadiah, hides 100 prophets of Yahweh in two caves. And that is where they are when Elijah meets up with Obadiah and announces his return, as well as the return of rain. The end of a three year drought! Wouldn't people be excited to hear the news?

We know the story from Sunday school. Elijah calls the prophets of Baal and the people of Israel atop of Mount Carmel. He prepares two sacrifices. One for Yahweh and one for Baal. There are some 850 prophets of false gods on this mountain top, and Elijah asks the people a very provocative question, "How long will you waver before two opinions?" He demands a choice to be made, either for Yahweh or for Baal. Then, the punch line; Elijah announces, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left." Wait a minute! Where have all the prophets gone? Where are the 100 cave hiding prophets? Why have they not come atop of Carmel to support Elijah or to see the fire of God fall from heaven?

The basic problem with cave dwelling prophets is that they are safe inside of the cave. They hear no strong message of God to proclaim as His mouthpiece. No one can kill them if they can't find them. Better to be a live quiet prophet than to be a dead one. Because, let's face it; no one likes a prophet who speaks a message from God that we don't want to hear.

We could stop reading the story there and make the connection with ourselves. But, something amazing happens with Elijah after the fire falls, after he kills 850 prophets of Baal, after he prays and it rains, ending a three year drought. He runs and hides in a cave himself! When God confronts him there with His still, small voice, Elijah is broken by the fact that he is the only prophet of the Lord left in the nation. Where had they all gone? It wasn't that God had not called any more after the slaughter of many of them. God's voice would not be silenced by Jezebel. The "mouths of God" had been hidden away, afraid to speak the "words of God," any more.

The Prophetic Message

The basic prophetic message of the past remains the same today. God is going to visit His people. If they are living in covenant with Him, they will see His grace and His blessing. If they are not living in covenant with Him, they can expect to see exile, destruction and even death. Because sin can not stand in the

presence of a Holy God, when He visits, sin is exposed and annihilated. Hang on to that sin when God visits and the fate of sin will become your fate as well.

The message does not end there. While judgment may befall those who have aligned themselves with false gods, justice will be served, and compassion will be offered freely. The prophetic message of the Old Testament prophets was directed towards a people who were living under a system of oppression. When the people of God found themselves living under oppressive systems, God would raise up prophets who would speak the end of that oppressive system as well as the return of justice, compassion and hope.

The dominant system in our Western society today can be described as technological, therapeutic, militant, consumerism. This is a system that promises those who live under it both happiness and safety, but its underlying deception is that of oppression. Freedom from this lifestyle demands the disengagement from the prominent social system. It is the task of today's prophetic messenger to proclaim an alternate message; one that both decries the current social bend toward this militant consumerism and one that offers a redemptive alternative to life as people currently live it.

While it is easy to associate oppression with a certain political system that may come across as oppressive, the modern prophetic message takes on depth as it addresses economic oppression, social oppression and even religious oppression evident in our world today. And, it is into to those very systems that God is calling Salvationists to be "the mouth of God." No longer can the prophets of God hide in their caves while political systems invade the well-being of humanity. No longer can the prophets of God hide in their caves while economic systems bind people into a spirit of poverty. No longer can the prophets of God hide in their caves while social systems make sin a sanctioned life style. No longer can the prophets of God hide in their caves while the religious systems and their churches hold people back from serving the one true God with all their heart, all their mind and all their strength. No longer can the prophets of God hide in their caves while He sends the fire! We pray for it. We sing for it. So why do we hide from it?

Justice, Compassion and Eternal Hope

Ours is a message of hope to the oppressed and a message of grief to the oppressor. For people entrapped in oppressive hopelessness, hope takes on special meaning. People who have been truly hopeless understand hope more deeply. People who have experienced injustice, understand justice more deeply. People who have been friendless and unlovely understand compassion more deeply. It is to those “people of God” that The Salvation Army has been raised to speak prophetically.

No longer can the church of Jesus Christ hide in our caves, broken over how few we are in number. Or how our message seems to be ridiculed. Or how our religious liberties are challenged and even taken away from us. It is time to hear the still, small voice of God – spoken from outside of the cave – and to be “the mouth of God” that speaks clearly and even loudly into the hearts of the people of God.

Our modern prophetic message is that when God visits injustice; justice will rain down. When God visits oppressive, self-centered, pride; divine compassion will overcome. When God visits hopelessness; His divine plan for hope and a future will ignite the fire of God within the people of God and they will live in everlasting hope.

Life Outside of the Cave

In order for the people of God to live in the freedom of God, the prophets of God have to come out of the cave.

The prophetic voice of The Salvation Army is needed among those who cannot imagine themselves living a life free from the political, economic, social or religious oppression they experience each day. That voice can not stay silent to such injustice. That voice must be heard outside of the cave. The cave is safe. But not everyone can hide in the cave. Others have to live their life under the oppression from which they cannot escape. In order to be free, they need to hear the prophetic voice speaking justice, compassion and hope. They need to hear the prophetic voice telling them they can be free. Life outside of the cave is not safe, but it is liberating.

There is freedom outside of the cave; freedom to speak the words of God, despite the cost of doing so. It is that freedom that will energize the people of God to believe and trust and imagine life anew. Life outside of the cave is where God has called us to speak. The problem with cave dwelling prophets is that no one hears their message from the cave. That is, after all, the purpose of the cave; to not be seen or heard or found out.

Not so with the prophetic voice of The Salvation Army. It is the “mouth of God” speaking justice, compassion and hope to those who live under the oppression of injustice, rejection and hopelessness. That is our covenant, and we will choose to live and speak outside of the cave. We will be found atop of Mount Carmel asking God to send the fire and praying for the life saving rain of the Holy Spirit to quench the drought of injustice, rejection and hopelessness.

“Reaching the Worlds”

Captain Jonathan Gainey, host of “The Flock’s Diner” website discusses how we reach out to those we are trying to win to Christ.

Reaching the world for Christ is a task for which many Christians long. For those of you who take this task seriously, realizing that it means much more than knocking on neighborhood doors and asking, “Do you know Jesus?”, you are aware of the importance of communication.

It’s fairly obvious that a Christian who wants to share the Gospel in a foreign land must know the language of that foreign land. And you also know that sharing the gospel in the vernacular is the only way to effectively seed the gospel in a foreign country. Unless a people are able to receive and teach the Bible in their own tongue, Christianity is doomed to disappear. Even those evangelized by the great Augustine of Hippo no longer exist as a body of Christ, due to the fact that the North African’s to whom Augustine taught the gospel were expected to receive the Gospel in Latin and worship as Westerners. It only required the Christians there to be persecuted before they quickly gave up their “Western” religion.

Ralph D. Winter, General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship, spent many years as a missionary in foreign lands, and he has brought to the attention of his readers in his article, “The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins”, that language and oceans are not the only barriers that must be crossed. It is just as important to understand the boundaries of social differences within our own communities.

Interestingly, many congregations want to reach every person in their neighborhood, but they only have one songbook and one form of worship. I am not an advocate of blended worship, as this would be like trying to develop a congregation where Japanese and Hispanics worship together. As Winter says, “Some go as far as granting separate language congregations, but hesitate when the differences between people are social and non-linguistic.”

The next time you wonder, “Where are all the twenty-somethings?”, consider the culture of your congregation. The generational arrogance of the young and the old often separates us by assuming that we should be able to easily accept one another’s culture in worship. But is this reality? Even Paul argued over whether the Greeks must live like the Jews (see Acts 15). This is often read as if it means

that Jews are not to live like Jews any longer either. However, this is a misunderstanding of the text. The Jews were free to continue following the Jewish commandments, but they were not to force non-Jewish Christians to do the same. And even with their cultural differences of Christian worship and practice, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. "I personally have come to believe that unity does not have to require uniformity, and I believe that there must be such a thing as healthy diversity in human society and in the Christian world Church" (Winter).

As Dr. Steve Strauss, Missions Professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC, pointed out, there is a group of Christians, north of Mecca, who were previously Muslims. Although they now worship the One True God, confess that Jesus is the only begotten son of God, read, study, and teach the Bible, they continue to pray five times a day and worship on Friday, the Muslim holy day. These practices are so embedded within their culture that to tell them to do otherwise would destroy the opportunity to see them continue in their Christian faith.

Although it would not be ideal to say that people of different generations, ethnic groups, and financial status cannot worship together, it would be just as wrong to suggest that they cannot congregate and worship with those of similar social norms. To worship in a context that is familiar, throughout history, has been the one overarching recipe for the survival of Christianity among people groups in any culture or nation.

Forcing earlier generational worship styles, music, and even times upon newer generations is just as ineffective a form of evangelism as asking non-English speaking citizens to worship in America's mostly Anglo, middle-class congregations.

There is one territory of The Salvation Army where every divisional youth leader has been told that, at every Divisional Youth Councils, only songs from the official Salvation Army songbook are to be used in worship. This is a case of confusing nostalgia for legitimacy. In this case, the older generation (younger generations also commit the sin of generational arrogance) has placed such a high value on the preservation of their historical forms that they don't recognize the underlying message of their generational arrogance—We are not as interested in *your worship* as we are in your preservation of *our expression* of Salvationism.

If we are going to reach the world, we must recognize that there are many worlds within our own communities, not just across the oceans and national borders.

And here is the irony: although single-culture congregations are more successful in growing and longevity than those which are more multicultural, it is the homogenization of cultures into worship which is the goal of Christ's desire for the unity of his bride.

Small group ministries are often very effective in serving both of these purposes—giving the freedom of cultural expression to small groups and then having all of those individual expressions come together for weekly worship. This is somewhat accomplished through Salvation Army music, Sunday school, and program groups, and there are still many other options which may be more suitable for others who are unable to be a part of corps programs, and are available for worship. Even our programmatic ministry is an expression of a particular culture, which leaves room for the non-programmatically minded, postmodern cultures that are so often left out by such ministries.

“I see the world Church as a gathering together of a great symphony orchestra where we don’t make every new person coming in play a violin in order to fit in with the rest. We invite the people to come in to play the same score—the Word of God—but to play their own instruments, and in this way there will issue forth a heavenly sound that will grow in the splendor and glory of God as each new instrument is added” (Winter).

Stories From The Hood –

Tales of Heartbreak, Testimonies of Grace!

Captain Sandra Pobjie-Pawar is the Corps Officer of the Charlotte 614 Corps in North Carolina. Here, she offers snapshots of her ministry on the frontlines.

I have to be honest with you right from the start, I am not an intellectual, I don't like to use big or fancy words, I am not very interested in theological debates and I don't have any original or new ministry ideas to bring to the table. I apologize if that is what you are looking for. The only thing I have to offer you is my heart for people and my experience doing ministry at Charlotte 614, an inner city community house, a ministry that I love dearly.

My experiences in this community have forever changed my life and the way I will do ministry in the future. 'Stories from the Hood' shares the experiences my husband and I have had in the JT Williams community of Charlotte North Carolina, both tales of heartbreak and testimonies of grace. As you read these tales, may you see the hand of God at work and may you be encouraged in your own ministries, knowing that God is a loving and graceful God and that he is present and working in lives even when we don't see any fruit from our labor, or we are ready to quit and the road seems far too long. God is present right where you are and he is turning tales of heartbreak into testimonies of Grace

DECEMBER 9, 2008

"I have been walking around this neighborhood for the last few weeks, praying for families, visiting families and as I walk these streets and visit these families, I have felt such darkness and despair. Behind those front doors I encounter families and individuals who are so lost, trapped in lifestyles that are destroying them and the ones they love. I have never felt such darkness in one place before, but instead of causing me to be fearful, instead of causing me to back away I have become more determined than ever to love this community and more determined to pray, visit and love each and every person within it.

The thing is I know I cannot do it by myself. I learned very early on in this ministry that without God by my side my ministry here would be without any power and would be of no consequence. This community is in the middle of a spiritual battle and in order for the Lord to have the victory I need to walk these streets armed with his words in my heart and soul. So instead of feeling fear, I feel privileged to be able to fight on behalf of my new friends in this community that are surrounded by the enemy. I am ready to go to battle for them and to claim them for the kingdom of God”

DECEMBER 21, 2008

“It has been a great week in the 614 community. Everyday it seems we have a new story to tell and a new person to introduce to The Salvation Army, and it is always totally random events that create these introductions. I have learned that even though they seem random to us, they are actually divine appointments set up by God.

One example of this is the little puppy that lives in the community. It is a golden lab mixed and she is beautiful. We call her India. India was kicked out of her house one afternoon and I happened to be there when it happened. I went straight up to her and played with her. I decided that I needed to take her to the community house, so I knocked on the door and asked the owners if I could take her with me. The owners obliged, but that one seemingly random encounter gave us the opportunity to meet new people. Over the last week we have been able to have many conversations with this family and we now have some new members to add to our community family.

This week we have met new friends, given out food, held a community baby shower, given out Angel tree gifts, held after school programs, cell groups, helped someone put up a Christmas tree, loved on a little puppy and visited families in despair. This is what ministry is all about, being there when people need you most.

Sometimes I know that this ministry is hard, constantly being surrounded by hurting and struggling people, but even though we are confronted with some challenges in this appointment, it is weeks like this where I see the hand of God at work that helps me keep going. I cannot help but praise God for putting us here, I feel like everyday is filled with opportunities to minister, to bless and just love the people that God has placed before us. I love that I get to see “my people” everyday. I love it and I thank God for this blessing!”

JANUARY 22, 2009

“614 Charlotte started Junior Soldiers tonight and we had 12 kids, which was wonderful! I am excited that these kids get to be part of The Salvation Army in this way. It makes them feel like they are part of a special club.

I love that at 614 we have the opportunity to be creative in our ministry and that we are not bound by regular Salvation Army Church activities (although they are good and helpful) but I am also excited that we get to add Salvation Army elements to our ministry. I love that although we are in the community we can still have women's ministry, Junior Soldiers, men's ministry, bible study, Sunday school and Church and yet we get to do it according to the needs of the people we serve and in a way that they can relate to. I just love it. This ministry has proven to me that The Salvation Army is still relevant today and it can still impact people's lives in a major way. Tonight 12 little kids found out for themselves just how exciting this Salvation Army can be.”

FEBRUARY 29, 2009

“Sometimes I get so overwhelmed with joy for what we do as our 'job'. I love working in this community and I love meeting the people who live in this community, they truly have become part of my family. I think about Red who is a transsexual living in a house in the community where the police are often called because of domestic violence, a house that has been without power for the last 2 weeks.

I think about a precious little girl T, who was told to go ride her bike for the rest of the afternoon because her Dad was about to get stoned with a neighbor.

I think of the little girl K, 3 years old who was playing by herself when I knocked on the door, her parents left her at home by herself for the afternoon as they went about their ‘business’ duties for the day.

I think of Mr. Larry, who is always without food and heat and yet he has a very full household to feed and keep warm.

I think of M who we gave some food bags to on Saturday and who then turned up at Brunch Church on Sunday and shared her powerful testimony to the teens.”

I think of D, K and L, who turned on the computer the other day and proceeded to show us pictures on the police website of their uncle, brother and father who were all currently serving time.

I think of B, who constantly gets kicked out of his house when his Mom gets fed up with him and his brothers arguing. He is only 14 years old and often has nowhere to go.

I think of the man who lives in the winter shelter across the road and who hated the Salvation Army when he first met us, but when we met him the other day he was on the way to the community house with a box of chips for us to give the kids.

There are so many other stories I could share, but there really is not enough time or space.

This is our family and like any family we have our ups and downs, and struggles, but just as in a family, we are there for each other, we pray for each other and we help each other when times are tough.”

March 31, 2009

I am just overwhelmed with frustration right now, I have rage building up inside of me.

Sunday was probably one of our hardest days in the 'hood'. When we were at Brunch Church one of my favorite girls came to me in tears, and shared with me that her family had a rough night and they were splitting. She said it has been going on for years and it all came to a head and that she knew she needed to get away, she could not handle it anymore and the girls in the family were leaving that afternoon. That broke my heart and I just cried for her and her family.

Later that day two young guys who we had poured our hearts into and who we have given chance after chance stole some of our personal property. That act hurt us incredibly. It was not the theft as much as it was the lies that came with it and the lack of respect for us.

Last week someone stole the power box from the community house and then today they stole the internet wire. In the last 6 months our community house has been broken into 6 times, our personal tv stolen, two computers stolen, windows and doors broken.

I am tired. I am tired of pouring into these families and these kids, just for them to turn around and steal from us. I just want it to stop. I want to yell and scream and get in someone's face about all of this, but I know that won't help at all and I know these people are in far worse shape than we are.

So I pray for them, I pray that God will touch their hearts, that God will cause them to bend their knees and fall at his feet in submission. I pray that they will encounter the true and living God...

As for us, I am frustrated and mad, but my God is BIGGER than all this junk, and his work in that neighborhood will not cease, he will reign in that place. They can steal our stuff, but they cannot stop the work the Lord is doing; that is what keeps me going when all I want to do is just quit.

APRIL 12, 2009

Praise God indeed! Today on Easter Sunday six young people made a decision to follow Christ and not the ways of the world or even the ways of their very own families. Six young people chose to promise to God that they would love and serve him and it was an honor to be a part of this time in their lives.

We know all too well the hard lives they have, and the battles they face on a daily basis, yet even still these children made a decision to serve and love God. Even as we picked up one of these Junior Soldiers from his Dad's house we walked in on a Dad and his mates about to light up and smoke pot. This is what these kids face on a daily basis, but on this day this Junior Soldier marched through his living room with his uniform on ready to make a commitment to do the opposite of what his Dad was doing right in front of his face. What a powerful witness and what courage. It is a powerful witness not only to us, but it is a powerful witness to their families and their communities.

Another young boy J left the community house right after his enrollment to show off his certificate and the Bible he was given to his father and he came back to report to us that his Dad looked at the certificate and saw his promise to not drink, smoke or take drugs and told his son that he was going to try and give up his drinking and his drugs too and that he would like to sit down with him and read the Bible with him at night so that they can help each other.

I believe very strongly that the promises some of these children made today will be what saves their lives in the coming days. It is something they can hold on to when all else is crumbling around them and what they can hold onto when they are put in very difficult situations by their peers.

Some times in this ministry I want to quit, I want to give up on people, but day's like today are what keeps me going. Those six kids we enrolled today are the same kids that steal from us and vandalize our property, but the difference is that 6 months ago they would have denied ever doing anything like that, but just this last Friday, Good Friday actually, those same kids confessed in front of a group of their peers that they slashed our friends car tires and broke his headlight and they stood before their peers and asked for our forgiveness and they asked Christ to forgive them too. There was not a more powerful example of why Christ died for them than that. And today they stand in front of family and friends getting enrolled as Junior Soldiers. Amazing Grace indeed!

I have learned these last few months that we may not always see the hand of God at work in people's lives but God is working and he is changing their hearts and their lives day by day, step by step and that makes me smile."

Programming: Cookie-Cutter or Custom-Fit

Cadet Aaron Abram (Prayer Warriors, USA Southern Territory) asks, "When it comes to the ministries we offer and the programs we lead, does one size really fit all?"

Home League, Men's Club, Junior Soldiers, Girl Guards, Adventure Corps, Sunbeams, Corps Cadets, Sunday school... oh, pardon me. I got caught up in reading the corps standard. That's right, each of these and several more are all programs that are required to take place on a weekly basis at every Salvation Army corps. The question remains, however, must they all look and function the same way in every corps?

Several years ago I heard of a plan for the future of new building projects. Essentially, there would be several designs to choose from, and based on the budget and needs of a particular corps you would choose from the designs and build. These were referred to as "cookie-cutter corps." There was of course some logic to the plan. Not to mention the fact that it would be easy for someone from a "Cookie Cutter B" corps to find their way around when they were visiting your new "Cookie Cutter B" corps.

This brought to mind for me trips to Wal-Mart; those of you in the states may be able to relate. Have you ever walked into a Wal-Mart in a different town and known just where to go to find your favorite section of the store without looking up at the signs that lead the way? For the most part, one Wal-Mart is much like the next. I remember the first time I went into a store in a different state and I thought I was in an episode of the Twilight Zone. That only ceased to amaze me on the day that I stopped at a red light and looked to my right and saw a Starbucks coffee shop. When I looked to my left I saw... you guessed it, another Starbucks.

I do not seek here to question the validity or necessity of the aforementioned programs, nor any other that the Army sees fit to place in every corps. I only question the methods that we sometimes use to put on these programs. Does it best benefit the corps to do things the same way as everyone else? Let's draw a comparison using two imaginary corps locations: Mosquito Net, Mississippi and Urbantown,

Texas. The corps in Mosquito Net has all of these programs as does the corps in Urbantown. The programs exist to build up the corps, but what does the corps exist for?

A Salvation Army corps exists to serve humanity in the neighborhood in which it is located. This means that at each corps, there is the potential for an entirely different community surrounding it than the next or the last. Let's stick with my two made up corps for the sake of argument.

The corps in Mosquito Net is an average Southern-American sized corps of about 60 soldiers, adherents and friends. The community is a fishing community where the men work and the women generally remain home to raise the children until they are in school. Once all of the children are of school age, the mothers either take on part-time jobs or work on homemaking skills. The average annual salary for the family is approximately \$62,000. The people of the town consider themselves to be well-off and truly believe in loving their neighbors.

A different story exists in Urbantown. The men that can be found in Urbantown homes generally are unemployed. Many others are in prison or have never been around at all. There are many single parent homes consisting of a mother and an average of four children. Most of the mothers are forced to take at least one, if not two full-time jobs to make ends meet. Those who are unable to work rely on government assistance. By the age of sixteen most have dropped out of high-school with the boys becoming involved in the various gangs in town and many of the girls contributing to the town's 23% teen pregnancy rate. The corps in Urbantown however has a very vibrant congregation of 150 soldiers, adherents and friends.

Each of these communities loves The Salvation Army and supports its work in any way that it can. In turn, the corps is open nearly twelve hours a day with various programs and services offered to the community.

As Mosquito Net is essentially a family community, it is in turn a family corps. Most of the people in attendance are related to one another and the families have been part of the Army for generations. The Salvation Army is the community church in Mosquito Net. Having such a long history, the community knows and understands the programs of the Army. Guards, Sunbeams, Adventure Corps etc. all attract a

large crowd of dedicated students eager to learn something new. They are very used to how the programs progress and they enjoy it that way.

The new officer in Urbantown is facing a problem however. He has noticed that the people who attend the regular programs do so more out of a sense of obligation. They want to be at the corps, but they do not necessarily want to be at the programs. Their minds are in the nice new gym that was just added on, or on the playground out back. When looking over the lessons each week, the leaders notice that most of them are riddled with scribbles and doodles. The programs are not working, but the officer does not know what to do.

Next to our campus is the beautiful new South Atlanta Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center. Many years in development, this new venture was undertaken with one hope in mind, to meet the needs of the community and introduce them to the God who makes all things possible. Part of the planning that went into the development of this Kroc Center was a survey of the community. Civic leaders, business leaders, school administrators, area religious leaders, community activists, even children were asked what the dream community center would hold for them. The overwhelming response was a center for the arts. Like many communities here in the states, the arts have been cut from many school budgets in this time of fiscal strains. The Salvation Army found themselves in a unique position to serve this need through the new Kroc Center.

Having officially opened in October of 2008 and now fully operational, The South Atlanta Kroc Center is meeting the needs of this community in ways that could only have been dreamed about before. Inside the building can be found dance studios, a state of the art gym with a fitness center, a pottery studio with its very own kiln, cartooning classes, storytelling, spoken word poetry, martial arts etc. While the Kroc Center functions still as a Salvation Army corps, meaning that it has the same programs that every other corps has, it is finding a way to meet the needs of its community. Some of these desires can be found incorporated into the various new program ventures that accompany these regulars.

I also recall hearing of the Alove program a few years ago. It was marketed to us here in the USASouth as a new way of doing corps cadets. We were told of how there was now a little more freedom from brigade to brigade as to how the program would be accomplished. There was even talk of football jerseys to identify corps. I even heard tell of a large number of teens being commissioned as generals

because chances are they were the highest ranking Salvationists their peers would meet. All of this was intriguing and I waited full of hope for what the fruit would be. I never would have imagined all that would come of it.

A couple weeks ago I went online and found all new lessons produced by Alove that rival the lessons here in the U.S. Pictures, testimonies, videos, artwork... evidence of progress through creative thinking and making a program fit the community in which it was meant to serve.

Again, every program has its place and there is certainly reason for doing things a certain way, but as the Apostle Paul encourages us, we must be all things to all people. If what we are doing is not meeting the needs of the people anymore, is there a catalyst there for change? Could we do the same programs in a different way in two places so that the needs of those in them are best served? Could not the people of Mosquito Net still go to their regular Sunday school classes each week, while the people of Urbantown are learning and praising God through a hip-hop Sunday school?

Perhaps it is time to look at these things. From my understanding, the programs are under constant review and they are being tailored even now as we speak ahead of the next batch being rolled out. Maybe we can end the cookie-cutter, and give some basics and let the officers and leaders of the individual corps custom fit them to the needs of their people. If there is a specific list of required outcomes, then why not meet them in a way that will leave a lasting impact on the community. It is all about ministry and getting people saved. Programs in and of themselves are not ministry, but all programs should be undergirded by ministry.

I read a very interesting quote last week and I will close with it. *"If we continue to tailor to those we already have, we will continue to be irrelevant to those we need to get."* This quote was posted online by Phil Laeger, a great Army composer and someone I admire for his heart to God and hand to man lifestyle. I would only add one word at the end of his quote. *"If we continue to tailor to those we already have, we will continue to be irrelevant to those we need to get **SAVED.**"*

Passing On Comfortable Faith

Gabriela Broome discusses our responsibility to the next generation.

We are going to leave something to them, but what?

A friend of mine recently mentioned how appalled and insulted he was when he heard people calling the “Christians” *radicals* during the 2008 Presidential election here in the states. My response was, “What’s wrong with that?” I thought we were supposed to be “radical for Jesus”.

Unfortunately, many Salvationists and “Christians” have the same reaction more often than not. We are afraid of how others will label us. There is that 1995 song by DC Talk that was popular at one time, which asked, “What will people think when they hear that I’m a Jesus freak? What will people do when they find that it’s true?” The chorus of that song includes a line stating, “I don’t really care if they label me a Jesus freak. There ain’t no disguising the truth.” However, if we are *in love* with Christ why would we be ashamed of that and try to hide it? That’s like dating someone or being married to someone and trying to hide our mate from everyone. The key however, is to actually be *in love* with Christ to have come to the point and realization that no one can pull us away from that love.

The challenge is to arrive at the level in life where a person is actually *in love* with Christ. Once this level is achieved, there is a vast difference in the way a person can live life. Unfortunately, I believe society today has convinced us that we as Christians, don’t have to be *in love* with Christ. We just have to love him. There is nothing wrong with loving Christ. Yet, God calls us to a deeper relationship with Him. Establishing this deeper relationship allows us to see through God’s eyes, feel through God’s senses and to love as God loves.

The setback, though, is the sad truth that too large a percentage of the Christian population doesn’t dig deeper. I honestly believe that if we did and on a daily basis, our world would be so different. We would see the miracles in the Bible stories we learn about. We would pray with fervent faith to move mountains. We would allow God to be in control. We would not worry about being shaken because of the economic crisis. We wouldn’t be afraid to knock on our neighbor’s door. We would have such

passion to seek Christ and serve Him in all the ways he asks. We would also wholeheartedly teach our children the path of righteousness.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives the Great Commission to his disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV) From this passage, it is very clear that everyone has been commissioned by Christ to spread His Word and that He is always with us. He is with us to help us accomplish this task. We however, need to consider the fact that Jesus is willing to be with us, but do we want Jesus to be with us? If we do not open our hearts and enter a loving and deep relationship with Him, how can we enable our trust to grow? How will our faith grow? This is the key.

Our faith and love for Christ will grow as much as we allow it to grow. Unfortunately, it seems that too often we do not allow our faith to develop. Yes, it is a process that develops over time, but even Paul said in Philippians 3:12-15, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you." (NIV) Paul, who was a very strong man of God who left us his testimony in writing, even states that though he had, what we would consider, an intimate relationship with Christ, he continued to develop that relationship because it was an ongoing process.

The questions here are: Are you comfortable with the level of faith and love you have reached? Are you continuously pressing onward to deepen your relationship with our Father? If the answers aren't what you wish they were, there is still time to change and time to spend developing that intimacy with Him. If we become apathetic towards the need to grow spiritually, not only are we endangering our soul's eternal destination, but we also run the risk of endangering that of the next generation.

There are often advertisements for saving and preserving planet earth for our children and grandchildren. These often remind us to recycle or start thinking more "Green". Sometimes we are asked for monetary contributions to help the work of various organizations that fight for endangered

animal species, for cleaner water or for better laws to protect the environment. Why? So the earth will exist tomorrow for our children and their children. In the USA, a cleaner environment is currently one of President Barak Obama's keen interests. His administration has already been reviewing and evaluating Former President George Bush's environmental policies. This issue and all other issues on the political agenda are handled in a manner which considers its effects on our future.

If the secular world is concerned with the *planet's* existence tomorrow for future generations why would Christians not be concerned with the *spiritual* status of their own souls in addition to that of their future generations? Now is the time to build a relationship with Christ. Others will see that development because Christ will live in us and will be revealed to others through our everyday living. These "others" are not only people of our own age, but children as well. Children are quite observant and grasp ideas and concepts that adults do not always consider that they would understand. Proverbs 22: 6 states, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (NIV)

Salvationist, and fifth grade teacher, Josh Knapp, was surprised to observe that his Muslim students could recite verses from the Koran with ease and unashamedly talk about their beliefs. The surprise came because he would compare this observation with the children at his home corps who couldn't really answer many questions about what they believe about Jesus. His concern as a youth leader at his corps is that church leaders are not teaching and leading to the best of their ability in order that the youth will know and understand about their relationship with Christ. However, the concern is not only in the leadership of the church, but also extends into the home.

It is vital that believers pass on their excitement and love for God to the youth, so that they too may have that same passion for building a more intimate relationship with Him. It is easy to imagine a world where this were to happen. The vision would include much joy, peace and prosperity for God's blessings would abound! However, the vision would be harder for a person to *want* to see if the passion for Christ did not exist; if believers did not teach the importance of spiritual growth in Christ. A world without Christ would be a world abounding in sin! Parents who are believers and who know God's Word are responsible for sharing that word with their children as well as others around them. However, it is not enough to just share the Word. I honestly believe that others, including children, can see the passion and fire in a believer's heart because it is reflected. The key to being in love with Christ is to know Christ in an intimate manner. I believe if an adult can grow to understand this point and practice it, they will

not want to keep this love and excitement from their children and their children's children. However, I also believe the contrary is true. If an adult does not grow spiritually to understand this point and practice it, they will unavoidably keep this love and excitement from their children and their children's children.

Nevertheless, the truth still exists that Christ came to save a dying world and a dying world we are, but *HE CAME! HE SAW! and HE CONQUERED!* There is hope for His people and that hope is in Christ Jesus. As Believers, we must continue to grow in our walk with Christ and grow to be unashamedly in love with Him. Let us pray as Paul prayed in the book of Philippians, "For my determined purpose is that I may know Him that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly, and that I may in that same way come to know the power out-flowing from His resurrection which it exerts over believers, and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness even to His death, in the hope," Philippians 3:10(Amplified). In this way, we will keep our children and our children's children from perishing. Praise God for his endless love!

One Thing I Learned in Training that I Never Thought I Would Need

Normally we celebrate stories of people who have overcome a problem with dependence.

Cadet Michal Chapman (Witnesses for Christ, USA Southern Territory)

shares her testimony of overcoming independence.

A strong-willed child turned strong-willed single mother learns to depend on herself for strength. Now you maybe thinking, "You can depend on God" which is absolutely true, but as far as other people are concerned, who needs them?

I was always independent and somewhat of a loner, even as a young child. During my school-aged years I developed one or two close friendships, but was never a part of a larger circle of friends. Hanging out at the mall or going to the movies was OK, every once in awhile, but I was just fine at home, in my room, with my music and nothing, no one, else. As I grew older this became my pattern and comfort-zone. I was comfortable being by myself and doing by myself. This became evident in all areas of my life: at home, at work, at play. My favorite pass-time was spending hours on the sofa watching television. If I had a problem at work, I spent hours trying to figure it out myself before I would dare to pick up the phone and call for help. My social life was limited to going out to eat or to the movies with my son, my parents, or my one friend. Spending time with other people, relying on someone else to get the job done, investing in relationships was not in my DNA.

Then I became a Christian and things did not change much. I felt the need for fellowship, so I went to church – on Sunday morning. I felt the need for prayer, so I prayed – for and by myself. I felt the need for Bible study, so I bought a workbook – to work on alone. The sad thing is that I was fine with this lifestyle and I felt that I was growing closer to the Lord. I stretched myself to welcome the children from the Corps into my life as I took on the YPSM position. Every so often I allowed someone new into my life, but never too close and never for very long. You see, I did not need other people because I could do it all myself. Except for the time that I had to spend with my son, parents, and people due to my commitments at the Corps, I could live alone, work alone, and be alone. Yes, sometimes I was lonely, but

I often felt that way in a large group of people as well as when I was by myself. I felt that as long as I trusted in my friendship with Jesus I would be fine.

My first year of training held a surprise for me. I was assigned to a ministry team, a group of people with whom I shared in ministry at one of the Atlanta area Corps. We had to plan children's meetings, Bible Studies, Holiness meetings, and other programs. With each passing assignment I opened myself up more and more to asking others on the team to do something in the service that I was planning, even asking for ideas and accepting advice. More and more I found myself praying for and with these teammates. This practice began to spill over into the larger body of my session mates. Before I knew what had happened, I found myself involved in a fellowship and enjoying it. Furthermore, I began to realize how much I benefitted and grew from it.

One day, at the beginning of my second year of training I became very ill, so ill that I had to go to the hospital. A friend drove me to the doctor's office and went to pick up my son from school. Another friend came to sit with me in the emergency room until the wee hours of the morning. Yet another friend drove me back to the doctor's office and made a return trip for some of my belongings when I found that I was going to be admitted for surgery. My mother came to stay with us to help take care of my son while I was in the hospital and during my recovery at home. Another friend brought handouts and notes from class to me during the days that I missed. Moreover, I know that I was lifted up in prayer by my community during this time. I had suffered from the illness that sent me to the hospital for three years prior. I have to wonder if the climax of the physical infirmity arose at this time to teach me a lesson regarding a spiritual infirmity.

Jesus told His disciples, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (Holy Bible, NIV, John 15:12). I believe that He made this command because He knew that they would need each other when He departed (physically) and when they began their ministry together. I also believe that the book of Acts is a testimony to their obedience to His command. Who needs other people? I do. This is what I have learned that I never thought I would need, I need other people. I need fellowship with a community of believers. I need prayer support. I need partnerships in ministry. I need friends with whom to share my life: at home, at work, at play.

To the Ends of the Earth We Will Go

Jason Pope, YPSM at The South Atlanta Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center is known for his passion for mission and seeing the world won to the Lord. Here he discusses the importance of missions both overseas and at home.

About a month ago I excitedly opened an email with a subject line that read: "USA South edition of "Journal of Aggressive Christianity" on armybarmy.com."

The email presented the idea for this current JAC edition and listed a number of possible subjects for writers to choose from. There were many provocative titles but none grabbed my attention like:

What's "over there" that you can't find here? (mission-centric work and needy souls are not just overseas)

Now I am confident of my calling. I am called to be a missionary. It is a lifelong calling. As a result of my calling, I have been on more short term mission trips to other parts of the world than most. Someday my wife and I would like to live and serve in a developing country.

On the other hand right now my wife and I serve in the inner city of Atlanta. We are the co YPSMs at our corps. We are living out our calling right where we are currently. I say all this to say when my eyes came across this question, and I began to analyze its premises, I was disturbed.

I was disturbed because the comparison between what we find overseas and what we find here is not helpful in the process of becoming mission centered. And, quite honestly, there are 'things' overseas that can't be found in America. And there are *many* things in America that can't be found overseas. The uniqueness of every person's life is bound in a package of unpredictable encounters with unique individuals, places and circumstances. It is the random chance of specific encounters and the fact that God orders our steps which creates that thing which we refer to as God's will for our lives.

The truth is we shouldn't be going anywhere on the basis of what we might find there but rather on the basis of God's calling and timing. This can only be determined through prayer and accountability.

One of the most beautiful sights my eyes have ever beheld was the large, burnt orange sun fading into the horizon over the black sea. Two of my favorite people in the world Gia and Eka, I met in the Republic of Georgia. When I was in hills of South China I saw emptiness in the eyes of men who realized the hope of a future generation of villagers in their community had been raped by the systematic abduction of every woman in the village for trafficking purposes. Standing on the demarcation line between North Korea and South Korea, peering through binoculars at no man's land, I sensed the desolation of competing political philosophies. In Tororo, Uganda, an AIDS infected infant is abandoned at the gates of the Salvation Army Children's Home by an AIDS infected and dying mother. The child is adopted into the children's home family immediately and given the name Gift. In Mexico, Captain Victoria Oliva, a widowed corps officer in Monclova, Mexico continued to serve her post in the worst slums of the city with a passion that could only have her husband smiling in heaven.

These are all experiences I have had "over there" that I will never have here. It is impossible to have them here because they were all unique experiences to that region, circumstance or individual. But there are unforgettable memories from the states as well.

I've seen the Salvation Army begin a work from scratch in Jonesboro Trailer Park, one of the poorest neighborhoods in one of the poorest sections of Atlanta. I have seen two twin teenage girls go from not being a part of The Salvation Army to not being able to be separated from it. I have seen hundreds of college student volunteers immerse themselves in the mission of The Salvation Army in South Atlanta. I have seen a homeless person choose the path of discipleship and turn his life 180 degrees. I've laughed with my friends while swimming in the pool at camp. I stood on a stage, under large oak trees, beside a flowing stream, with a wall of flowers as a backdrop to the vows I made to my wife in earshot of my closest friends and relatives. These and much, much more are experiences I never would have overseas. Because they deal with unique individuals, places and circumstances.

Mission is not based on personal experiences.

Basing our motivations for doing ministry on neediness makes us vulnerable to codependent relationships. I once had a friend ask me to verbalize my theology of mission? He said that if I didn't know my theology of mission then I would burn out. Over time I came up with the following statements. Man is in constant need. God is in constant fullness. Life has meaning because God has purposes for it. Man's need is urgent. God's glory is eternal. Man's ultimate purpose is to worship God. Meaningfulness is found in worshipping God with our lives. People here at home and across the world cannot worship what they don't know. They can not know what they are not told. We can't tell them if we aren't there with them. John Piper states, "Missions exists because worship doesn't." We do missions so that people may be redeemed because this brings glory to God. Do you know what your theology of mission is? Consider the following possible events:

- You have been ministering to a teen girl in your youth group for a couple of years. For the past two weeks she seemed to really be paying attention and soaking in everything. You are excited about her change until she announces she's pregnant.
- You go to seminars and hear speakers talking about new paradigms of ministry. You come home and begin to work on them. Those around you pay lip service to the philosophy but in private conversations question the practice and undercut your leadership.
- You are promised new resources for your ministry. You make plans and commitments to people and community members. The bottom falls out of the economy and the new resources never arrive.
- You are working in a developing country. Over the past several years the country has made major strides in development. A neighboring country attacks the country. You are forced to return home. The country moves back five years in their development.

If you based your motivations on meeting people's needs and you get your esteem from doing so these situations and many others like them will destroy you over time. But if you find your identity in Christ and your place in the world next to the sinner you will run the race with perseverance.

Now here is a riddle: Biblically speaking "here" is really "over there." In Acts 1:8 the Bible says you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. When we talk about missions in the states we talk about going to other countries. Many churches use this verse to help motivate them to be involved in missions. They ask what their Jerusalem might be. They ask what their

Samaria might be. And they end up thinking of the country farthest away from their current geographic position as their “ends of the earth.” So for those of us in the Southern Territory this could be China.

But this verse has a literal meaning. It was spoken while in Jerusalem. At the time the Americas hadn't been discovered. Doesn't it make sense that perhaps America is the ends of the earth as literally spoken of in Acts? We need to be involved in mission in America not primarily because of need but rather because it is part of God's will and plan.

Biblically speaking, missions is about reaching new people groups. This is defined in terms of language, culture and race. At the tower of Babel humans chose to disobey God. In Genesis 11:6, God discouraged, laments “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.” He changed their language because they relied on each other instead of on God. He didn't want people to be separated from each other but he would rather them be separated from each other than Him. But in the very next chapter, Genesis chapter 12 God calls Abraham to become the first missionary. He was asked to leave his people and go to a land God would show him. He was told that all the nations, tribes and families would be blessed through him.

The rest of the Bible is the story of God returning the whole world to Himself through His people. In Revelation we find all nations worshipping together in heaven. Missions is the process by which God restores relationship to Himself first and between the races secondly. This paradigm fits perfectly with the two great commandments. They are love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Secondly, love your neighbor as yourself. And when asked who someone's neighbor is Jesus responded by telling the story of a person who chose to love and take care of someone belonging to a different race, the Good Samaritan.

Is it irony or fate that all of the cultures of the world have immigrated to the “ends of the earth,” America. We as a southern territory must learn to embrace all peoples. Our corps must take a proactive approach to reaching new people groups. The change in the intercultural methods and values at THQ needs to impact the traditional Caucasian corps with immigrants in their communities that they are not reaching out to as much as those corps that have traditionally been made up of ethnic minorities. These new values should be embraced by all corps.

Let's turn the question upside down. Instead of asking what's over there that's not here we might ask what is here that is not overseas. In America there is a church on almost every street corner. Sunday morning television is filled with live broadcasts from local churches. The Wonderful Words of Life radio ministry has brilliant messages to the general public. There are billboards telling about God's love. In many places overseas this permeation of the gospel message is not possible. There is not a large enough percentage of Christians in the country to get the message to every person. It is our missionary task to take the gospel to all nations. This is a reason for people to go.

On a recent trip to Kampala, Uganda I was reminded of something else we have here that they don't have there. Even in the economic crisis that faces us we have an enormous amount of resources. Some of the corps I saw in Uganda were made out of mud and had holes in their roofs. I think American Christians should take a close look at the relationship between God and Israel in the Old Testament. God wanted to bless them economically. And God did bless them economically. But God expected them to bless all the nations of the earth with the blessings He gave them. We should not dismiss this principle as something unique to God's relationship with Israel. We should seek to understand God's heart for the whole world. If he expected Israel to bless others with their prosperity then He expects America to do the same.

In the end the comparison between what's over there and what is here is just a bad way to discover God's will. He wants all people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He needs Christians to be willing to travel or stay for Him. When we ask questions like the one presented in this topic we spend our energies accusing other Christians rather than glorifying God. Picture a soldier giving the Salvation Army salute. He stands with one finger pointed towards heaven to represent that there is only one way to heaven. Now imagine the soldier standing there for one hundred and forty four years. Over time his arm gets tired and it moves from being vertical to being horizontal. It becomes parallel with the ground. Now instead of pointing to heaven it is pointing at other soldiers. It is saying you are doing it all wrong. It is time for us to stop finger pointing. It is time to bring glory back to God and reengage in a world wide salvation effort. And yes, "to the ends of the earth we will go."

“We Don’t WANT To Be Different (do we...?)”

Major Willis Howell is President and Principal of Evangeline Booth College in Atlanta, Georgia.

In this article he encourages Salvationists to remain true to who we are
and not seek to be like everyone else.

Every parent of a teenager has heard words to this effect:

“...but Tommy has one...!”

“Karen’s parents let her do it. Why can’t I?”

“Alice and Bill get to go. I’ll be the only one left out!”

“Why can’t I buy it? Everyone else has..!”

After a deep sigh (and briefly wondering if science could develop a way for birth control to somehow be retroactive), the weary parent does their best to explain to the emotionally fraying kid in front of them:

- It doesn’t matter what Tommy has.
- Karen’s parents aren’t your parents.
- Alice and Bill may not be the best role models.
- You and your spouse are not responsible for how everyone else spends their money.

Let me tell you from personal experience, the odds of coming through one of these “discussions” with your sanity intact, are right up there with successfully mixing nitro glycerin in your blender. In both cases – trying to “reason” with a hormone-crazed teenager, and do-it-yourself nitro mixing – you’re dealing with highly volatile and unstable components that can explode without warning. In fact, it’s practically one of life’s unwritten truths that any parent/teen set-to that bears even a slight resemblance to what’s described above will be followed by assorted acts of door slamming, sullen expressions, deafening silence, and no end of eye-rolling. And that’s just from the parents!

The message every teen-pressured parent wants to get across, however, is simply this: “Our family isn’t like everyone else’s family. Our standards, our expectations, our values are different. Others can do what they choose, but this is the way we do family.”

God knows what it’s like to be on the receiving end of tantrums. Throughout millennia, His children have thrown all kinds of fits in His direction as they’ve repeatedly rejected His plans and insisted on doing things their way.

For example, do you remember the little falling-out between God and His chosen people in 1 Samuel 8?

It’s probably best to give something of the background that leads up to the event. To do that, though, we have to go all the way back to when God singled out the Jews in the first place, and skim our way forward through some of the events and occurrences that helped to shape their identity as a people.

Now from the very beginning, when He first established His covenant with Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, God clearly intended that His “chosen people” would be special – different. The King James translation even goes so far as to use the word “peculiar” – unlike everyone else. Over time, Abraham’s descendants came to learn that these peculiarities would influence practically every aspect of their lives, including:

- their worship of one God (as opposed to the numerous gods other nations worshiped),
- their laws,
- their diet,
- their dress,
- their hygiene,
- their relationships,
- their work habits,
- the way they fought wars...

In short, everything about them was to be distinct. Their day-to-day rhythms and routines were to be completely dissimilar to those of the people around them. In fact, God wanted Israel to be so utterly unique that all other nations would figuratively stand around scratching their heads in wonder and

amazement at the success of the Jewish people, and come to one unmistakable conclusion: it had to be a God-thing.

For the Jews, this God-planned “differentness” led them into amazing blessing and unimagined hardship. It included centuries of slavery in Egypt, and an astonishingly miraculous release from that slavery. This was quickly followed by forty years of running laps in the wilderness, which finally led them to the successful conquest of the Promised Land. But over all that time, slowly – often painfully – the Jewish people learned how well God cared for, protected, and provided for their needs *because* of their distinctness. At every point, God was trying to get across the idea that He wanted to leverage their peculiarity in front of the whole world in ways that would lead to their blessing and His glory.

So now we’re at the point of our 1 Samuel episode. It’s now been more than 1,000 years since God and Abraham first kicked this whole thing off, and nearly 300 years after first arriving in the Promised Land. God’s hand picked children are now well-settled into Canaan.

At this time, Israel is still a *theocracy*. That is, God, by way of various prophets and judges, is calling the shots. It’s the system He put in place and the arrangement the Jews had lived by – and prospered by – since right after their release from Egyptian slavery. Each time they collectively rebelled and bucked against God’s plan brought some level of suffering and consequence. But when His design was willingly and whole-heartedly embraced, it worked amazingly well for them (imagine that)!

During the days of the prophet-judge Samuel, a sort of rumble could be heard. A growing discontent was spreading in the hearts and minds of the Israelites. Little by little, God’s people – the very ones He had chosen to be unique among all other nations – wanted to look and behave more like the nations around them.

Why? Had they observed some more successful “model?” Were the countries around them somehow more prosperous? Were others’ standards of living better? Was there some desired result or outcome other nations were receiving that Israel wasn’t? Sure, there had been some pretty serious problems with Samuel’s sons and all, but was that sufficient reason to throw out the whole system after it had worked for them for so long? I don’t know....

I wonder if it's possible that over the years they had simply gotten tired of being labeled as "strange," or "oddball". Do you think that perhaps some had had all they could stand of explaining to questioners – those from surrounding kingdoms or people they traded with – that their lives and behavior were guided by the terms of a covenant (*"You see God spoke to this guy Abraham, like centuries ago, and they agreed on a bunch of stuff... I mean, dude, that's so irrelevant to our lives now, right?"*). Maybe their frustration with having to dress and live a certain way, and hold to certain practices and values had built up to a point that finally took them over the top.

Whatever it was, it all came to a full boil, here in 1 Samuel 8. God's children collectively stomped their feet, threw their toys, slammed their bedroom doors, and pitched a hot, blue fit. *"That's it – we're done! Give us the same kind of king every other nation has! We're tired of being different. We've had enough of being 'unique.' No more standing out. Just let us blend in and be like everyone else."*

God gave in. He let Israel have exactly what they asked for. They got a king, and looked more like all the other nations around them. But it sure didn't lead to what anyone would call a "happily-ever-after" kind of ending. You see, their lives – and their nation – were forever changed. Their insistence on swapping out God's original game plan opened the door to what would eventually lead to a divided kingdom, some truly disastrous kings, and greater distance from God.

Here's a question... Do you see any parallel at all between this story and our present-day Army? If so, then is there some "moral of the story," or word of caution that we would do well to pay attention to?

Let's look a little closer and ask a few more questions...

Do you think there's a chance that God, as He did with the Jewish people...

- ...has called out and raised up the Army to be somewhat separate from the rest of the church pack?
- ...designed our rhythms and routines to be, well, "unconventional" by comparison to other parts of the Church body?
- ...intended that we would stand out as unique and distinct for His purposes?
- ...brought us through various specific experiences and circumstances, to *intentionally shape* our identity?

- ...wants to leverage *our* peculiarity in ways intended to honor Him and advance His Kingdom?

If that's the case, then perhaps He also *led* our founders and early day leaders to develop and embrace such "peculiar" Army elements as:

- our free, non-liturgical worship style,
- or the kind of people we intentionally sought out (the marginalized, the cast-off, those who were in some way broken, ignored, despised, or who would fit into no other church system),
- or the uncompromising standards we volunteered to live by (a binding covenant that outlined our values and actions, and touches on most every part of our lives)?

In short, is it just possible that the Army was, and still is:

- called by God to be noticeably – maybe even *radically* – different?
- *designed* as a one-of-a-kind shape that fits perfectly into a specific place in the mosaic of God's overall plan and purpose?
- unique to the point that when people examine our "success" as a Movement, they scratch their heads in wonder and amazement and come to the unmistakable conclusion: it's got to be a God-thing.

Please understand... By suggesting that God has called us to be "different," I don't mean to imply that the Army is "elite," "exclusive," or "better than" anyone else. I'm just putting forward the idea that perhaps the Army is, in fact, planned by God to be who we are and how we are: a distinctive, uncommon, "horse of another color," out-of-the-ordinary Movement.

Now if you think this just might be true, then we should be aware of another Samuel-like parallel.

As it was in Samuel's day, there is a growing rumble of dissatisfaction in some Army circles. A subtle shift seems to be taking place. In a way rather reminiscent of the Israelites' "give-us-a-king" cry of 1Samuel, some Salvationists want to cast off what makes us distinct in order to adopt more of the style, methods, and "look" of the churches around them.

For some, their concerns center on the uniform and our military trappings. Others focus on brass bands and music styles. Fine. While I have some level of interest in those debates, they are not exactly issues

that keep me awake at night. What I do find highly disturbing, however, is the strengthening push – here in the West, anyway – for us to become more of a “middle-class,” suburban church. If some had their way, they would ditch the urban Army model where we intentionally go out searching for and bringing in those who have been written off by other churches. Instead, they would have us settle into well-placed bedroom communities where we could turn our attention on the comfort and care of folks who “look like us.” Tell me...where is it written that we are called to be more concerned about those we’ve already got, than we are those who are still missing and in danger? (For Jesus’ answer to this question, check out Luke 15:3-7)

Of even greater concern, to my thinking, are the increasing demands that we relax our standards on such Army distinctives as holy living and covenant-based behavior. You’re probably aware that there are some in our ranks who think the existing standards of soldiership are too high, and that we’re asking too much of people. (*“You see, this binding promise thingy sometimes kinda gets in the way of today’s lifestyle options. It like talks about what I will do and what I won’t do...what’s up with that? I mean, dude, there’s like w-a-y too much hardcore stuff in there. It’s so unlike what other churches have for their membership standards these days. C’mon, let’s get real... If you want people to join, you gotta lower the bar to where people can reach it”).*

This is all coming to a head. For whatever the specific mix of reasons, more and more of God’s soldiers are stomping their feet, throwing their toys, slamming their bedroom doors and pitching a fit. They want the Army – **their** church – to blend in and look like everyone else!

Evidently, this isn’t a new phenomenon. The “let’s-look-more-like-other-churches” folk have been with us from our founding right up through today. Why else would we hear this constant counsel echo over the years?

- *“I do not want another ecclesiastical corps [that is, corps that look like and act like the bulk of other churches out there – W] cumbering the earth. When The Salvation Army ceases to be a militant body of red-hot men and women whose supreme business is the saving of souls, I hope it will vanish utterly.”*

– William Booth

- *“Beware of imitating the churches.”*

– Commissioner Florence Booth

- *“Today many Officers make no secret of the fact that they measure their privilege by the numerical strength they find on their rolls, and not by the opportunity to establish true religion among those at present unsaved and uninterested. When Officers assess their opportunity in this manner, they show a lack of the aggressive spirit; they show the harking back to “church and chapel” ways which I have already deplored.*

“Some Officers allow their influence to be almost entirely confined within the bounds of their corps. Their power is wholly dedicated to maintain existing forces. Do not sink your Salvationism in pastoral duties, fussing the soldiers, visiting sympathizers who are willing to receive you because of the work of your predecessors. Many good people will be glad to keep you at their beck and call doing a little charitable work for them. Officers who are content to do this, neglect aggressive work; brothels and public-houses do not know of their existence; the Devil’s victims, sinking in the mire, hear nothing of that radiant hope in the Lord, hope for the worst, which Officers were raised to carry, like a glowing torch, into the darkest places. Such Officers are helping to snap rather than to add a link to the precious chain of love which binds the heart of the neediest to the Army.

“They are satisfied if the corps has an increased congregation of well-dressed people who like to listen to the Songsters. They are elated because the Army has a good name among the respectable in the town, proud that it has a fine building. If this is included in the printed list of places of worship, which no drunkard, prostitute, or other lost soul ever regards, they think the Army has greatly benefitted.

“My comrades, if one of you is neglecting, and intends to neglect, aggressive warfare against the Devil’s forces and clear witnessing for Christ amongst the ungodly; if one of you feels unable to seek the despairing, the lost, and the callous, who hide themselves in the haunts of sin and will not seek us, I beg that one to resign. Many of the churches will receive you gladly. None who has cast off the bridal garment of Salvationism should remain amongst us.”

– Commissioner Florence Booth

- *"Some Officers venture altogether too close to the methods of the denominations, and wherever that is done two things inevitably follow – a smaller number of penitents and a decline in the fighting spirit of the soldiers!"*
– General Edward J. Higgins
- *"We...are not opposed to the church, but we feel we were raised by God to present religion in a different way to the masses outside the church orbit."*
– General Albert Orsborne
- *"The other churches need us, not to come up with some pale imitation of what they do, but to complement their outreach by doing what only The Salvation Army can."*
– Major Ted Palmer

The point to the whole thing takes us back to both the parent at the beginning of this writing, and God's choosing of Abraham and his descendants: It doesn't matter what others do. God has made us who and what we are for His purpose. Sure, there are problems and issues that need addressing. No question. But does the way to accomplish that really call for scrapping the entire organizational and missional identity of our Movement?

See, I believe this is a time for us to run more *toward* our heritage than *away* from it. I believe the Army at its results-producing best when we accept, totally embrace, and operate from the full strength of our distinct God-given identity. But when we water down our methods, compromise our standards, or try to pass ourselves off as something we're not, the Army, those we're trying to reach, and the Kingdom all suffer.

And to my Salvationist brothers and sisters who may be trying to move the Army in directions of liturgy, greater formality, a more "stained glass" setting, communion, more relaxed standards, or a mega-church mentality, may I lovingly set this idea on the table...? Could it be that the Army just might not be right for you? Please understand I'm not criticizing or condemning! I know full well that we aren't everyone's cup of tea. Truth is we're really more of an "acquired taste." I'm simply suggesting that perhaps we work together to help find you some church or ministry – complete with the elements, practices, "look," and "feel" you're wanting – where you'll be more comfortable, and not as frustrated.

The Army's *Orders and Regulations* – which are published to cover an incredibly wide range of topics – are a far under-used tool when it comes to explaining the standards and expectations of soldiership. But in the most current *O&R for Soldiers*, the following information is provided in the very first chapter (the emphasis and underlining is mine):

From O&R for SOLDIERS: CHAPTER 1 *Some Features of Salvationism*

Section 2. The Soldier's Covenant

1. Though the Army's soldiers (members) are drawn from various cultures, traditions and races, as well as from all levels of society, they have all signed their name to the document called 'The Soldier's Covenant' (previously known as the Articles of War). In 1890 it was stated as a regulation that 'every salvation soldier must consider, accept and then sign this document'. This requirement is in force today, as are its reasons, which are reproduced here.

(a) That he may understand beforehand the doctrines, principles and practices to which he will have to conform.

(b) Thinking and praying over this covenant will help him to find out whether he really has the faith and spirit of a salvation soldier or not.

(c) The pledge involved in signing the covenant will help him to be faithful to the Army in the future.

(d) The covenant may prevent many joining who are not in heart and head with us, and who consequently would be likely afterwards to create dissatisfaction and division.

Said another way, every potential soldier owes it to themselves and the Army to know what they're signing up for; what they're agreeing to. This point is only made stronger by the fact that we're asking them sign and enter into a binding covenant with God. So before signing, some questions have to be

asked, considered, and settled: “Do I have what it takes? Do I really believe what this says I believe? Am I both able and *willing* to fulfill what is expected of me? Do I understand, and embrace the Army’s mission and methods?”

If for any reason(s) they find themselves tensing up or pushing back against any of the terms and conditions, they simply shouldn’t sign. Otherwise, they run the risk of *create[ing] dissatisfaction and division*, mentioned in the O&R above or, worse still, breaking a covenant with God.

Can you imagine what our Army would look like if every Salvationist actively lived out the covenant we’ve signed? Can you picture the unbelievable difference it would make if each of us actually ordered our lives and priorities around the behaviors and passions we’ve put our signatures to? Can your mind grab hold of what God might do with an Army like that?

Understand we still wouldn’t be a perfect Army. And we certainly wouldn’t look like any flavor-of-the-month church model. But I’m convinced that an Army of full strength, covenant-living soldiers like that who completely accept their God-assigned, unique role and specific mission would do nothing less than change the world!

Who’s with me...?

“Proud To Be A Salvationist?”

Captain Kelly Goldfarb, Corps Officer in Princeton, WV, discusses whether or not we are losing our love for who we are as Salvationists.

Recently I was sitting at my desk and I heard several of our employees in the kitchen talking about my husband. Let's just say they weren't exactly being complementary. Now granted some of the things they were saying were true – but still he's my husband and no one can talk about him except me! I don't know about you, but I was raised with the principle that you have pride in your family and you always stick up for them and defend them no matter what. You don't allow people to tear down who or what you love.

One of the things that has always fascinated me about Americans is their unbelievable patriotism. Sure we Brits are proud of who we are, of the Royal Family, the Beatles, David Beckham but we are no way as patriotic or proud as Americans. In recent years I have begun to question just how proud we as Salvationists are of The Salvation Army. It seems that rather than pride we look at our heritage and traditions with a sense of shame. We slowly seem to be moving out our songbooks, flags, brass bands and uniforms only to replace them with the modern churches equivalent of the same thing. Songbooks have been replaced by the screen, flags by banners quoting Scripture, brass bands by praise and worship groups and the uniform by jeans and a t-shirt. So I ask myself today, how proud am I to be a Salvationist and will I stand up for and defend the Army and our beliefs not just to the outside world but to those who stand next to me in the ranks.

My heart is saddened by how often I sit around a bunch of Salvationists and hear them blast the Army. Their attitude is one of dislike for the Army's policies, principles, traditions and beliefs. There is always talk of how we need to change and adapt, of how outdated our ministries and methods are. People talk about “the old days” not with a sense of pride but disdain. It offends me that people will happily take a pay check, house, car, medical insurance, college education...and yet have nothing good to say about the organization that is providing it all. Now I'm not saying that we don't need to adapt and move with the times but we need to be proud of our heritage and realize that The Salvation Army was founded not solely on the principles of William Booth but the principles of Jesus Christ. I love a church growth book

as much as the next guy but I think we need to stop trying to transform our congregations into Willow Creeks and Ginghamburgs. We are who we are and we do a lot right. Yes we can learn from other groups/denominations but we need to remain Salvationists at our core and in our Corps!

I know of congregations who never even pick up a red songbook – man are they missing out on some incredible songs! I know of soldiers and officers who only wear their uniforms when they “have” to – the words to a beautiful chorus come to my mind when I put on my tunic and step on the platform, “In royal robes I don’t deserve, I live to serve your majesty.” I know of far too many of our people who are confused doctrinally because we as officers are confused doctrinally.

By this point I’m sure if you are still reading this you are wondering who wrote this and who do they think they are?! – Well I’ll tell you – I am a woman who strives to live my calling every day, who feels privileged that The Army lets me serve and trusts me not only with thousands of dollars but to teach and preach Jesus to people. I don’t have any Salvation Army tattoos and I don’t have a picture of Brengle next to my bed but I do have a passion and respect for who we are as Salvationists and of our heritage.

During Holy Week I attended services hosted by local congregations that were well attended by each of the churches in the area. It cracked me up everyday because as I looked around I could easily identify each of the different congregations – each of them has a “look” – but as I looked around at my people I realized how diverse we are. From the man who owns his own business and is a first generation Salvationist, to the teenage girl who has grown up in the Army and loves it with the passion of Booth, a former prostitute redeemed by God who is taking soldiership classes and can’t wait to put on her uniform and a mentally challenged senior citizen who struggles to speak and is hard to understand but walks daily in God’s grace. This is who we are! This is our heritage; this should be a source of pride. We are doing soldiership classes with five people who literally can not wait to put on their uniforms and join the Army and I want them to join the authentic Army of Booth and not some watered down version.

So what is the answer? Man, I wish I knew – but what I do believe is that God is calling us back to our roots – our roots in Him. God is calling us to a life of holiness and purity; He is calling us to be true to His Word. If we choose to serve and worship Him through the Army then I believe He is calling us to be true to who we are as Salvationists, to be true to our beliefs and our heritage.

The fact is women are still weeping, children are still hungry, men are still in and out of prison, alcoholism is still a problem, there are way too many lost girls on the street and we can only hope to fight against these injustices and for these people if we are united in the fight and not fighting against each other. Perhaps the devils greatest foothold in the Army is in distracting us with debates about who we are and what traditions we should keep because that way he keeps us distracted from our real mission which is to reach the lost for Christ in Jesus name. So will you join me? You certainly don't have to agree with me, but will you lay down your personal thoughts and philosophies and join with me as we "serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13)?

New Salvationism

Kelly Pope is the YPSM at The South Atlanta Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center.

Living incarnationally gives her a definition for Salvationism in the 21st Century.

There are many questions facing The Salvation Army as the world continues to change at a dizzying pace. Barriers in communication are being eradicated by new technology; the political terrain is unrecognizable from even a decade ago; post-modernism is aggressively challenging the certainties and absolutes of preceding generations. The last few years, however, there has also risen in The Salvation Army world a new kind of Salvationism. It has emerged from the traditions instilled in each soldier and adapted from the new innovations coming out of the Army in the last decade. This New Salvationism is eager to meet the needs of the current culture and shape the future of the Army in the 21st century.

New Salvationism is grounded in doctrine, but open to dialogue. Comfortable with mystery, ready to meet the questioning challenges of post-modernism and confidently grounded in Christ, it is eschatologically focused. Not with the rhetoric of those who attempt to link obscure scripture references to declarations about the future, but through a forward-looking theology focusing on the future of hope. Life changes are not necessarily centered around the mercy seat, but more often formed through challenging discourse and dialogue. In Philippians, when Paul urged Christians to “forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead,” this was not a call to forget all that is in the past. Paul often urged to recall events that were worth remembering, but never to allow past victories to hinder future possibilities. The Salvation Army is steeped in rich tradition, however cannot rely solely on traditions to sustain and shape its future. An eschatological perspective understands that the hope that we have as Christians is future oriented. As Christians we are believers in that hope and as Salvationists we must be dispensers of it.

One approach to the Christian life is an oscillation between a life of action and a life of contemplation. The weight of tradition in the Salvation Army means we can never abandon our service to the poor. However, a life of action is incomplete without the nourishment and restoration drawn from times of quiet dwelling in the presence of God. New Salvationists have been inspired by the 24/7 prayer

movement and shaped by classic spiritual disciplines. They have encountered new faces of God through countless mission trips. While refusing to abandon the mission of The Salvation Army, they increasingly understand that this life of service must be tempered with time intentionally set aside in their schedules for developing a life of contemplation in which the heart becomes a portable sanctuary, ready to accept the challenges of a life filled with intense activity bolstered by a centered peace generating new rotations within the oscillation.

In the last two decades, the church has experienced a cataclysmic shift away from modernity. Unfortunately, The Salvation Army has too-frequently been on the back end of such changes rather than the cutting edge. Salvationists are now more ready than ever to move beyond the confines of the church building and involve themselves in worship that goes beyond music and that is not only practiced on Sunday mornings. It is a participatory worship encompassing every aspect of the individual and naturally flowing into every aspect of life. It ranges from serving a cup of coffee to the homeless who live on the street to starting a children's ministry far beyond the church walls. It is the truest form of living sacrifice as worship becomes not just a series of disconnected experiences, but an overarching life choice. Such worship contains the power to impact the world.

Another attribute of New Salvationism is its renewed commitment to the poor. The Salvation Army as an organization has adapted itself to the wishes and desires of the donors and advisory boards, but New Salvationism challenges this acceptance by defining itself primarily in relation to the poor. New Salvationists are incarnational. They are willing to live with poor people, sharing their struggles and providing a ministry of presence long absent in the communities of those less fortunate. This involves a mutuality of relationship. Rather than just asking the poor to solely share their lives with us, this action is reciprocated as we share our lives with them. Through Christ's incarnation we know that God left the heavenly realms to be with us. Moving beyond imitation for imitation's sake, we instead share our lives as persons meeting persons in the reality that is Christ. Christ's incarnation is experienced through relationships. But that relationship cannot remain one-sided. When I act with and for another person, Christ meets us both and we are transformed.

New Salvationists are willing to sacrifice in order to live a life of simplicity. The needs of others take precedence over their own needs as fullness in Christ can only be achieved as we empty ourselves in service for others. And such service cannot be restricted to a monthly financial donation or a weekly

volunteer activity. It is a continual commitment to place the needs of others above personal needs. It means responding to a call for help at 3:00 in the morning; it is speaking out against injustice in your community; it means showing up consistently in the lives of others so that your commitment and presence can be trusted. However, this is not the essence of a life of simplicity. This is when we weigh the abundance of our possessions against what those possessions represent. The parable of the widow who had little to give was not about how much she gave; but about how much she had left. The de-accumulation of “stuff” liberates our spirit for simplicity and strengthens our ability to inwardly trust in God’s providential care. Our renewed commitment to the poor is a radical mandate and if we are to exemplify this principle action, we must hold fast to its radical nature.

The defining characteristic of New Salvationism is that Salvationism has become an identity for its soldiers. This goes beyond the current denominational culture that insulates many of its members. New Salvationists do not want to be anyone other than Salvationists. They hold their commitment to The Salvation Army close to their hearts as they choose their own futures, journey alongside their friends, and live a life of continued obedience. Identity alone, however, cannot carry us into the 21st century.

The Salvation Army was birthed in London when William Booth sought to meet the needs of the urban poor created by the Industrial Revolution. These people came to the city looking for work and were often unable to find it. They subsisted on low wages with barely enough to survive, and so were the working poor. William Booth and his Army all pre-existed the emergence of the welfare state. Now The Salvation Army faces a different challenge - the idle poor. They are those unable to work because of the support they receive from welfare, trapped in a cycle that penalizes those who step outside of it. We must follow the examples of William and Catherine Booth for inspiration, but understand that their example cannot inform us as our world is different than the world of London in 1865. We need new wineskins to hold creative approaches and future-focused strategies for reaching others.

In the last decade, there have been a number of initiatives pulling Salvationists out of complacency and allowing them to dream about what TSA can become in this century. In the mid-1990s, a group of Salvationists from the United Kingdom gathered to pray about their church and that gathering turned into a movement called Roots which swept across four continents. In 1997, an International Youth Congress called together young people from across the globe to meet in South Africa. The relationships

formed at this event opened a global perspective of The Salvation Army world for those who attended. In 2001, the 614 network was birthed. An idea employing core values that built upon Salvation Army principles of how to reach the poor in an urban context. Today, there are 614 communities in Canada, the US, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. These movements among others have shaped Salvationism into becoming an identity of action, and also an identity of contextualization. New Salvationism needs to consider these initiatives and re-imagine new ways to contextualize the vision of the Salvation Army into new communities, traverse new vistas, and discover new horizons.

The Salvation Army is indeed changing as we move forward in the 21st century. William Booth once wrote:

“Beginning as I did with a clean sheet of paper, wedded to no plan...willing to take a leaf out of anyone's book...above all, to obey the direction of the Holy Spirit...we tried various methods and those that did not answer we unhesitatingly threw overboard and adopted something else.”

May we too follow the direction of the Holy Spirit and take responsibility for our part in envisioning the future of The Salvation Army.

Evangelism?

Captain Melanie Falin is the Director of the Family Life Center at Evangeline Booth College in Atlanta, Georgia. Here she recounts a valuable lesson learned and how it reshaped her view of what evangelism really is.

As a young officer fresh out of training, I was fired up to rush into my new community to change the world for Christ. My husband and I were assigned an outpost to sink our teeth into. What a fantastic first assignment! We started worship services in a school cafeteria and thrived on the challenge of making a difference in the neighborhood. Less than half a year later we were worshipping in a gorgeous building with all the bells and whistles. We were blessed, and our community started to take an interest. People were curious to see what the Salvation Army was going to do in their neighborhood - for better or worse. Many of them would visit on Sunday morning. That's how I met Tiffany. Tiffany was one of the neighborhood folks who almost got away.

I'll never forget the day Tiffany changed the way I approached evangelism. I was rushing around before the meeting trying to make sure everything was perfect: lighting the candles, double checking the program, coordinating with program participants, etc. A life-long klutz, as I was trying to get it all right I tripped – probably over my own feet. After Tiffany watched the whole thing unravel she came over and said, and I quote, "It's good to see that you're human! Before, I never thought I could approach you because you appeared to have everything so together. Now that I see you're normal we can be friends!" She later told me she was about to leave the corps to look for another church until she saw me trip. We quickly became friends and later she became a soldier at our corps.

Ironically, Tiffany and I would attend the USA's National Seminar on Evangelism as delegates together. As I continued to develop my evangelistic skills, I would pull the moment with Tiffany out of my mind and view it from different angles. I know there are an infinite number of methods for evangelism; there's the open air, door-to-door, Alpha, the community corps event, the tract, you get the idea. All of them are good and serve their purpose. But what I have learned to be the most effective method of

evangelism is personal/relational evangelism. One that is deplete of all the trappings of “technique” and full of raw honesty.

There is nothing more influential than a genuine personal relationship with someone. The most poignant example I can think of are the disciples. During the last years of his life, Jesus lived, ate, and prayed with the disciples, teaching them along the way. The relationships He built with them came as a result of authentic love. His influence over them was so strong that nearly all would choose to die for Him.

We live in a skeptical world. Politicians lie, infomercials misinform, and evangelists who claim absolute morality are revealed to be human like the rest of us. The days of contrived evangelistic methods are over! Our culture is savvy, even sensitive to perceived manipulation. Oh sure, you can be intentional. But programming for the sake of numbers or to get someone nominally “saved”, only to leave them at the altar in pursuit of the next person is no longer acceptable. Instead, just be authentic and willing to invest your time in others. Be the unique individual that God has made you to be in order to speak into the lives around you. This may mean that you don’t reach every single person in your midst...and Jesus didn’t either.

This brings me back to my friend Tiffany and the thought of never having the chance to develop that relationship with her. What repelled her from me, and Christianity, was the thought that she had to reach some sort of unattainable perfection in order to have a relationship with God. I had a special uniform, a special language, a special job...*a special wedge!* She couldn’t see me through the image of the officer that I was projecting. On the converse, instead of focusing on my people when they walked in the door, I was worried that the candles got lit and the program was perfect. It’s not about the program or the perfection, and dare I say, it’s not about the numbers either. It’s about conveying a uniquely authentic relationship with God to others.

Women in Leadership: Talent vs. Tokenism

Cadet Andrea Hoover (Prayer Warriors, USA Southern Territory) looks at where and how to place women within The Salvation Army.

William Booth was once asked the question, “Why do you have women for leaders?” William Booth replied, “Because they often lead better than the men” (www1.salvationarmy.org.uk). As this quote catches your attention, consider the role of women in leadership in The Salvation Army. Certainly throughout the history of the Army, we were influenced either directly or indirectly by women such as; Phoebe Palmer, Suzanna Wesley, Catherine Booth and Evangeline Booth. Young Eliza Shirley had the vision for the Army in the United States and Evangeline Booth became the first woman General of The Salvation Army. Later Eva Burrows followed in her footsteps. All of these women were influential and talented leaders used to further the kingdom of God.

Throughout the Bible, God uses women in ordinary ways for extraordinary purposes. Scriptures give details of women’s influence on society and the importance of their role in the family. Scripture never down plays the talents, intellect or abilities of women. These women were influential because of their character and faithfulness to God (MacArthur).

For many decades there has been controversy over women in leadership positions and even more so, over women in ministry. Some would say that the church is a “guy’s club” which devalues the capabilities of women in ministry. Within the church in general, some have used scripture to back their view point that women should only be involved in women’s and children’s ministries, while others have used scripture to support women serving as pastors and elders (Kimball). The view of women in leadership in our society is starting to evolve beyond placing a woman in a leadership position just for diversity’s sake.

Some women have had the privilege of being in positions of leadership in ministry, but were these women placed in leadership positions based on talent or tokenism? Certainly the view of women in

ministry is a little different than years past and is becoming more widely accepted. Bringing a different and complimentary perspective to worship, the presence of women in ministry is changing the face of the church. Yet some people remain concerned that women bring too much femininity to worship (Kimball). Certainly women and men bring varied gifts and talents to the table. The goal should be to place the right person in the right position regardless of gender.

This leads me to question, are women being utilized in the Army to their fullest potential? The Army has led the way for the use of women in ministry for many years. Early on in the history of the Army, William and Catherine Booth entrusted the women to open new corps and evangelize communities. Over the years, this practice has changed slightly. We still have a higher percentage of women in ministry positions than most denominations; but I have to wonder, are women placed in the positions in which they are most talented? I think we are advancing in that direction more and more with the recent appointment of a female Divisional Commander and other women appointed to non-traditional female positions in the Southern Territory.

Imagine the changes that would take place in the church when men and women are prayerfully placed in positions not merely based on gender, but in areas of spiritual giftedness. Uniquely different, men and women were created to compliment one another and partner in ministry. Despite marital status, both genders can work together in ministry. Few churches, if any, ordains husband and wife teams to minister to the needs of others as does the Army. Regardless of gender, the church and The Salvation Army should respect and empower those exceptional people who have felt God's call on their lives. The goal is a mutually shared ministry in which God uses the gifts and talents of ordinary men and women in extraordinary ways to lead His people.

<http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/>

Kimball, Dan. *They Like Jesus But Not The Church: Insights From Emerging Generations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.

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Blood and Fire. Do We Really Have Both?

As the Assistant Corps Officer at The Atlanta Temple Corps, Lieutenant Jimmy Taylor leads *Light on the Hill*, a contemporary expression of Salvation Army worship. We sing the song and pray the prayer; Jimmy imagines what it would be like if it happened.

Emblazoned on our flag are the words "Blood and Fire." The blood of Jesus frees us and the fire of the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. But is it truly happening? Is the fire of the Spirit present in the Army today? Maybe at your corps you can say, "Absolutely, without a shadow of a doubt," but what about the corps around the corner and the one in the adjacent city and the one on the other side of the world. If we are going to be so bold as to stitch it on our standard shouldn't it ring true throughout the ranks? So I ask what would happen to The Salvation Army as a whole; our corps; the communities that we live and work in, if God really did send His Spirit's fire? This is a question that I have asked myself a lot recently. How would our ministry and mission change; or would it? Would our Army change or would it continue in the vein that it has for decades?

The Holy Spirit arrived at Pentecost as a rushing wind that exploded into tongues of fire. It filled the disciples and everyone else in the room. It filled them so intensely that they couldn't hold it in. They had to tell someone. This drove them into streets where they proclaimed the Gospel to anyone that would listen. Wow, what an amazing experience! But, if the same Holy Spirit is here with us today and the same fire fills us, are we seeing the same results? Are we content sitting in our pews, reading our Bibles, singing our hymns and remaining virtually unchanged and uncharged? Do we have the same burning in our gut that the disciples had that Pentecost morning? If the Spirit's fire fell on us right now or entered a room in which we were gathered for worship would it make a bit of difference? Would we even notice or care? As at Pentecost, would we run to the streets and tell people about our experience? How would the communities that we live and work in change if we became so consumed by this holy fire that we could not stay silent?

I have been to corps where when you walk in there just seems to be something missing and I have been to corps that have been set ablaze. Which one is your's? Does your corps burn with the Blood and Fire

spirit we are to be charged up with? Are your services bland and your soldiers lifeless? Perhaps the Holy Spirit is chomping at the bit waiting for you to allow Him to wreck your service in a holy, chaotic blitz. Again this is not every corps, officer or soldier in the Salvation Army world. However, if we are all going to say we are one Army then we need to think as one army, for armies are only as strong as their most vulnerable soldier, which brings me to our personal lives.

What if the Holy Spirit's fire **REALLY** ignited the lives of our officers and soldiers? What if Salvationists lived lives that were so blazingly passionate for the Gospel of Jesus Christ that everything else was consumed by its flame?

In far too many places, in my opinion, we have lost our mission and drive to serve those hurting both physically and spiritually. I believe this grieves the Spirit. When we do not carry out the mission that we have been tasked with both spiritually and socially, we little by little begin to extinguish the fire that the Spirit has ignited.

Imagine what God could do with this Army if we allowed the Holy Spirit to take over. Imagine the lives that could be changed. Imagine how our corps would explode with people with an unquenchable fervor for the cause of reaching the least, the last and the lost. In places where complacency had once reigned, Christ would rule. Our Officers whose hearts may have cooled would burn with a passion to save souls and grow them spiritually. Our buildings would become places of spiritual refuge. Our uniforms would be recognized as symbols of hope. Our congregations would become unified. Our people would love without discrimination. The possibilities are limitless!

The Holy Spirit must take hold of us and thrust us into the fray. We are an Army and armies fight. The Holy Spirit, according to our doctrine, regenerates us into new creations. Oh, Holy Spirit come. Regenerate this Army into the fighting force that You raised us up to be. Renew us and fill Your people, Your soldiers and Your officers. Reclaim us for Your purposes. Remove our contentment for the status quo. Restore to us the Fire of Your Holy Spirit. Inspire us to reach out beyond our walls. Inspire us to intervene in people's lives. Cause us to hurt for those who are hurting; weep with those in mourning; and fight for those who can not defend themselves. Holy Spirit come and renew Your Salvation Army. May our motto of "Blood and Fire" become something we truly possess and are willing to fight and die for.

Consider the words of our founder:

Send the Fire

Gen. William Booth

Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame, Send the fire!

Thy blood - bought gift today we claim, Send the fire!

Look down and see this waiting host,

Give us the promised Holy Ghost,

We want another Pentecost,

Send the Fire!

God of Elijah hear our cry: Send the fire!

To make us fit to live or die, Send the fire!

To burn up every trace of sin, to bring the light and glory in,

The revolution now begin, Send the fire!

'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead, Send the fire!

The fire will meet our every need, Send the fire!

For strength to ever do the right,

For grace to conquer in the fight,

For power to walk this world in white, Send the Fire!

To make our weak hearts strong and brave, Send the fire!

To live a dying world to save, Send the fire!

Oh see us on Thy altar lay

Our lives, our all, this very day,

To crown the offering now we pray, Send the fire!

General William Booth

Send the Fire

Send the Fire

Go Ahead and Keep Your 10%!

The always provocative Cory Harrison takes a look at tithing and comes up with an interesting conclusion.

My wife and I administer a Corps in a fairly affluent community in the United States. We have Soldiers at our Corps, including ourselves, who “bring home” a fairly significant amount of money comparative to about 95% of those we live life with us as part of our ministry.

Like most churches we have financial commitments; budgets to meet and expenses to pay out; a café that runs 6 days a week and we have just agreed to provide 3 meals a day open to all who live in our neighborhood. We estimate that we will see over 500 a day for those meals alone. We have just hired a full-time staff member to focus completely on evangelism and out-reach and a crazy Salvation Army World Services goal.

In the midst of knowing all that, I am about to make a dramatic decision at our Corps. I am shortly going to instruct every Soldier to go ahead and keep their 10% ‘tithe check.’ Oh, and not just for this week or this month but forever (or until I get fired for this and they bring in the next person).

How did I come about this decision?

It all started with a New Year’s resolution to read 52 books this year. It then lead to a trip to the library, and has now lead to me reading A.J. Jacobs book, *The Year of Living Biblically*. The author asks a spiritual advisor about how much to tithe and the response is, “You shouldn’t get too legalistic about it. Give what you can afford. And then give some more. It should feel like a sacrifice.” Jacobs writes, “I study my Bible for insight. It seems at the time of Ancient Israel—before the Romans took over—no one paid taxes per se. The tithes were the taxes.”

This got me thinking as to if Jacob’s was right. I mean, if this was the case, what was tithing for? Jacob’s doesn’t cover this in his book, he just moves past it as if it were just one out of the 613 laws he is trying to live out. But for some reason it stuck with me, like a splinter in my brain, as Morpheus would say.

So here is a bit of what I have come up with...

I learned that I have Jacob seems to have had it a bit backwards, or perhaps my pastors did.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's

household, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."—Gen. 28:20-22

This Scripture seems to contradict about 99% of the sermons that have ever been preached on the subject of tithing. The messages that I always heard were always about if you give...then God will. The always told me, "You have to give until it hurts and then God will come through for you." But prior to these verses Jacob realizes that God was there and he begins to proposition Him. "IF God will do this and IF God will do that and IF God will come through on these things over here, THEN I will give Him a tenth." Isn't it funny that God honored this throughout history?

Let's ask ourselves a reasonable question: Just how did Jacob actually give a tithe to God?

Did he personally hand it to God? No, no one has ever even seen God.

Did Jacob tithe to an angel? No, angels do not need and can't use tithes.

Did Jacob send his tithe to Heaven by Celestial Express? No.

Did he take it to the local church? No, there was no local church.

Did he take it to the Temple? No, there was no temple.

Did he give it directly to one of the Levite priests? No, there were no Levites as yet.

How then did Jacob tithe to God?

Here are a couple ways that he accomplished his task of TITHING.

But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

Jacob pulls the whole TITHING thing off just the way the LORD instructed. He got his family together and they ate the tithe in an act of communion and celebration.

Can you imagine being confronted by a pastor who asks about your tithing and you tell him that rather than putting it in the offering plate, you took your family to _____?

There was another way.

At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the

fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

The second way that Jacob gave his TITHE was by gathering the FOREIGNERS, the FATHERLESS, and the WIDOWS, who lived in his town together so they could come and eat and be satisfied.

The TITHE is again celebrated with not only family but with the alien (and my version does not stipulate that they be only 'legal' aliens), the fatherless, and the widows who live in the town. The tithe is again eaten up because the basic idea of the tithe was that it was consumable not depositable (i.e. a check).

I like this verse from Leviticus 27:30-33:

"And all the TITHE of the LAND, whether of the SEED of the land, or of the FRUIT, of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the TITHE of the HERD, or of the FLOCK, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it..."

We learn a great deal about tithing in this section of Scripture: The tithe comes from the "land," not the air or the sea. Fishermen were not required to tithe fish. It was the "seed" or agricultural products from the fields that was holy to God and tithable. Products from "trees" were to be tithed. This not only included the fruit, but oils, etc. Of "herds or flocks" it was the "tenth" that passed under the rod that was holy and dedicated to God.

Here is exposed another lie of my modern teaching. It was not the first tenth, but rather the tenth tenth that belonged to God, contrary to every minister I have ever heard, who insists that the first tenth always belongs to God.

Another interesting point is this. If a herdsman had nine cattle, he didn't tithe his cattle at all! Also notice that God did not even require the best of the cattle, just the tenth one to pass under the rod even if it was the runtiest of them all. Remember, we are talking about tithing and not sacrificing (animals for sacrifice always had to be without blemish).

Did you notice that this summary at the very end of the book of Leviticus does not mention the tithing of money?

So here is what we are thinking of doing at our Corps. In an effort to be as accountable to the original idea of tithing as possible, we are instituting a food tithe. I believe it was in the gospel of John Maxwell that I read, "My grandfather had a farm. My father had a garden. I have a can opener."

We understand that society has changed and so has eating. One of our goals, as we move into providing meals for our community, is to establish the art of the long meal. We believe that the earth is the LORD's and everything in it. We believe eating together to be a very spiritual act.

We are requiring each Soldier of the Salvation Army at our Corps to provide a tenth of their food for the alien, fatherless, widow, homeless, poor, lonely, and needy within our community. We are seeking to develop a community in which we bring a tenth into the storehouse and prepare a meal and eat together.

If you are ever in the St. Petersburg, FL area, you can stop by, keep your 10% and enjoy a meal with us.