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In This Issue

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

Colonel Janet Munn Salute

Issue 139, June -July 2022

Editorial Introduction *page 3*

Major Stephen Court

The Six Great Moments Of The Day *page 5*

Olivia Munn-Shirsath and Nealsen Munn

The Disciplines *page 9*

Colonel Janet Munn

Fasting - The First Works of Jesus *page 12*

Colonel Janet Munn

A Short History of Fasting *page 16*

Colonel Janet Munn

To Love and Serve Him Supremely all my Days *page 18*

Colonel Janet Munn

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Foundations *page 22*

Colonel Janet Munn

Continued Obedient Faith as Holy Witness Through Participation in

Small Groups *page 46*

Colonel Janet Munn

Introduction to Discipleship *page 61*

Colonel Janet Munn

Discipleship – Part Two *page 64*

Colonel Janet Munn

Discipleship – Part Three *page 68*

Colonel Janet Munn

How Long Lord, How Long? *page 72*

Colonel Janet Munn

A Call To War *page 75*

Colonel Janet Munn

Retirement Salute *page 80*

Captain Nicole Poore

Editorial Introduction

By Major Stephen Court, editor

Greetings in Jesus' name. Mercy and peace to you from God our Father. Welcome to JAC139 - the 139th issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity, reaching all the way back to the previous century. And following hard on the heels of JAC138 - the Richard Munn Issue - we present to you JAC139 - the Janet Munn Salute.

Colonel Janet Munn retires from active service during the release time period of JAC139. Munn is The Salvation Army's apostle of fullness (holiness+), spreading this full Gospel widely. She is a descendant of the Biblical persistent widow, launching and leading lengthy extraordinary global non-stop prayer and advancing the cause of justice. She is champion of women (the world's most marginalised people group). She is mother to a generation of younger warriors. So, we're collecting a selection of her writings from past JACs to salute her and edify you.

But to kick things off, we look to her children, and, with permission, share their retirement meeting eulogy:

The Six Great Moments Of The Day - Olivia Munn-Shirsath and Nealson Munn

The Disciplines

Fasting - The First Works of Jesus

A Short History of Fasting

To Love and Serve Him Supremely all my Days

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Foundations

Continued Obedient Faith as Holy Witness Through Participation in Small Groups [aka Wesley's "Class Meetings"]

Introduction to Discipleship

Discipleship – Part Two

Discipleship – Part Three

How Long Lord, How Long?

A Call To War

And to wrap up JAC139 content, a personal Retirement Salute by Australian Captain Nicola Poore. How about this excerpt? "The concentration of Christ in you has a gravitational pull that draws others into his presence. It is rare and it is beautiful." Read the whole article!

This will whet your appetite for more Munn. You can read her books, and listen to her teaching and preaching. And if you ever exhaust that, we invite you to the 138 previous issues of JAC offering a free treasury of content for the eager reader. Should Jesus tarry, stay tuned for more. Stay close to Jesus. Much grace.

The Six Great Moments Of The Day

By Olivia Munn-Shirsath and Nealson Munn

*Presented at the retirement ceremony of Colonels Janet and Richard Munn,
April 22nd, 2022*

Nealson's remarks:

If you know my family — and if you're here today that's probably a safe assumption — you'll know we love lists. "The List Anointing," it has been called. (It must have been called that by one of us at some point.)

My dad's affinity for lists once proved valuable when he was the Divisional Commander in Northern New England. Someone in a leadership meeting unexpectedly asked him to outline his vision for The Salvation Army in the region. I don't actually know what he said, but I know that he outlined — extemporaneously and completely off the cuff — a seven-fold vision for the Northern New England division that was cited as a set of foundational, guiding organizational principles for years to come. I'm sure it was a great list. But, just know that the next time you hear a multi-pronged vision for the future of the Army communicated by someone at headquarters, there is a non-zero chance it was improvised on the spot.

Possibly the most famous of my dad's lists within our family is "the six great moments of the day." Stepping into a hot shower. Arriving at the office and greeting esteemed colleagues. Sharing an evening meal with the family. They were all great moments — although, I know my teenage self once called you a "voluptuary" based on the fact that some of the moments were more sensory pleasures like "enjoying that first sip of coffee" than moments of elevated spiritual import like "leading someone to Christ."

Well, if my dad can have six great moments in a single day, imagine how many great moments the two of you have experienced in 35 years of officership. Some were triumphant, some were difficult, and some were humorous. Livi and I wanted to reflect on a few of the "great moments" that have captured the heart and the impact of our parents' ministry together.

"Go to church!"

My parents' first corps appointment was Camden, New Jersey in the late 1980s, at the time a community struggling with industrial decline and high levels of violent crime. I'll sometimes hear my friends who are corps officers now talk about "doing pick-ups," driving from house to house in a 12-passenger van, picking up kids to take them to the corps. My mother was doing pick-ups one Sunday in Camden, with me as a three year-old in my car seat. She entered one house to find the aftermath of a wild party the night before, with adults lying drunk, stoned, and unconscious on the floor, and dazed, unsupervised children saying they wouldn't be able to come to the corps that day. When my mom returned to the van, alone, she was crying. I asked why, and she explained that the kids wouldn't be able to come to the corps with us. With the innocence (and ingenuity) of a toddler, I suggested: "We should put up a big sign that says GO TO CHURCH!"

We've told this story a few times within our family, usually highlighting my childlike innocence and optimism. (Although I defy you to come up with a better church growth strategy.) But what strikes me in reflecting on this bittersweet scene is the innocence, the commitment, and the sincerity of heart you had in that moment — you were a young woman, still in your twenties, far from your home turf of Danvers, Massachusetts, driving around a rough neighborhood to bring kids from broken homes to church at The Salvation Army. For so many of the amazing things you've done since — the leadership roles, the international appointments, the highly visible platforms for teaching, preaching, and the performing arts— the spirit behind it all starts there, in that humble moment, driving from door to door to say to someone in a difficult situation: "I'm here for you. I'm welcoming you into this community. You have a home here." *Go to church.*

"Let the Walls Come Down" and "Lord of the City"

We have Bill Rollins in the house today. Did you think we were going to let this retirement ceremony slip by without making a *Lord of the City* reference? Are you crazy? These days, I tend to think of my mom and dad as specialists in areas like leadership development, education, ethics, and social justice. But, I would argue you've always been artists and creatives at heart. Within a year or two of the Berlin Wall coming down, my mom as a young DYS staged a Pink Floyd-esque destruction of a literal brick wall set to Steve Green's song "Let the Walls Come Down." Meanwhile my dad and Bill — in a bold challenge to Gowans and Larsson's cultural supremacy in the domain of Salvationist musical-writing duos — composed a musical about finding God in the context of a tough, chaotic city in decline. Nowadays you won't find my mom leading a sacred dance troupe pushing over styrofoam bricks, and it's been a while since my dad wrote a rap verse for Bill to set to music (which, actually ... we need to get back to that). But the basic themes you explored through those pioneering artistic projects are still there: racial reconciliation, bridging cultural divides, healing and renewal in a context of urban decay. If you've followed my mom and dad's work at the ISJC over the last couple of years, it all sounds awfully familiar! I seriously feel like we might need a "Let the Walls Come Down 2.0" ... and let's just say I would absolutely watch an Off-Broadway revival of *Lord of the City*.

"I quit" : Dad's youth ministry chapter unceremoniously draws to a close

Sometimes people discover their vocation through a sudden, blinding epiphany — think Saul on road to Damascus. Sometimes, with equal suddenness and certainty, they discover that it's time for their vocation, or one aspect of their vocation, to end. My dad had such a moment as a Corps Officer in Manchester, Connecticut in the mid-1990s. After a brilliant and fulfilling career in youth ministry that began long before he became an officer, as a counselor at Camp Wonderland in 1976, it was the young men of the Boys' Adventure Corps at Manchester Citadel that finally broke him. (And by "young men" I mean basically nine year-olds.) While chaperoning a lock-in / slumber-party at the corps — by this time a Captain, an M.Div., a father of two, and a respected pillar of the community— my dad had one too many of his admonishments to stop talking go ignored, one too many vows of fearsome reprisals be met with giggling and fart sounds, and something in his spirit broke, or was perhaps set free. I've heard you describe the sense of peace that settled on you as

you felt the Lord releasing you from your calling to youth ministry, and you lay there in the darkness of the Manchester Corps gym reflecting, with relief and acceptance: "I quit." You handed over the leadership of the Adventure Corps to two young adults from the congregation, who promptly turned it into an indoor dodgeball league. Attendance tripled. I think perhaps the lesson here is that sometimes God calls us to something just for a season. And also that sometimes an important part of leadership is, in the words of John Gowan, to "loose them ... Let 'em go."

Olivia's remarks:

I was in the womb at my parents' commissioning and ordination in June 1987. I've grown up quite literally alongside their ministry, strapped on as an infant, stealing epaulets as a toddler, relishing in Sunbeams, sacred dance, brass band (yes, brass band...) and homeleague (yes, homeleague... which I was distressed to miss once my half-day kindergarten switched from afternoons to mornings, and declared, "What will 'the girls' do without me?!"). As a teenager and young adult I came of age as my parents' ministry and leadership was also in a sense coming into maturity. I watched with curiosity as mom and dad discovered even more specificity in their sense of calling from the Lord.

"Don't forget us. Please, don't forget us."

During my adolescence in Maine my mother developed a laser-like focus on the souls of the officers under their care. She's been a fiery preacher for many years, shy as she may have felt, but this platform ministry almost pales in comparison to her mother-like care for "the one." She began small groups for officers across the division, and the non-ironically named "Fullness" prayer and fasting retreats (at which, by the way, I consumed literally 17 hot chocolates and vomited). Then she launched "Army on Its Knees," leading the territory in a year of nonstop prayer, and subsequently the whole world into a year of nonstop prayer while at the ICO. At this point my mother's ministry was known as "spiritual formation," and that is accurate.

But the fourth moment that I want to tell was actually a turning point. At the end of an eight week ICO session, one female officer from India and one female officer from Pakistan approached my mother to say goodbye. They had developed a sense of trust and love by this point in time, and the women wanted to say something to her before they left. They simply said: "Don't forget us; please, don't forget us," and mom knew exactly what they meant. They were referring to the oppression they faced at home, simply due to their gender. This moment grabbed my mom's heart, and as a result she shifted her doctoral studies focus from spiritual formation to leadership. She wrote her thesis on the use and abuse of power, specifically in regards to gender in the Salvation Army. She has continued to advocate for women and people of color in every appointment since, many times at great personal cost. This moment at the ICO is evidence of mom's keen ear: she's quick to listen to people, and to the Holy Spirit. And the result is real Kingdom liberation and strengthening.

The Elder

My childhood memories of my father's officership are a strange mix: sometimes he was sitting at a huge desk (in an office with fun historical figurines and a full mini

brass band!) meticulously calculating the weekly corps finances in a big black book. Other times he was hamming it up on stage at youth events, which earned him the affectionate title “the peanut butter man!” from one youngster, unaware that it was the DC he was speaking to. And still other times he was preaching up a storm and “fishing” during altar calls — with discernment and power.

As my father’s ministry refined over the years, he continued to show his theological chops, and that which the training college defined as “programmatic gifting.” His excellence in study and his clever use of words led to the creation of memorable and poignant territorial events such as the Kaleidoscope Congress, the Moral and Social Issues Symposium, and Nealson’s all time favorite Camp Meetings: 2007. All five living Generals on one stage!

These are not the moments that I esteem the most valuable. As his former corps officer, I most appreciated his faithfulness as the adult Sunday School teacher at the Times Square Corps. From my perspective, he brought the same caliber of research, intelligence, pastoral thoughtfulness, and preparation to this as to a congress. Rather than five generals, the class included five types: Glory Shop students, young professionals, ARC beneficiaries, Hell’s Kitchen locals, and often a few Salvationist-tourists. Starting on time with an endearing: “Alright gang, 45 minutes — is that the social contract?”, my dad was able to ensure that this diverse group of learners each felt both included and challenged. Somehow, all of us together, illuminated by the Spirit of Christ in our midst ... a true “kaleidoscope” effect. If you’ve been to a Salvation Army Sunday School class before, you know the scene.

And the fifth moment is simply this: One Thanksgiving Sunday, in true Salvationist form, dad donned an apron over his uniform shirt and carved the turkey for the corps, because he was the only person present who knew how. This earned him the nickname “the elder” at this youthful corps, a sign of his growth since his “peanut butter man” days. He is a true elder, in the most biblical sense, worthy of double honor for being a man of integrity, sound doctrine, and love.

In closing

And that’s really what has marked both mom and dad over 35 years of officership: Love.

Nealson and I have often noted that the same qualities that made them excellent corps officers is what also made them excellent international leaders. It’s their love, which, after all talent and gifting is long gone — is the more excellent way.

The Disciplines

By Colonel Janet Munn

When you hear the word “discipline” what comes to mind? Punishment? Self-denial? Difficulty? Usually the word conjures up negative feelings of discomfort. One definition of “discipline” is: to instruct, train, correct.

The word *disciple* occurs some 269 times in the New Testament with almost all the references found in the Gospels and Acts. “Disciple” means “a learner”. It implies that the person not only accepts the views of the teacher, but that he/she is also in practice an adherent (*Practical Word Studies in the New Testament*).

*For physical **training/discipline** is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:8*

“The disciple is to discipline him/herself in godliness as much as an Olympic athlete exercises his/her body. How much energy, effort, time, and dedication do Olympic athletes put into their training? Their sport is their life—unequivocally so. So it is with the disciple: godliness is to be our life. All of our energy, effort, time, and dedication are to be given over to godliness” (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*).

What Would Jesus Do?

We could say of Lance Armstrong, five-time winner of the Tour De France, “His life is cycling. His life is disciplined preparation for the Tour De France.” When people think of you, do they conclude that your life is Jesus Christ? Is your life all about the disciplines leading to Christlikeness? Lance Armstrong could not simply hop on his bicycle on the day of a race and expect to win. First he must have consistently and intentionally invested in athletic disciplines. As Christ-followers, we cannot expect to do simply do what Jesus did. First we must consistently and intentionally invest in the spiritual disciplines in which Jesus participated. The spiritual disciplines are a key part to the ability of believers to live like Christ in the world.

No Excuses!

As we consider intentional participation in the spiritual disciplines, here are some foundational truths about God, His purposes in our lives and His provision for a victorious Christian life: 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and **self-discipline**. We have within us, by the Holy Spirit, the power to discipline ourselves. Peter writes, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:3). His power is within us providing us with more than enough for disciplined living. And in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” God is powerfully at work **with** and **in us** to complete the image of Christ in His Church.

We are not alone in the disciplined life! God Himself is working with us by His indwelling Spirit, and He assures us this is true by His Word of promise.

Prodigal Purified

Consider the prodigal son, Luke 15. It took only a few hours to get the prodigal out of the far country, but undoubtedly it took many years to get the far country out of the prodigal. “He was instantly forgiven and justified, declared to be not guilty and given the tokens of acceptance: the ring, the robe and the reception. But almost certainly there were habitual thoughts to conquer, attacks of guilt for wasting the inheritance and the lingering censure of his brother” (*The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*).

This is where spiritual disciplines are essential. They may be defined as life patterns that direct us to God and disciple us more fully into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

E. Stanley Jones observes in *Conversion*, “You cannot achieve salvation by disciplines—it is the gift of God. But you cannot retain it without disciplines”.

The Disciplined Journey

In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard offers a helpful way to survey these practices by considering spiritual growth as a journey with three movements: first, the journey upward (to know and love God better), including the disciplines of solitude: planned availability, thanksgiving: waging war on discontentment, confession: being honest with God, and Bible meditation: crawling through Scripture.

The second movement in the journey is the journey inward (to know and love ourselves better), to include the disciplines of journal keeping and walking through life with Jesus (healing of memories).

Finally, the third movement is the journey outward (to know and love others better). This movement involves the disciplines of intercession, forgiveness, hospitality, social action and spiritual gifts. The order is significant.

Richard Foster divides the disciplines into two categories: disciplines of abstinence (to counteract tendencies to sins of commission) and the disciplines of engagement (to counteract tendencies to sins of omission).

The disciplines of abstinence include solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice. However, these disciplines do not lead to balance in the spiritual life. One struggling disciple held the following conversation with the Lord, “Well Lord, so far so good. I haven’t said anything hurtful or unkind yet today. No conflicts with family members or co-workers. I haven’t lost my temper, had a lustful thought or jealous feeling. But it really is time to get out of bed and start getting ready for work!”

It is not enough to lie in bed and live “holy” lives. We have to get out of bed, and engage the world, interact with people in a holy way, in a way that matters. Thus, the disciplines of engagement are vital. These include study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission.

Your Father Loves You

What is the Father saying to your heart regarding your life as a disciple? Hebrews reminds us that the Lord disciplines those He loves. He loves you dearly and calls you to a life of discipline . . . and victory. Ask your Father how He would have you grow in the practice of spiritual disciplines. Disciplines are not the means of sanctification—that is God’s work—but rather are ways of making ourselves available to God in spiritual growth. May it be said of you, “Her life is Jesus Christ. His life is all about disciplines toward Christlikeness.”

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988);

Fasting - The First Works of Jesus

By Colonel Janet Munn

Greater Works – Who Me?

Jesus said to his followers, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21) and “whoever believes in me, the works that I do they will do also; and greater works than these will they do” (John 14:12). How can this be? What does it mean that we are sent by Jesus? How are we to do the greater works to which Jesus referred?

Jesus Our Model

Mahesh Chavda is a pastor and author of *The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting*. He points out that just as a gymnast must first master elementary moves like a forward roll and a cartwheel, prior to mastering more advanced moves, so must the disciple of Jesus Christ develop the “first works” of Jesus prior to demonstrating the greater works promised by Him.

Before Jesus began his public ministry, first, he went into the wilderness, led by the Spirit, to fast for forty days (Luke 4: 1-2). However, Jesus returned from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). At Jesus’ baptism the Holy Spirit came upon Him. Following the fasting Jesus went forth in the power of the Holy Spirit. If fasting was key for Jesus to operate on this earth in spiritual power, so it is for His disciples. Times of fasting and prayer are the first works we are called to do if we want to do the greater works of Jesus Christ.

Authority vs. Power

Jesus clearly told the disciples that He had given them tremendous spiritual authority (Matthew 10:8), yet when faced with a boy suffering demonic torment, they found themselves unable to set him free. Upon Jesus’ arrival on the scene, the demon was readily driven out, the disciples rebuked for their spiritual impotence. Jesus explained that His effectiveness results from a lifestyle of prayer and fasting (Matthew 17: 14-21).

There are challenges we will face, confrontations with evil we will encounter, that will only result in victory through prayer and fasting. We neglect such a lifestyle to our own detriment.

Fasting – What it is and what it isn’t

In our overeating western culture, it could readily be said of us, “our god is our stomach”, as Paul referred to in Philippians 3:19. Fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Through fasting we put our flesh in its place and give the Spirit first place; we tell our bodies, our appetites to wait; we declare that we do not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In fasting we proclaim that our hunger and thirst after God and His righteousness is greater than our hunger for our next meal.

God does not change. He will not be manipulated. Our fasting does not persuade Him to do something against His will, nor do we impress God with our piety through fasting. Rather we are changed through fasting. The psalmist David said that he humbled himself with fasting (Psalm 35:13). John wrote, “This is how we know what

love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16). Fasting is a way to lay down our lives for one another. When we become aware of someone in need, we can enter into a period of fasting and prayer, laying down our appetites, our physical comfort, for the sake of another as we focus our energies instead on the Lord, on the Scriptures and on intercession. Jesus amplifies this when he spoke of the necessity of those who follow him, to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him (Matthew 16:24).

The Lord's Expectations

In the Old Testament, fasting appears to be a pre-requisite for revival. In Joel chapter 2 prior to the prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, later quoted by Peter at Pentecost, the people of God are challenged to “declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly” (Joel 2:15). Then God promised, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Joel 2:28). Is it possible that greater revival, an increase in the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit on all people is delayed in our day, at least in part as a result of our lack of fasting, our self-indulgence rather than our self-denial? How often do we really say “no” to ourselves, to our own appetites and cravings for the sake of seeking the face of God through fasting and prayer?

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught the disciples how they were to pray and how they were to fast, with an underlying assumption that they would do both (Matthew 6: 5, 16-17). When his disciples were criticized for their lack of dietary restraint relative to John the Baptist's disciples, Jesus assured the critics that when he, the bridegroom, was taken from them, then they would fast (Luke 5: 35).

Benefits of Fasting

As mentioned earlier, in fasting we humble ourselves and we know from the book of James that God gives grace, favor, to the humble (James 4:10). Jesus' example reminds us of the power over temptation connected with fasting (Luke 4). Throughout the book of Acts the early Church gathered corporately for periods of prayer and fasting in order to gain clarity and guidance regarding the will of God. This He made known to His people when they were together seeking Him in prayer and denying themselves of food as they sought Him. Imagine if we as Salvation Army leaders began to make major decisions only as we met together in fasting in prayer, rather than by committee meetings planned around meals!

Pioneers of Prayer and Fasting

Queen Esther called her people, the Jews, to join her in a corporate fast for their deliverance as a people. Anna served in the Temple in Jerusalem around the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, with prayer and fasting. She lived a fasted lifestyle (Luke 2:37) as did John the Baptist. It was during a period of fasting and prayer that God spoke to the gentile Cornelius, the Roman Centurion about contacting Peter which then led to a major shift in understanding regarding the gospel and the Spirit offered also to the gentiles (Acts 10:30-31). The Apostle Paul fasted for safety and deliverance during a fierce storm (Acts 27) and Daniel fasted individually as a gesture of repentance on behalf of the sin of the people (Daniel 9). Jesus began his public ministry immediately following a forty-day fast.

The early church fathers, Polycarp and Tertulian fasted, as did Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and John Wesley. Wesley was so committed to fasting that he

would not approve a candidate for ministry if he did not fast twice a week! How would that policy change our Candidates' Councils and us?

Whenever he became aware that his spiritual power or anointing was weakening, Charles Finney would immediately commence a three-day fast. Following the fast, the presence of God would radiate so powerfully through Finney that people would fall under overwhelming conviction upon his entrance into a room, a building, or even the city limits.

Jonathan Edwards and Charles Haddon Spurgeon would fast and pray in order that they would be able to preach well! A fruitful endeavor indeed.

Types of Fasts

Elmer Towns outlines various types of biblical fasts and their purposes, in his book, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*. These include the Samuel fast, in which people join together to seek God's guidance for them corporately (1 Samuel 7) as well as the Ezra fast, a corporate fast for protection (Ezra 8:22). The Elijah fast is an individual fast to cry out for God's help in time of trouble and discouragement. The Disciples' fast is for spiritual power to exercise authority over the demonic (Matthew 17:21) and the Saint Paul fast is an individual fast for increased light – for an opening of the eyes of the heart (Acts 9: 17-19). God's covenant people agreed together to fast for deliverance from danger and evil in the Esther fast (Esther 4:16) and the Daniel fast is one in which the individual fasts for physical health and strength.

When You Fast

What is the Lord calling you to by way of fasting? Are you to enter into a short-term fast, like Finney's three-day recharging of the spiritual battery? Or disciplined observance of the 40 period of Lent, a season of fasting?

Is God calling you to a fasted lifestyle, like the prophetess Anna or John the Baptist, in which you live in a such a way that you are continually fasting from something or some things? Perhaps you are to give or significantly reduce your intake of certain unhealthy foods. Perhaps you have some hobbies or recreational activities that are not in themselves evil, but that can sometimes take too high a priority in your life and you need to fast from them for a period of time. This will help to re-establish in your heart, your affections and in your calendar, that loving the Lord your God is the number one passion of your life. This could involve fasting from the computer, the Internet, the television, the telephone or sports or movies – anything that can work its way too high up on our list of priorities.

May God help us to enter into the "first works" of Jesus, and from that may we see a great unleashing of the "greater works" in our midst.

Questions

How would a lifestyle of fasting and prayer change the way we currently do business?

What would integration of fasting into our ways of doing and being mean for each of us individually and for The Salvation Army corporately?

Do you desire to be like Jesus? What are you doing by way of intentional discipline to move toward that goal? Could fasting help?

How much are we willing to deny ourselves, to sacrifice, in terms of our bodily appetites, that the Kingdom of God would be more strongly established in these days?

Do you desire to be about the “greater works” of the Lord Jesus? Are you seeing them to the degree that you desire? If not, why not? Could ongoing fasting and prayer, individual and corporate, be part of the answer?

Resources

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A Short History of Fasting

By Colonel Janet Munn

In the Old Testament, fasting appears to be a prerequisite for revival. In Joel, chapter 2, prior to the prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, the people of God are challenged to “declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly” (Joel 2:15). Then God promised, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Joel 2:28). Is it possible that greater revival, an increase in the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit on all people, is delayed in our day, at least in part, as a result of our lack of fasting, our self-indulgence rather than our self-denial? How often do we really say “no” to ourselves, to our own appetites and cravings, for the sake of seeking the face of God through fasting and prayer?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the disciples how they were to pray and fast; His assumption was that they would do both.

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full... 16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face.” Matthew 6: 5, 16-17

When His disciples were criticized for their lack of dietary restraint compared to John the Baptist’s disciples, Jesus assured the critics that when He, the bridegroom, was taken from them, then they would fast.

35 “But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.” Luke 5: 35

Benefits of Fasting

In fasting, we humble ourselves, and we know from the book of James that God gives grace and favor to the humble (James 4:10). Jesus’ example reminds us of the power over temptation connected with fasting (Luke 4). Throughout the book of Acts, the early Church gathered corporately for periods of prayer and fasting in order to gain clarity and guidance regarding the will of God. This He made known to His people when they were together seeking Him in prayer and denying themselves of food as they sought Him. Imagine if we as Salvation Army leaders began to make major decisions only as we met together in fasting and prayer, rather than at meetings planned around meals!

Pioneers of Prayer and Fasting

Queen Esther called her people, the Jews, to join her in a corporate fast for their deliverance as a people. Anna served in the Temple in Jerusalem around the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, with prayer and fasting. She lived a fasting lifestyle (Luke 2:37), as did John the Baptist. It was during a period of fasting and prayer that God spoke to the Gentile Cornelius, the Roman centurion, about contacting Peter, which then led to a major shift in understanding regarding the Gospel and the Spirit offered also to the Gentiles (Acts 10:30-31). The Apostle Paul fasted for safety and deliverance during a fierce storm (Acts 27) and Daniel fasted as a gesture of repentance on behalf of the sin of the people (Daniel 9). Jesus began His public ministry immediately following a 40-day fast.

The early church fathers, Polycarp and Tertulian, fasted, as did Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and John Wesley. Wesley was so committed to fasting that he would not approve a candidate for ministry if he did not fast twice a week! How would that policy change our Candidates' Councils and us?

Whenever he became aware that his spiritual power or anointing was weakening, Charles Finney would immediately commence a three-day fast. Following the fast, the presence of God would radiate so powerfully through Finney that people would fall under overwhelming conviction upon his entrance into a room, a building, or even the city limits.

Jonathan Edwards and Charles Haddon Spurgeon would fast and pray in order that they would be able to preach well!

Types of Fasts

Elmer Towns outlines various types of biblical fasts and their purposes, in his book, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*. These include the Samuel fast, in which people join together to seek God's guidance for them corporately (1 Samuel 7) as well as the Ezra fast, a corporate fast for protection (Ezra 8:22). The Elijah fast is an individual fast to cry out for God's help in time of trouble and discouragement. The Disciples' fast is for spiritual power to exercise authority over the demonic (Matthew 17:21) and the Saint Paul fast is an individual fast for increased light – for an opening of the eyes of the heart (Acts 9: 17-19). God's covenant people agreed together to fast for deliverance from danger and evil in the Esther fast (Esther 4:16) and the Daniel fast is one in which the individual fasts for physical health and strength.

Lieut-Colonel Janet Munn - Secretary for Spiritual Life Development

For more on fasting...

Mike Bickle, *The Rewards of Fasting*

Mahesh Chavda, *The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting*

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

Elmer L. Towns, *Fasting For Spiritual Breakthrough*

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*.

To Love and Serve Him Supremely all my Days

By Colonel Janet Munn

God Loves Supremely

Victoria & Albert Museum London, England

Diana Ross & **The Supremes** – (originally simply *The Supremes* Motown soundtrack)

“Ain’t no mountain high enough
ain’t no river wide enough
and no valley low enough
to keep me from you . . .”

Though you pass through the waters I will be with you.
When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. (Isaiah 43:2)

Love; The Love of God

The Love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell

O love of God
How rich and pure
How measureless and strong
It shall forevermore endure
The saints and angels’ song

Could we with ink the ocean fill
And were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above . . .
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8: 35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
I am convinced that neither life nor death,
neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,
neither height, nor depth. . .
Neither mountains nor rivers nor valleys . . .

Nothing in all creation can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The love of God
How wide, and long and high and deep.
Surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3)

Past finding out
Love surpasses knowledge
The love that will not let us go.
This love seeks and saves the lost.
This love is supreme, and extreme – it desires to cleanse the leper, to forgive the sinner, to heal the broken hearted, to rescue the perishing, to care for the dying.
This love of God – supreme love, this God who loves supremely – always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails

Love covers over a multitude of sins
Love is the most excellent way
1 Corinthians 13

The supreme love of God

God loves us supremely ... *We love Him because He first loved us.*
Because ours is a responsive love -- We can love supremely.

Mad Munn – husband's ancestor, contemporary of Wm & Catherine Booth. Do anything to communicate the gospel.

Love and serve God supremely all my days?
Is this madness? There are lots of other things we could all be doing!
Making some money
Living where we want to live – be comfortable.
Do what we want – not under people's criticism, scrutiny, authority.
Wear what we want.

Office door in Manchester corps:
2 Corinthians 5:13-15

If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God.

If we are in our right mind, it is for you.

For the love of Christ compels us – because we are convinced that one died for all.

And therefore all died.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Our lives are not our own – because we believe Christ died for us and for all – therefore we **MUST** live to love and serve Him supremely.
To serve the present age.
Beyond our comforts.

Beyond what is to what can be
Beyond our personal preferences to the will of God,

To love and serve him supremely all my days

All My Days

Basketball team with an excellent record during the games, but their record showed that whenever this very good team got into overtime, if the game was ever tie score at the end of the regular time, and therefore the teams went into overtime, this particular team ***always lost in overtime***. Otherwise good record.

Don't lose in overtime – all my days!

Live in obedience for a while and then falter – suffer great loss.

Victim of our own successes. Great grace, anointing, prosperity, blessing upon our lives, ministry. Labours.

- Retired International Leader of TSA – great spiritual pressure and temptation
- Order of the Founder – elder, hero, mentor of mine – “under tremendous demonic oppression”
- Retired life-time missionary to Africa – faced death many times, nearly 4 decades in highly unstable African context. Now retired in England – described this time in her life as the most difficult yet – most temptations to her own soul, to compromise, to say “no” to the Spirit’s demands.
- My own father in retirement – lifetime of obedience and faithful service to the Lord as devout follower of Jesus and local church pastor over period of 50 years.

Love and serve him supremely all my days

Don't lose in overtime –

- Best wine for last. Deepest communion with Jesus Christ.
- Revival among our retired officers
- Wisdom and covering of authority from older to younger
- But receiving of zeal, passion, creativity, vision from young to older too.

Let's love and serve Him supremely –
Not with mediocrity – but supremely
All our days.

Rejecting cynicism, callousness, coldheartedness, lukewarmness, unbelief.—tender

...

Stay fresh and hopeful and clean hearted and trusting – in our earlier days and now..

Dad as young pastor – summoned urgently to elderly man in his church, on his deathbed, who had something important to say to his young pastor. My father hurried to the man's bedside, leaned down to hear the words, “I still love the Lord”.

This is the way to end – devoted in love to the Lord, supremely, all my days, to the very end.

SASB

All my days and all my hours
All my will and all my powers
All the passion of my soul
No a fragment but the whole
Shall be thine dear Lord,
Shall be thine dear Lord.

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Foundations

By Colonel Janet Munn

“Justice is power performing the work of love.”

Paul Tillich

“Speak truth to power.”

The Quakers

Two women officers of The Salvation Army, one from Pakistan, one from India, spoke to us, two women officers of The Salvation Army, one from the United States, one from the United Kingdom: “Don’t forget us. Please, don’t forget us.” And we never will. Having shared life together daily for eight weeks, we understood each other—our stories, idiosyncrasies, joys, and pain. These women from South Asia had found a place of emotional safety in our short-term Christian community, allowing them freedom to express for the first time the oppression and injustices they and many other women are enduring, specifically because they are female.

My ministry context in recent years has involved sharing daily living in close community, for eight weeks at a time, with Christian leaders from a wide variety of nations. I have found that assumptions devaluing females are present in Western contexts as well as in developing cultures. Cultural norms and practices that are antithetical to the gospel remain widely accepted and unchallenged even among Christians, including Christian leaders. In fact, I have become aware of a recurring pattern, throughout the systemic structures of many Christian organizations and denominations, of gender inequality.

This project will attempt to discover the extent to which leaders in The Salvation Army value gender equality. To inform that exploration, a transformative hermeneutic must be applied to the Christian Scriptures, to kingdom theology, and to church history. Specifically, biblical application must be made regarding an

understanding of the image of God in humankind, as well as a fuller understanding of Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom of God and its implications for male/female relationships. Additionally, clearer theological insight regarding the gospel of the kingdom and holiness within that kingdom is essential and particularly needed for those who wield power within Christian organizations and denominations. Further, greater cognizance of the history of Christianity, and particularly of The Salvation Army and its antecedents, is vital in order to rightly respond to contemporary contexts and challenges.

This chapter will explore, in section one, a biblical hermeneutic of power, gender, and the kingdom of God. This will be followed in section two with an examination of theological perceptions of power with respect to gender and the kingdom of God. Finally, section three will study the antecedent influences upon the formation of The Salvation Army relative to the participation of women in leadership.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Underlying the biblical foundation section of this chapter is an assumption that proper engagement with Scripture can bring about transformation of individuals and communities. This addresses the need for a transformative hermeneutic, an approach to biblical interpretation that has the potential to change the community of believers into one more authentically redemptive.

Power, Gender, and the Kingdom of God

Three Scripture passages are considered that address the topics of power, gender and the kingdom of God. The first is Genesis 1:26-29, with particular emphasis on verse 27: "So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (NLT). The New Living Translation (NLT) is used here due to its more inclusive use of "human beings" compared to the "mankind" of the NIV. Gen. 1:27 is examined within the context of the creation narratives, with specific focus on the image of God as reflected in humanity and the potential in Christ for the fullness of that image realized in Christian community.

The second text to be considered is Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV). This brief passage, with its description of the new community established in Christ as an in-breaking of the kingdom of God, is studied in the light of its relationship to Gen. 1:27.

The third passage is the parable told by Jesus of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. The themes developed from this passage reflect the larger context of Luke's Gospel and once again illustrate the in-breaking of the kingdom of God: the struggle by the powerless for justice (18:2-3); the images of God implied in the parable (18:4-5); and the necessity of relentless perseverance, fueled by the imagination of what can be, until justice is meted out—a manifestation of the kingdom (18:1, 3, 7). This treatment of Luke 18 demonstrates a hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures as a means of individual and community transformation.

Humanity: A Theophany

A great deal of attention has been given to the study of Gen. 1:27. This brief verse offers a fascinating and important window into the identity of humankind:

*"So God created human beings in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them."*

Gen. 1:27 (NLT)

The verse has a chiastic structure, which places "the image of God" at the center, thereby stressing the importance of the concept, as does the repetition of "image" (Hartley 2000, 48). The concepts expressed in Gen. 1:27 in terms of the imaging of God and the dignity of all of humanity as bearers of that image are unique in the context of the ancient Near East.

There is one way in which God is imaged in the world and only one: humanness! . . . God is known peculiarly through this creature who exists in the realm of free history, where power is received, decisions are made, and commitments are honored. God is not imaged in anything fixed but in the freedom of human persons to be faithful and gracious. (Brueggemann 1982, 32)

“Humankind is the locus of divine presence and, as such, it should be highly cherished” (Herring 2008, 494).

Further to the structure of Gen. 1:27, in the Hebrew language the placement of the phrase “male and female” before the verb adds emphasis to it, thereby establishing two things: first, that every male and every female is made in God’s image; and second, that “in the essence of being human there is no qualitative difference between male and female” (Hartley 2000, 48).

Spencer makes the valuable point that the image of God is a double image. Therefore, males and females together are needed to reflect God’s image. The contextual significance for the image of God is displayed in relationships. The interrelationship between male and female symbolizes the interrelationship within God. Male and female are needed to reflect God’s nature (Spencer 1985, 21). Hess’s study of Gen. 1-3 corroborates Spencer’s conclusions. He points out that the image of God defined in Gen. 1:27 as male and female reveals that “the most important distinction between human beings and all other life on earth is a distinction that is shared by both male and female” (Hess 2008, 8).

The Image of God and Power

The language of Gen. 1:27 not only gives insight into the dignity of humanity as bearers of God’s image and the necessity of both genders in that image bearing, but also shows the significance of humankind’s image bearing in community. In the Hebrew text, the human is first spoken of as singular (“he created him”) and then as plural (“he created them”). Human beings are individuals but are also a community before God, a community including both males and females. Human beings in community mirror God’s image to the world (Brueggemann 1982, 34). These image-bearing humans, male and female, are immediately given authority for the rest of creation, being assigned by God to “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over. . .” all creatures (Gen. 1:28). Interestingly, Keen sees in Genesis 1 an anticipation of the advent of Jesus as the revelation of the fullness of the image of God:

Adam and Eve were called into being as a hope that opens to the coming history of the fullness of God with us. That is precisely what the history of Jesus is. Therefore, it is to this that they are essentially related; when God created Adam and Eve, it was to the coming Christ that he looked. (Keen 1998, 138)

Thus, Jesus as the image of God (Col. 1:15; Hebrews 1:3) significantly informs an understanding of the assignment given to humankind in Gen. 1 as divine image bearers with delegated divine authority. Jesus’ image-bearing example teaches that

divinely empowered image bearers are not to grasp at such privilege (Phil. 2:1-8) but, instead, exercise power as God does by creative self-giving, for the sake of others (Mark 10:43-44). "There is nothing here of coercive or tyrannical power, either for God or for the humankind" but rather a costly demonstration of the Divine caring for the world (Brueggemann 1982, 32, 34).

As Jesus models a new disclosure of God, so he embodies a call for a new human community. The idea of the "image of God" in Gen. 1:26-29 and in Jesus of Nazareth . . . is an explicit call to form a new kind of human community in which the members, after the manner of the gracious God, are attentive in calling each other to full being in fellowship. (Brueggemann 1982, 34-35)

Whatever Happened to Eden?

Most scholars agree at least on the 'spiritual equality' of males and females as stated in both the Old and New Testaments, most specifically in Gen. 1:27 and Gal. 3:28. Some, however, limit the notion of gender equality to the spiritual arena, and understand these texts as irrelevant to temporal equality.

For example, in interpreting the earliest chapters of Genesis and their instruction as to God's intention for gender at creation, Perriman references Gen. 3:9, stating, "We should take note of the fact that the man retains both precedence and prominence throughout the creation narrative. It is Adam to whom God calls in the garden" (Perriman 1998, 177). The conclusions reached by Perriman from his interpretation of Scripture include language of male dominance and power and, by implication, subservience and weakness for females.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes such a religious view as patriarchy, not just in the sense of an "androcentric world construction in language but a social, economic and political system of graded subjugations and oppressions" (Russell 1985, 127). The practical implications of such a patriarchal hermeneutic can be seen in an essay by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, based on her work in shelters for battered women. The essay is entitled "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation."

Frequently women with strong religious backgrounds have the most difficulty in accepting that the violence against them is wrong. They believe what they have been taught, that resistance to this injustice is unbiblical and unchristian. Christian women are supposed to be meek, and claiming rights for oneself is committing the sin of pride . . . I have found that most social workers, therapists and shelter personnel view religious beliefs as uniformly reinforcing passivity and tend to view religion, both traditional Christianity and Judaism, as an obstacle to a woman's successful handling of abuse. (Russell 1985, 99)

The hermeneutical conclusions from the early chapters of Genesis reached by Perriman in support of female subjugation in the temporal realm can readily fuel the kind of acceptance of oppression and abuse described by Thistlethwaite. Perriman's conclusions are difficult to reconcile with the sacrificial, self-giving example of the exercise of power understood in Gen.1:27 and in Jesus' witness, which the text

anticipates. Further, they are incompatible with the double image of gender mutuality central to Gen. 1:27.

In contrast to Perriman's view, Bilezikian presents a hermeneutic of the creation texts that celebrates the full humanity of woman. In interpreting Gen. 2:23, Bilezikian notes that Adam acknowledges the woman's participation in the fullness of his own humanity.

She was God's ultimate achievement, taken out of man and made in God's image, the fusing of human beauty distilled to its graceful essence with mirrored divine perfection, the sudden present that caused the man to marvel in a whisper, 'At last!' (Bilezikian 1999, 33)

Bilezikian defends the male-female images of God of Gen. 1:27 by insisting that a proper hermeneutic of the creation texts demonstrates that ideas of a hierarchy between man and woman were completely absent in God's creation design (1999, 35). In that "[male domination] resulted from the fall, the rule of Adam over Eve is viewed as satanic in origin, no less than is death itself" (Bilezikian 1999, 58).

Kingdom of God, Come!

Gal. 3:28 brings into focus the kingdom of God as a new world order. The Apostle Paul asserts the theme of the kingdom of God breaking in with his pronouncement in the form of a threefold affirmation: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This is understood to have been an early Christian baptismal confession, the locus of which is "in Christ" (Jervis 1999, 106). Having been raised a devout Jew, prior to his conversion Paul himself was likely to have given daily thanks to God, along with other Jewish males, that he was not a Gentile, not a slave, and not a woman. It is interesting to note that this prayer was not an indication of contempt for Gentiles, slaves, or women per se. Rather, the prayer of gratitude was expressed because Gentiles, slaves, and women "were disqualified from . . . religious privileges which were open to free Jewish males" (Bruce 1982, 187).

But the Christian baptismal confession of Gal. 3:28 declared that a new world order had begun, that the kingdom of God had come. In that kingdom Christians gained a new identity that "transcended all typical social distinctions and the moral distinctions that resulted from such social differentiating" (Jervis 1999, 106). In Christ, one's primary identity is no longer defined in terms of ethnic, social, or gender distinctions.

There is a striking detail in the language of Gal. 3:28 that commands attention. In the Greek text, the first two phrases of the affirmation are symmetrical: "Jew *nor* Gentile" and "slave *nor* free." However, the third phrase stands out because it reads literally "male and female."

The phrase exactly echoes the Septuagint of Genesis 1:27: God created man "male and female." Perhaps early Christians chose this phrase deliberately so as to signify that in baptism a new creation occurs (cf 2 Cor. 5:17), one that redefines even the most basic features of the original creation. (Jervis 1999, 106)

In both the creation account of Gen. 1:27 and the new creation declared in Gal. 3:28, the language of “male and female” does not emphasize their distinctiveness from each other, but their union in reflecting God’s image. Of course certain gender differences remain; these are not abolished in the new creation. But “in Christ” something new has happened, the kingdom has come, and the old divisions of the fallen world order have come to an end (Bruce 1982, 189; Longenecker 1999, 159).

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The Gospel of Luke has been called the “Gospel of the Outcast” (Witherington 1990, 52) and of the poor and marginalized. Luke clearly displays a special concern for women, “who were the most marginalized group in the first century, and for those who existed at the bottom rung of Jewish society” (Card 2011, 13). Luke’s Gospel contains many incidents in which the contributions as well as the needs of women are remembered. Among them are the stories of Mary and Elizabeth (1:39-56); Anna (2:36-38); Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38-39); the widow at Nain (7:11-17); a hemorrhaging woman and a dead girl (8:40-53). Luke also attributes to Jesus a number of parables that are replete with female perspectives and experiences, such as the woman using yeast in making bread (13:20-21), the woman searching for her lost coin (15:8-10), and the widow before the unjust judge pleading for justice (18:1-8). The inclusion of these women in the Gospel of Luke, studied with a hermeneutic of liberation, emphasizes the contribution of women as “exemplars of poorness and lowliness before God that finds expression in barrenness, widowhood, spiritual or actual neediness or service to the poor” (Kopas 1986, 192).

The parables just cited are set in the context of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God in Luke 11-19. The coming of the kingdom in the Gospel of Luke is expressed in the attention given to women, and these parables are seen as exemplary of the nature of the coming age (Wink 1992, 132). In fact, Jesus treated women as he did because “the restoration of women to their full humanity in partnership with men is integral to the coming of God’s egalitarian order” in the kingdom of God (Wink 1992, 134).

The Struggle of the Powerless for Justice

"In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" Luke 18:2-3

Jesus tells a parable of a widow in need of justice facing an unjust judge. In Jesus' day legal cases were always a matter of a judge deciding to vindicate one party or the other (Wright 2001, 212). Such judges were usually appointed by Herod or the Romans and were notorious for their corrupt practices, particularly the expectation of bribes (Barclay 1953, 230). The widow in this case is without resources of any kind and has no hope of ever extracting justice from such a judge. She is a symbol of all who are poor and defenseless in the face of injustice (Barclay 1953, 231; Card 2011, 202).

Kopas asserts that the parable of the persistent widow succeeds perhaps better than any other in "uniting the themes of equality and oppression" (Kopas 1986, 200). The widow is virtually powerless in that she has no status compared to the judge or in relation to others who would plead with him. Yet, "despite her lowliness in society she recognizes a deeper claim to recognition" (Kopas 1986, 200). Reid describes this parable as one that "shatters stereotypes and highlights the power of the seeming powerless" (Reid 1996, 194). Widows such as Ruth, Tamar, and Anna join the woman in Luke 18 as women of action and persistence who are a vital part of the biblical story. These women challenge assumptions of widows as poor and helpless; they demonstrate assertiveness in their willingness to take critical action for justice and salvation (Reid 1996, 193).

This paradox of strength and weakness is intrinsic to the kingdom of God and manifest in the essential nature of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven, like a woman with yeast (Luke 13:20-21), comes not in power and glory but in "hiddenness and insistent, gentle influence on people whether they know it or not" (Kopas 1983, 199).

The Image of God—As Judge or Vulnerable Widow?

"Finally [the judge] said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

Luke 18:4-5

The theme of the vindication of the powerless is a constant one in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth continued this identification of the chosen of God with the poor (Russell 1985, 100). How closely Jesus' teaching allows for his own identification with the poor is another question.

There is a wide variety of opinion among scholars as to the most appropriate way to interpret the position of the widow of this parable. Augustine allegorized the persistent widow as the church. Some contemporary scholars identify her in relation to the individual believer. Others view her as embodying all who are oppressed and need to continually fight against systems and structures of subjugation (Snodgrass

2008, 454). Each of these can offer a helpful perspective and have legitimacy in the context of particular life circumstances.

There is also more than one way to interpret the role of the judge in the parable. The traditional interpretation is that the judge represents God, not in the sense of one who corrupts justice, but in the sense of one who holds supreme power and authority (Wright 2001, 212; Barclay 1953, 231). Others would see this portrayal of God as itself oppressive. Some view the judge as embodying oppressive structures of injustice that cannot withstand the relentlessness of the coming kingdom (Scott 1989, 187).

Reid sets her interpretation of this parable in literary context, noting that in each of the previous two Lucan parables—the kingdom of God likened to a woman with yeast in Luke 13:20-21 and to a woman searching for a lost coin in Luke 15:8-10—the woman represents God. In the context of Jesus' kingdom teaching in the Gospel of Luke an entirely different understanding emerges, namely, that the image of God is represented by the widow.

Here is an unexpected twist in the parable. That God would be relentlessly pursuing justice is not a new image of the divine. But that God is more akin to a victimized widow than a powerful judge is startling. She embodies godly power in the midst of apparent powerlessness. Followers of Jesus are invited to take up the same stance: to draw on the power of weakness to overcome death-dealing powers. (Reid 1996, 192)

Kopas adds further hermeneutical insight from the Gospel of Luke: “[the female] image is of the God of compassion who brings good news to the poor, does not break the bruised reed or extinguish the smoking wick, and gives hope to those who wait in darkness” (Kopas 1986, 202). She also sees in the women portrayed in these parables from Luke the image of God communicated in simplicity (Kopas 1986, 199). Such an approach to hermeneutics offers a redemptive message to the poor and powerless people of the world as well as a tempering message to the powerful ones.

Relentless Perseverance Fueled by Imagination

“There was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ . . . And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?” Luke 18:3, 7

The powerlessness of the widow in this parable is beyond doubt. It seems unlikely that she would have been able to offer a bribe to the judge, or that she had other human support or advocacy. Her case looked hopeless. After all,

Judges have two principal motives to show justice . . . a healthy fear of God . . . a deep respect and concern for humanity. This judge had neither of these qualities—had no reason to “do justice.” But the persistent widow is about to help him find a new reason. (Card 2011, 202)

The woman's only asset was her persistence (Witherington 1990, 53). And in the kingdom of God as illustrated by Jesus in this parable, her persistence was enough.

In teaching this parable Jesus not only demonstrates a concern for a widow, but even the implication that this woman's conduct—persistent, relentless, importunate, annoying perhaps—was a model to the disciples of divinely affirmed behavior, including for women (Witherington 1990, 63). It is difficult to imagine a stronger endorsement of the widow's persistence than that given by Jesus.

From this text and interpretation Reid challenges contemporary believers, both women and men, "to courageously face death-dealing powers and persistently demand justice" (Reid 1996, 194). Similarly, Wright offers a helpful hermeneutical approach that calls for persistence in challenging the status quo, practices that need to be challenged with the new thing that has happened and continues to happen through the entrance in the flesh of Jesus Christ into the human story. Such must be challenged and at times confronted with the redemptive word of Scripture (Wright 2005, 121-123). The widow's relentless persistence is essential in this regard.

The promise of the coming kingdom included vindication of the powerless: Israel's god would vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night. His vindicated elect (18:8) however, would be a group one might not have expected: not the official or self-appointed guardians of Israel's national life, but those who cry to their god for vindication. They would be the forgiven ones. Humble in the present, they would be exalted in the future on the day when Israel's god acted. (Wright 1996, 366)

In the Lucan parables, Jesus features women as exemplary of the nature of this coming age. The widow of Luke 18 is iconic in her persistent challenge of injustice— injustice meaning anything out of line with the perfect will of God. "Injustice is sin, systems, powers and authorities that damage the world. Injustice is greed, desire and harmful practices and beliefs that diminish people and society" (Roberts and Strickland 2008, 14).

An Imaginative Hermeneutic

Bilezikian addresses persistent intentionality in recreating a redemptive biblical hermeneutic, stating that

It will require nothing less than a systematic effort of deprogramming, designed to purge the Christian mind of abusive interpretations of portions of Scripture that should have been left alone when not understood, and the vulgar popular stereotypes that such misinterpretations have reinforced. (Bilezikian 1999, 210)

The Lucan pericope considered here expresses the potential of a refusal to give up on a vision, an imagination of justice restored. How is it possible to remain persistent in fighting against injustice, to continue to believe for something better? Engaging the Scriptures in such a way that creative use of the imagination is involved makes it possible to see beyond what is to what could be. In the context of the Gospel of Luke specifically, Card asserts that "a parable demands the use of the imagination . . . we too must learn what it means to read, to perceive, to understand the Bible with our imaginations" (Card 2011, 11).

Several scholars have used the term 'imagination' in addressing issues of hermeneutics and justice in the post-modern context. For example, Brueggemann describes within each person a "zone of imagination that stands between the input of the text and the outcome of attitude, belief and behavior" (Brueggemann 1993, 61). This, he argues, is an essential factor in the human capacity to change through engagement with biblical texts. It is this sort of hermeneutical imagination that is needed to face and challenge oppressive and exploitative practices (Brueggemann 1993, 62).

Brueggemann offers an imaginative conception of the ultimate effectiveness of a biblical understanding of various kingdom paradoxes. "It is that candid reality of weakness and gentleness that will in the end permit the undoing of an abusive, fearful world of the self-sufficient and the formation of a new counter-world of genuine humanness" (Brueggemann 1993, 32). Card describes life in this kingdom as becoming "a slave to the impossible" (Card 2011, 40). Faith leads to perseverance in the struggle and the imagination necessary to prevail, the same spirit portrayed by the persistent widow:

What is unbelief but the despair, dictated by the dominant powers, that nothing can really change, a despair that renders revolutionary vision and practice omnipotent . . . Faith entails political imagination, the ability to envision a world that is not dominated by the powers. (Myers 1988, 305)

Jesus' purpose in Luke 18 is to teach his disciples to persist in prayer, an endeavor of imaginative faith. Wink links such persistence with challenging oppressive forces through prayer:

Intercessory prayer is spiritual defiance of what is in the way of what God has promised. Intercession visualizes an alternative future to the one apparently fated by the momentum of current forces. Prayer infuses the air of a time yet to be into the suffocating atmosphere of the present. History belongs to the intercessors who believe the future into being. (Wink 1998, 173)

Summary

This biblical foundation section has endeavored to address oppression stemming from an inadequate or inaccurate biblical hermeneutic. A hermeneutic of the kingdom of God is needed that is essentially Christian feminist and deeply imaginative.

The three scripture passages studied included Gen. 1:26-29 with an examination of the image of God as reflected in humanity and the potential in Christ for the fullness of that image in male and female together. The second text considered was Gal. 3:28 and the new community established in Christ as an in-breaking of the kingdom of God explored in relation to Gen. 1:27 and Luke 18:1-18, the third passage examined. Specifically, Gal. 3:28 was examined as a threefold early Christian baptismal confession understood as representing the new creation in the kingdom of God in which previously held social categories of separation and domination become irrelevant. Particular focus was given to the categories of male and female in the new creation.

Luke's Gospel was studied as an expression of the gospel of the kingdom. This in-breaking of the kingdom as witnessed in the Gospel of Luke includes the struggle by the powerless for justice (18: 2-3), the images of God implied in this parable (18: 4-5), and the necessity of relentless perseverance, fueled by the imagination of what can be (18: 1, 3, 7).

These three passages provide key hermeneutical themes with relevance to matters of the image of God, power, gender, and the kingdom of God. The kingdom themes of strength in weakness, power exercised in sacrificial self-giving, and God's identity with the vulnerable were developed throughout. The mutuality and synergy intended for the genders as understood in the creation texts were explored, as were some feminist interpretations of the parable from Luke 18.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The theological foundations section of this chapter approaches the themes of power, gender, and the kingdom of God, from the varying perspectives of Christian thought and tradition. The use of power by those who self-identify as Christians has left a varied and contradictory legacy. To this day, some Christian denominations and organizations offer theological justification for male domination within religious hierarchies, resulting in diminution of the full image of God as displayed in both genders. This examination will commence with a theological discussion of power and the image of God as reflected in the dual male/female image, and the image of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Power, Gender, and the Kingdom of God

Clearly, any Christian theology of power must be profoundly formed by Christ's own example as He inaugurated the kingdom of God. A truly Christ-formed theology of power must manifest itself in personal holiness and societal transformation with regard to gender relationships as a demonstration of the kingdom of God breaking in. This principle applies most particularly to the use of power within the church. These issues are taken up by means of a focus on power and a theology of the kingdom of God.

Interwoven throughout is consideration of Wesleyan holiness theology as it relates to the kingdom of God and power as this is the theological tradition of The Salvation Army—the context for the project reported on in this paper.

Theology of Power and Divine Image

A classical theological conception of the omnipotence of God includes the power of creation, governance, and teleological completion (Case-Winters 1990, 39, 172, 201). This is in alignment with most orthodox Christian creedal statements, including Salvation Army doctrine number two, which states: "We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship (The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine 2010, xv).

Biblically, all power comes from God and belongs to God (Matt. 26:64; John 19:11); God's power upholds the world itself (Heb.1:3; Col. 1:17; Marshall 1995, 679). Calvin asserts that divine omnipotence includes not only the overall direction of human history but also the determining of all personal and particular details (Case-Winters 1990, 202). According to Barth, divine power is "independent, unconditioned and causative . . . never even partly dependent upon, or responsive to" any of its objects (Case-Winters 1990, 103; Davaney 1981, 48).

This theological understanding of divine omnipotence invites critique. Divine omnipotence, as asserted by Calvin and Barth, is understood as "power in the mode of domination and control" (Case-Winters 1990, 39). Wink perceives the danger of such power as representing "the Domination System" which he describes as "might makes right . . . the prize goes to the strong. Peace through war, security through strength: these are the core convictions that arise from this ancient historical religion" known as "the Domination System" (Wink 1992, 16-17). The "Domination System" is best understood as what the Bible describes as "world," "aeon," and "flesh" (Wink 1992, 49). While at times attributed to God, these ways of exercising power are in contradiction to the example of Christ himself and God's intended "domination-free order," which Jesus came to establish in the kingdom of God (Wink 1992, 46).

The theological view of divine omnipotence propounded by Calvin and Barth is perceived as having a male bias that has historically resulted in destructive social consequences of "oppression, exploitation and violence" enflamed by divine attribution (Case-Winters 1990, 172-173). Another criticism of the Calvinist position, then, is that it excludes the female image of God drawn from the creation narrative of Gen. 1. Primary or exclusive emphasis on masculine divine imaging of power communicates, at best, a secondary position for females (Case-Winters 1990, 218).

The image of God portrayed in Gen 1:27 reveals the necessity of both male and female to reflect the divine image in the world. The intention is neither masculine nor feminine as normative, but rather a necessary co-existing of both in an egalitarian order (Wink 1992, 47).

What we need are images that encompass the positive aspects of both [male and female]. . . . The issue of sexist language in our God-talk goes far deeper, then, than matters of simple justice and fairness to women. What is at stake is a veritable revolution in our God-images. Nothing could be more crucial, because our images of God create us. (Wink 1992, 48)

The egalitarian order referenced here was inaugurated through Jesus Christ as the unique expression of the divine image and the holy example of a right use of power.

Divine Power in the Image of Christ

Divine power, particularly as revealed in Jesus, "liberates rather than subjugates," and thus is an expression of divine love (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 311). A theology of power must allow for God to restrict his freedom to act, for love's sake. "God shows power, not by asserting himself against us, but by the act of turning precisely to the creature that rebels against God" as demonstrated in Jesus' self-

sacrifice (Mott and Tilleman 2012, 312). This is a distinctly different theological perspective on divine omnipotence compared to that of domination and control, as conceived by Calvin (Case-Winters 1990, 39). It also relates to the biblical concept of justice, which seeks not only to alleviate suffering but also to deliver from the power that causes it (Mott and Tilleman 2012, 27).

Lipp and colleagues offer insight regarding power and freedom demonstrated in Jesus. "In the incarnation of the Son and his path to impotent suffering on the cross, we are thus to see an act of divine freedom and divine power" (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 311). It is evident that in Christ's exercise of power, relations of superiority and subjection have lost their primacy:

God's power is always rooted in love, not pride; it is rooted in redemption, not conquest; and it is rooted in concern for the other, not the self. It is humble, not proud, and inviting, not rejecting. Its symbol is the cross, not the sword. This is why [God's power] is seen as weakness by the world. (Hiebert 1994, 238)

Jesus Christ reveals the Father, and thereby radically alters any theological understanding of divine omnipotence by demonstrating "power operating in divine relationship and through divine intention" (Van Rheen 2000, 777). Jesus brings into being a new order, an exercise of power transformed by faith working by love, that is "free even in the face of death and hence it can dare all for which it can be responsible to God. It can defy superior force, because it still accepts even ruin as victory" (Rahner 1973, 408-409). This new order is called the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God offers a radically new picture of divine power (Lk 4:14; 5:17; 11:20-22).

The Kingdom and Power

The kingdom of God is viewed by some scholars as the first and most essential dogma of the Christian faith, in that it is both the gospel Jesus preached and the new state of things he introduced (Snyder 2001, 61; Green 2012). The New Testament concept of the kingdom of God is as the reign of God, the redemptive rule of God (Grudem 1994, 863-864; Green 2012). Such language: “kingdom,” “reign,” “rule;” is the language of power.

With the coming of this kingdom something new has happened, particularly in relation to power. This kingdom comes in the person, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rahner 1981, 402; Marshall 1995, 680; Hiebert 1994, 235). In Wright’s language, “Jesus came to launch God’s new creation, and with it a new way of being human . . . God’s kingdom was bursting into the present world” (Wright 2010, 116). It is a kingdom, a reign, bringing freedom—the rule of God that brings liberty (Moltmann 1989, 78), which Wink describes as “God’s domination-free order” (Wink 1992, 299). This clarifies why Jesus’ words and actions, which introduced the kingdom of God, were particularly good news to the poor, those who were powerless and thus vulnerable to mistreatment by the powerful (Mott and Tilleman 2012, 12; Rahner 1981, 401). This kingdom, ushered in by Jesus, cannot be established by force, “but only by its proper means: by suffering, self-giving love” (Wright 2010, 98). Hence, the use of power, in its usual sense, has been turned upside down by the coming of this kingdom.

The Kingdom—Personal and Social

This upside-down kingdom has significant implications that are both personal and social in nature. Grudem contends that Christians can experience in this life something of what God’s final kingdom reign will be like: “They will know some measure of victory over sin, over demonic opposition, and over disease. They will live in the power of the Holy Spirit who is the dynamic power of the coming kingdom” (Grudem 1994, 864). Wright goes a step farther, “Precisely because God is the God of creative, generous, outflowing love, his way of running things is to share power, to work through his image-bearers, to invite their glad and free collaboration in his project” (Wright 2010, 67).

Snyder is concerned that a theology of the kingdom have application in contemporary society. For example, he argues that Barth’s theology of the kingdom results in an overemphasis on individual rather than communal response and societal impact (Snyder 2001, 72). Similarly, Bultmann’s theology of the kingdom of God is criticized for “retreat[ing] into the hearers’ interiority,” (Heltzel 2008, 455), with significant questions raised as to societal relevance:

Has Bultmann lost the very thing that made the kingdom of God relevant in the first place: namely, how to achieve God’s kingdom in the sociopolitical reality of history? If the social and communal dimension of the kingdom is localized in an individual’s interior struggles, and if human responsibility is reduced to an attitude toward the unknown future, has not the kingdom of God become merely a solipsistic disposition? (Heltzel 2008, 455)

The implied disconnection of the kingdom of God from society in the here and now is untenable for Snyder and Heltzel.

Willard and Simpson place strong emphasis on the personal, individual effect of the breaking in of the kingdom. They call this a revolution of character, pointing out that the power of the kingdom manifests itself first inside the human heart—but that it then results in transformation of social structures. “Such transformed people bring the presence of the Kingdom and the King into every corner of human life by fully living in the Kingdom with him” (Willard and Simpson 2006, 13-14). This fullness of the kingdom Moltmann understands to be the “restoration of all things” (Muller-Fahrenholz 2000, 186).

Wink points out that Jesus’ own life demonstrated the possibility of “a total reorientation within . . . and a total reorientation without” (Wink 1992, 162). He emphasizes the necessity of change in personal conduct in the kingdom, anticipating that by itself it will upset the conventions of social power. This is exemplified in Jesus’ words regarding tax collectors and prostitutes entering the kingdom of God ahead of some religious leaders (Matt. 21:31). “Apparently Jesus’ God is interested in one thing only: whether we behave in a way consistent with the divine order that is coming” (Wink 1992, 168).

Kingdom Power in Society

John Wesley’s kingdom paradigm is not one of passively waiting for a future hope but, rather, recognizing that while “the final eradication of evil and establishment of righteousness will only take place at [Christ’s] return,” the church “must prepare for [his] appearing with Kingdom deeds,” thus the need for activism in social justice and mercy (Cubie 1983, 103).

The kingdom of God is present and future, personal and corporate, is inaugurated by and present in Jesus Christ. This kingdom represents a reversal of the power dynamic, whereby God shares power with the citizens of the kingdom. This is especially good news to the oppressed, and therefore has significant relevance for females, who suffer the most among those who are oppressed.

In Wesleyan kingdom theology there is no disconnect between conversion, sanctification, and the process of social transformation (Hynson 1988, 47). The kingdom of God involves individuals freed from sin by the sanctifying power of the Spirit and also from the relationships and conditions in which they live (Moltmann 1989, 293). Wesley recognized that “the Gospel must simultaneously be individual and social” (Bundy 1988, 12).

Salvation Army founder William Booth developed a similar holistic understanding of holiness:

For William Booth, especially in his later theology, the one true sign of the Church was participation in the work of redemption, both personal redemption and social redemption leading ultimately to the establishment of the kingdom of God. This work was fundamentally connected to Booth’s doctrine of

holiness because he believed that only a holy people could accomplish a holy work and achieve a holy goal. (Green 1989, 56)

E. Stanley Jones' theological development offers an interesting example of evolution from an individualistic American view of the kingdom (Bundy 1988, 5) to one recognizing social responsibility and seeking societal redemption:

Jesus believed in life and its redemption. Not only was the soul to be saved—the whole of life was to be redeemed. The kingdom of God coming on earth is the expression of that collective redemption. The entrance to the kingdom of God is by personal conversion, but the nature of that kingdom is social. The kingdom of God is the most astonishingly radical proposal ever presented to the human race (Jones quoted in Bundy 1988, 10).

The outworking of the kingdom of God in society will include “justice to others on the personal, social and societal levels” (Cubie 1983, 100). This of course includes a radically different community of females and males.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Not only does Wesley understand that power is available to the individual believer to respond to the Gospel and to resist sin, but also that power is at work in the church corporately, power to radically impact society. Because Christ is king now,

“The church may resist evil powers in the sure promise that its work in the world will be crowned with grace and, finally, glory . . . Wesley's theology makes conversion the rite of initiation into the kingdom, and sanctification the pilgrimage through the kingdom on earth until the glory of heaven is reached” (Hynson 1988, 52, 54).

Believers are thus freed from the will-to-power of the unregenerate and empowered, rather, to live for God and for the good of others (Hynson 1988, 54; Cubie 1983, 102). This is the domination-free order preached by Jesus in which we see “a single unifying theme: a vision of the liberation of all humanity” (Wink 1992, 45).

The gospel of the kingdom of God is more than a future hope, valuable as that is. It is a gospel of Jesus' liberating message that offers a “context-specific remedy for the evils of the Domination System” (Wink 1992, 49). “Context-specific” indicates that the coming of the kingdom on earth as in heaven is for now. It is meant to demonstrate the presence of God in his people, male and female. And that these people, as male and female, would relate to one another in mutual honor and submission, even as is demonstrated in the godhead. This is to be a sign of the kingdom of God breaking in.

Wesley's theology of the kingdom of God is one of power, power given by God's grace, power to respond to the Gospel, power not to sin. Further, this is divine power in human communities given in order to oppose injustice and oppression in society and cultural norms and forms that are in opposition to the reign of God. This is to include power in the grace of God to resist sexism and discrimination against females, and power to transform structures that stand against God's kingdom breaking in.

The gospel of the kingdom was never intended to be kept personal and private; in fact, it cannot. The reality of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God indeed brings about personal transformation, and that is intrinsically linked to transformed conduct in community, thereby proclaiming the coming of the kingdom in the wider society. This new order is demonstrated in relationships between males and females in defiance of the prevailing Domination System of the world.

Kingdom Power in the Church

Cubie points out that emphasis on societal transformation has often been either neglected or attempted through the use of force by the church, thereby negating kingdom principles and understanding of Christlike use of power (Cubie 1983, 101). He applies the term “anti-Christ” to anything that opposes the kingdom of Christ (Cubie 1983, 101). This includes efforts by those with power in the church to create unity through force, use of violence or deceit, and oppression of others (Cubie 1983, 106). All of these demonstrate a failure in love, which is the ethic of the kingdom of God.

Jesus sets the example of
the power of the powerless, the judgment of the one who did not come to judge and the wrath of the Lamb who did not come to condemn but to save. His power was that of sacrificial, self-giving love, and must be manifest in those who are his. (Cubie 1983, 107)

The power and authority of believers individually and as a community flow from the kingdom of Christ. In other words, all rule in the church is legitimized only by Christ’s own kingdom rule and should be modeled after his example.

True unity in the church is not about organizational or hierarchical unity, as these invite temptation “to fulfill one’s personal vision of the Kingdom by coercing others into it” (Cubie 1983, 108). Kingdom unity transcends loyalties of politics, economics, and culture, recognizing the manifold ways in which the kingdom comes. What each is called into is the liberty and unity of love (Cubie 1983, 109). The ideal of kingdom unity challenges the so-called hierarchical unity that William Booth demanded of his troops, outshines it in reflecting the unity of the godhead, and is potentially demonstrated by women and men portraying the divine image.

Temptations abound within the church to use coercion and to establish one’s own “kingdom” or vision. There must be recognition, even suspicion of “all autonomy of power” (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 312). The power of God in the kingdom is “irreconcilably opposed to any form of divisive self-assertion or request for power on the part of any individual or group” (Rahner 1981, 401-402). These are to be recognized as “anti-Christ” (Cubie 1983, 106), submitted to accountability or controls, and rejected as legitimate means of accomplishment. Wesley’s optimism and confidence in the power of God over sin did not lead to the absence of accountability, but to greater accountability, in the form of class meetings and other similar means (Henderson 1987, 13).

A theology is needed to assist in distinguishing between a secular model of the use of power and the right use of power available through the Spirit within the people. And such a relevant “theology of power must refuse, then, to demonize power or to glorify impotence. Instead, it must develop criteria for responsible handling of ecclesiastical, political and social power” (Lipp, Huber, and Stobbe 1999, 314).

Summary

Theological views of divine omnipotence must be profoundly formed by the revelation of Jesus Christ and His example of the use of power as self-sacrificing for the sake of others and rooted in love. Further, a theology of the Divine image that includes both the masculine and feminine serves to inform an egalitarian understanding of human community in general and the new community in Christ in particular.

This new community in Christ is to demonstrate the coming of the kingdom of God by means of its unconventional relational power dynamics, in which those whom society would exclude are welcomed, the weak are empowered, and the powerful humble themselves, resulting in a domination-free order. This theological understanding of power in Christian community assumes the transformation of all social relationships, most particularly relationships between males and females.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The history of Christianity reveals a stunning polarity in the use of power with regard to personal holiness, social responsibility, and gender equality. On the one hand, it was Christians who launched the Crusades and the Inquisition, slaughtering large numbers of Muslims and Jews. This legacy also includes the New England witch hunts of the 17th century, 90 percent of whose victims were female (Isherwood and McEwan 2001, 37). On the other hand, throughout the centuries, it was in no small part Christians who established hospitals and universities, promoted literacy and education for the masses, and fought to abolish the African slave trade. Christians have long defended the rights of women, children, and the poor (Campbell and Court 2004, 44, 48-49).

From this wide scope and contradictory witness of Christian history this section of the paper narrows its focus to the antecedents influential in the formation of The Salvation Army and its early history relative to the participation of women in leadership. This examination is intended to provide a basis for comparison of current Salvation Army practice with historical practice and offer a context for review and analysis of contemporary Army leaders' views with regard to gender equality.

Power, Gender, and the Kingdom of God

Specifically, early practice of The Salvation Army is considered in light of its spiritual ancestry in the Wesleyan revival of the 18th century and of the pervasive influence of the holiness movement that grew out of that revival. Particular attention is given to Catherine Booth's significant role in promoting women in leadership. An exploration of the effect of the Salvation Army's military structure on its use of power and the authoritarian stance of co-founder William Booth round out the section.

Early Influences

From the days of the early church fathers as shown in the patristic writings, Green argues, there has been an emphasis on the correlation between personal holiness and social responsibility, bringing significant societal benefits. "One such example of this is found in the success of Christianity with equalizing women in society" (Green 1977, 28). These three emphases, personal holiness, social responsibility, and equality of women, were foundational in the practice of The Salvation Army.

An influence on The Salvation Army in its earliest years in terms of inclusion of women in ministry leadership was that of the Quakers.

Booth found himself at the head of a rapidly growing movement badly in need of local leadership and funds. Women flocked to The Army, and Booth . . . used women in the entire range of Army work . . . almost from the very beginning. Catherine Booth, an extraordinarily intelligent and capable person, spearheaded this reform. The Quaker example proved, again, helpful and encouraging in this regard . . . It is clear that the early Salvationists repeatedly made eager use of the Quaker example in employing women in the Christian ministry. (McKinley 1977, 49-50)

McKinley makes explicit the Quaker precedent and influence upon both Catherine and William Booth with regard to females in ministry. The unity of conviction on this point between Catherine and William was sufficient to overflow into their own practice within their marriage and into their leadership of the newly established Salvation Army.

"The greatest breakthrough in opportunities for women to proclaim the gospel came with the Wesleyan revival in England in the eighteenth century." So asserts Malcolm in *Women at the Crossroads* (Malcolm 1982, 111). Green states that, resulting from the influence and example of John Wesley's mother, Susanna Wesley, women descended from early Methodism have enjoyed greater opportunities for leadership in the church than women in other denominations (Green 2012). These would include all subsequent expression of Methodism, such as the Wesleyan Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and The Salvation Army.

In terms of John Wesley's influence upon The Salvation Army, it would be difficult to imagine a stronger statement than that of co-founder William Booth:

I worshipped everything that bore the name Methodist. To me there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet. I had devoured the story of his life. No human compositions seemed to me to be comparable to his writings . . . and all that was wanted, in my estimation, for the salvation of the world was the faithful carrying into practice of the letter and the spirit of his instructions. (Booth-Tucker 1892, 74)

Booth left the Methodist church while still a young man and established The Salvation Army, infusing his Wesleyan theological roots with a renewed evangelistic zeal and a fiery passion for social justice.

Rader argues that the holiness movement itself championed women's rights and female equality. Specifically, "Phoebe Palmer exercised extensive influence in the struggle for women's rights . . . it was the evangelicals, and principally those of holiness persuasion, who championed the cause of female equality in church and society" (Rader 1977, 86). Palmer had a singular influence on Salvation Army co-founder Catherine Booth (Green 2012).

Confronting the Culture

Given that the personal holiness espoused by the various Salvation Army antecedents was consistently expressed in terms of social responsibility, it was perfectly congruous for The Salvation Army to involve itself in politics, even controversially so, on behalf of vulnerable young girls. The Army played a major, very public role in the successful campaign to raise the age of consent in Great Britain in 1885 from 13 to 16 years old (Hollis 2013, 200). By such action, The Salvation Army established itself early on not only as a movement where women could preach and lead in spiritual ministry, but also as a powerful advocate for the rights of women and girls in the wider political arena, willing to confront the hypocrisy of the surrounding Victorian culture.

The values of The Salvation Army stood in marked contrast to those of that culture. Within the holiness movement itself and The Salvation Army in particular, there were strict standards of a puritanical holiness lifestyle (Murdoch 1985, 99). Further, in Victorian England, women were generally not empowered to lead; rather, they were marginalized and restricted to the separate sphere of domestic life.

Yet Read cites the popular culture of the day as one formative influence on The Salvation Army: "Freed from constraints of outdated and irrelevant ecclesiological and religious practices the founders looked to the world for models and methods that would assist them in their God-given mission" (2006, 559-560). Read's assertion is a surprising one; however, it is evident that the Booths saw no contradiction in taking from the popular culture whatever could be utilized to advance the mission of The Salvation Army (Maddox 2008, 5). With regard to women's rights this sometimes landed the Army in closer alignment to secular feminist activists than to conventional church practices and sensibilities.

Nevertheless, Victorian English culture and the early Salvation Army were at odds with each other in countless ways. With regard to gender roles, the differences were extreme. In Walker's view, The Salvation Army "disrupted and refashioned gender relations in many facets of its work . . . as Salvationist women challenged and resisted the conventions of femininity and enhanced women's spiritual authority" (Walker 2001, 2). In claiming the right to preach, women "disrupted a powerful source of masculine privilege and authority" (Walker 2001, 2). Walker concludes, "Virtually no other secular or religious organization in this period offered working-class women such extensive authority" (Walker 2001, 2). Consequently, The Salvation Army has an unusual and significant history of advancing women's rights

in relation to the surrounding culture, be it popular or religious, in many parts of the world.

Catherine Booth

Murdoch gives much credit to Catherine Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army, for the significant inclusion of women in leadership from the start.

Catherine Booth recognized women's powers of intellect and innate equality and elevated them to clerical parity with men. Although Catherine Booth did not break new hermeneutical ground in her discussion of scriptural support for the ministry of women, she did, through her public advocacy, force the introduction of thousands of working-class women into the ranks of ordained clergy. (Murdoch 1984, 348)

Murdoch used U.S. census statistics for the decades 1880 to 1900 to discover the percentage of U.S. clergy who were female. In 1880, the year The Salvation Army arrived in the United States, the percentage of female clergy was .225. By 1900 the percentage had grown to 9.2 (Murdoch 1984, 349). The Salvation Army was a major contributor to this increase. Catherine Booth was the primary formative influence on The Salvation Army in this regard (Murdoch 1984, 349).

The influence of Catherine Booth on William Booth can hardly be overestimated, and without the synergy between them on the matter of women in leadership, The Salvation Army would not have its place in history as a significant vehicle of ministry and leadership for tens of thousands of women (Murdoch 1984, 348). Interestingly, the female/male mutuality in leadership demonstrated by Catherine and William Booth is a historic illustration of the dual image of God explored in the biblical foundations section of this chapter. Further, their shared vision and example of gender equality in marriage and mission gave powerful witness to the kingdom of God and to the holy imagination necessary to envision this new community, as explored in the theological foundations section of this chapter.

As The Salvation Army developed and formalized its own identity, it issued important foundational historical statements relative to gender equality. First, from The Constitution of the Christian Mission, which changed its name to The Salvation Army the following year: "Godly women possessing the necessary gifts and qualifications shall be employed as preachers . . . and shall have appointments given to them . . . and they shall be eligible for any office" (Christian Mission Magazine, 1877).

Further, from Orders and Regulations for Salvation Army Staff Officers:
One of the leading principles upon which the Army is based is the right of women to have the right to an equal share with men in the work of publishing salvation to the world ... She may hold any position of authority or power in the Army from that of a Local Officer to that of the General. Let it therefore be understood that women are eligible for the highest commands—indeed, no woman is to be kept back from any position of power or influence merely on account of her sex ... Women must be treated as equal with men in all the intellectual and social relationships in life. (The Salvation Army 1895)

The “Lydia Phase”

In her studies of various religious groups, McKinnish Bridges has identified what she calls the “Lydia phase” (McKinnish Bridges 1998, 333), which Shade helpfully describes as a period in the early years of a developing movement in which women begin in positions of leadership, as was true of Lydia the key person in the establishment of the church in Philippi (Acts 16). With time, the very women who were founding leaders in the church are “relegated to secondary roles in order for the movement to gain cultural legitimacy and to diminish the feminizing effect of women’s leadership” (Shade 2012, 4).

The irony of widespread, significant female leadership in The Salvation Army being a “Lydia phase” that came to an end for the sake of cultural legitimacy is obvious in view of the previous insights of Read (Read 2006, 559-560) and Walker (Walker 2001, 2) regarding the perceived unseemliness of the early Army’s actions relative to its cultural contexts. Those actions ranged from the use of unconventional (in the view of the established church) secular methods for the acceleration of Army mission to defiance of conventions of the wider culture in the interests of that same mission. Further, the initial “feminizing effect of women’s leadership” was such that in many towns nearly all the pubs went out of business because “the whole population had gone to the ‘Hallelujah Lasses’!” (Hollis 2013, 264). Yet, Eason’s research reveals that a shift from the “Lydia phase” did indeed take place in The Salvation Army within the first few decades of its existence. By the 1930s, it was evident that the percentage of females in leadership was relatively minimal (Eason 2003, 151).

The Military Structure

The Salvation Army was birthed in the mid-19th century, when many popular British heroes were generals and soldiers (Read 2006, 357). Without a doubt, this is one reason why The Salvation Army adopted military forms and terminology (Read 2006, 357). Nonetheless, females found themselves welcome and readily deployed in service, in mission, and in leadership in this army.

In view of the military structure of The Salvation Army, it is not surprising to learn that it was “founded upon the principle of implicit obedience . . . the principle of voluntary subjection to an absolute authority” (Jewett 1999, 51). William Booth stated emphatically in his remarkable work, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, “The first condition of that service is implicit unquestioning obedience. The Salvationist is taught to obey as is the soldier on the field of battle” (Booth 1890, 250). McKinley goes further in asserting that William Booth “regarded dissension . . . as ‘the very poison of hell’” (1977, 51). It is noteworthy that some of the more rigid and autocratic sentiments expressed by William Booth came years after the death of Catherine Booth, who predeceased him by 22 years. One can only imagine the degree to which the ongoing involvement of Catherine in leading and forming The Salvation Army might have contributed to a more balanced use of power.

In contemplating the influence of the military metaphor and the expectation of unquestioning obedience, questions naturally arise as to potential dangers to the less powerful: namely, women. There is increasing recognition that the church has historically expected women to be self-sacrificing: some would argue, more so than has been expected of men (Isherwood and McEwan 2001, 37).

In The Salvation Army in the United States, married women officers do not receive a paycheck in their own name. Thus they have no employment record with the U.S. government, leaving them quite vulnerable should they leave Salvation Army officership and/or should their marriage fail. These married women are expected to sacrifice a basic dignity that is offered without exception to male officers and also to single women officers. This Salvation Army practice illustrates the point made by Isherwood and McEwan as to the church’s expectations of women, as well as the unintended but real abuse of power in the military structure against the very women who energize its mission. Further, it contradicts the historical principle of the organization: personal holiness and social responsibility resulting in particular concern for the just treatment of women.

Summary

The Salvation Army historically experienced explosive growth in no small part as a result of the active involvement of tens of thousands of (mostly young) women in its mission. The release of these women into ministry was born out of the influence of other Christian traditions, both ancient and relatively recent, and was motivated by both theological and practical impulses, largely spearheaded by Catherine Booth. The guiding principle was personal holiness leading to social responsibility and resulting specifically in advocacy and action for the equality of females. Further, the historical interaction between this burgeoning movement and 19th century British

culture, while largely antagonistic, was also synergistic, with each contributing to the development of the other.

The challenge of consistently acting in accordance with the proclaimed principle of gender equality was apparent early on in Salvation Army development and remains today. The Army's military structure has historically proven efficient in numerous contexts, with an army of human resources willing to be deployed anywhere in the world to advance its mission. However, with the military assumptions regarding power come the potential for a misuse of power, particularly with regard to gender equality.

Continued Obedient Faith as Holy Witness Through Participation in Small Groups

By Colonel Janet Munn

(Presented by Lt. Col. Janet Munn at the "Holiness Ablaze" conference in Boston, Massachusetts at the 125 anniversary of the Brengle's sanctification on Boston Common)

In John Ortberg's, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, is the following description:

Hank – long-time church member, regular church-goer – could not effectively love his wife or his children or people outside his family. He was easily irritated. He had little use for the poor, and a casual contempt for those whose accents or skin pigment differed from his own. Whatever capacity he once might have had for joy or wonder or gratitude atrophied. He critiqued and judged and complained, and his soul got a little smaller each year.

Hank was not changing. He was once a cranky young guy, and he grew up to be a cranky old man. But even more troubling than his lack of change was the fact that *nobody was surprised by it*. It was as if everyone simply expected that his soul would remain withered and sour year after year, decade after decade. No one seemed bothered by the condition.

The church staff did have some expectations . . . that Hank would affirm certain religious beliefs . . . that he would attend services, read the Bible, support the church financially, pray regularly, and avoid certain sins. But here's what the church leadership did not expect – *We did not expect that Hank would progressively become the way Jesus would be if he were in Hank's place.* (Ortberg, p.29)

This is called by some "Pseudo-transformation"

- Stories like Hank's and countless others raises the question – Are we after MEMBERS/SOLDIERS OR DISCIPLES? ENROLLMENTS OR ENGAGEMENT IN APPRENTICESHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST?
 - Gallup polls re premarital sex, adultery, divorce, bigotry, domestic violence – that there is no statistically significant difference between Christians and non-Christians in these areas of attitude and conduct.
 - John Green, an evangelical pollster, says that about a third of all evangelicals say that premarital sex is okay. And about 15 percent say that adultery is okay.
 - A large study of the Christian Reformed Church, a member of the National Association of Evangelicals, discovered that the frequency of physical and sexual abuse in this evangelical denomination was about the same as in the general population.
 - Six percent of the "born-again" people tithe; nine percent of evangelicals do.

(This data taken from an interview with Ron Sider in Christianity Today April 2005).

Is this what disciples of Jesus Christ look and act like? Is this holiness

Membership or Discipleship

Yet church attendance in US is very high relative to most western nations. The SA nationally is in the midst of a membership campaign – “Come Join Our Army”.

Dr. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, introduction p.x

There is an obvious Great Disparity between, in the one hand, the hope for life expressed in Jesus – found real in the Bible and in many shining examples from among his followers – and on the hand, the actual day-to-day behaviour, inner life, and social presence of most of those who now profess adherence to him.

If the new birth and the power of the Holy Spirit do not result in transformed living by transformed people there are basically 2 possible reasons:

1. God's provision is inadequate – including perhaps the possibility that what God promised and commanded is completely unrealistic and even impossible, thereby making the Lord out to be a cosmic despot.

Or --

2. We (most Christians) do not give ourselves to [our walk with Christ] in a way that allows our lives to be taken over by it. (Willard. p.x)

Willard adds the following:

- Eternal life . . . is interactive relationship with God and with his special Son, Jesus, within the abiding ambience of the Holy Spirit. p. xiv.
- The Church (the gathered disciples) needs the quality of life [Christ] makes real in the life of his disciples – in order to fulfil Christ's purposes on the earth for the church.
- Will those who by profession or culture, are identified as Christians (including us) become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to life the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.

We are faced with a challenge here.

Colonel Damon Rader (Order of the Founder) – in speaking of the nature of the relationship between the Lord and human beings, said simply:

We can't do God's part. He won't do ours.

There are both divine and human elements of the new birth and the life of holiness, and our doctrines so indicate.

Doctrine 10

We believe it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's part – giving to us the Sanctifier. Wooing us, calling us, drawing us more deeply into Himself. Creating within the believer a spiritual hunger for more. A longing for a clean heart as well as the provision His divine power to bring it to pass.

²³ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

²⁴ *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.*

³ *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 2: 3-4.*

Gilbert Thompson, pastor of thriving church in Boston, taught on spiritual warfare at Vision New England a number of year ago, at which I was present. He described his visit to a church as a guest preacher, when he was a young pastor. As he got up to preach he began to cough and was unable to speak. The “mothers” in the congregation began to rebuke and take authority over the unclean spirits behind the cough. In the meantime the elderly senior pastor brought him a cup of water. As the older man gave young pastor Thompson the drink he leaned in said, “Help the prayers son, help the prayers.”

“help the prayers” . . .

We too are responsible to “help the prayers” – to do what we can do to cooperate in the life of holiness.

Doctrine 9

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

Colonel Damon Rader (O.F.) – We can't do God's part . . . **He won't do ours.**

Our Part – continued obedient faith.

¹² *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—**continue to work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is **God who works in you** to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Philippians 2: 12-13 (TNIV)*

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For **God is working in you**, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Philippians 2: 12-13 (NLT)

My purposes in sharing this paper are:

- To intentionally link Salvation Army doctrines 9 and 10 – (doctrine 9) the need for human cooperation with and responsiveness to (doctrine 10) the

sanctifying grace of God, in order to strengthen and maintain powerful holy witness to this grace, as a Salvationist people.

- To highlight the significance of John Wesley's class meetings (or small group structure) in sustaining lives of continued obedience in the converts of his day.
- To heighten awareness of the contemporary move toward and need of a class meeting structure or method.
- To expose and contradict the "individualistic heresy" of privatized Christianity, so prevalent in the western church – namely that my faith is just between me and God and that it is not your business – that it is *private* rather than *personal*.
- To motivate Salvationists to intentionally seek out relationships, contexts and opportunities with others, (be they small groups, accountability partnerships, discipleship meetings, etc.) that will demonstrate a whole-hearted responsiveness to and cooperation with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the individual and in the community.

I want to emphasize the synergy between divine initiative and human response – to commend to you the need for human cooperation in the divine calling to holy living.

Continued Obedient Faith vs. "Disorderly Walkers"

John Wesley, in describing those Christian converts who failed to live a credible holy life, who fell into sin and compromise, or failed to mature, called such "disorderly walkers".

There are many means to help believers continue in obedient faith.

The focus of this paper will be:

THE COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF CONTINUED OBEDIENT FAITH using the template of the Wesleyan quadrilateral – Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience – the view by which Wesley believed sound doctrine could be discerned.

SCRIPTURE

- TRINITY – "LET US . . ." from the earliest chapters of Scripture, where God is revealing Himself to humankind, we read that the very essence of God is community – in the godhead, Father, Son and Spirit share in a perfect, unbroken, self-surrendering community of oneness. This is the very thing Jesus prays for us also (John 17). It's not lonely at the top, within the godhead, and it's not meant to be lonely at the top, so to speak, in Christian leadership! The very nature of the godhead demonstrates this. Christian leaders of any sort – take our example from God in whose image we are made – no matter what our responsibilities or status – God the Most High reveals Himself as living and loving in community.
- IT IS NOT GOOD FOR HUMANS TO BE ALONE – the writer of the creation account in the first chapter of Genesis, punctuates each aspect of God's creation, day by day, with "and God saw that it was good". Light from darkness = good. Land separated from water = good. Sun and moon = good. All various animals, birds, fish = good. Creation of the human, a-dam = good. All that God saw is described as "good". 10 times – God saw that it was

good. Only one exception. The creation of the human as solitary, as alone = **NOT GOOD!** (Genesis 2:18).

- Donahue and Russell describe human beings as having an inbuilt “relational DNA” or a God-given “community gene” that is an essential part of what it is to be human and made in the image of God. Additionally they state that “humans are ravenously relational (24).
- JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES – Jesus’ primary model for disciple-making was that of a small group, the 12. That was the context he used for investing deeply in developing the first generation of Christian disciples. Jesus also brought into his closest confidence the 3 – the INNER CIRCLE, PETER, JAMES, JOHN, for deeper lessons in discipleship. Yes Jesus had alone time, sought out solitude to pray and commune with God, but he developed disciples in community.

From the *Discipleship Journal*:

Consider this: Jesus chose to be a member of a small group. In fact, He was the ultimate small-group leader. He taught thousands on hillsides and was superb in one-on-one situations, but when it came time to pour His life into the people He knew would be the most critical to the spread of the gospel, He chose to invest a huge portion of His time and discipling efforts into the lives of just twelve guys.

And what a motley small group it was: guys who argued with Him and with each other; imperfect human beings who struggled with envy, jealousy, deceit, and lying; men who didn't seem to "get it" most of the time.

That's what growing in Christ is all about: spending time together, studying and learning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ; lifting others up when the discouragements of life get them down; getting the support you need when those daily struggles descend upon your turf; praying together about earthly and heavenly things; and growing stronger relationally as the body of Christ.

This was the approach Jesus used in establishing the church. We need to deliberately follow his lead.

- In the EARLY CHURCH – ACTS 2ff, devoted themselves to apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking bread and to prayer . . . believers continued to meet together, broke bread in homes, ate together with glad and sincere hearts . . . the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2: 42-47.
- Lord’s prayer – completely plural language – “our Father”, “give us”, “lead us”, “deliver us”.

TRADITION

- ROMAN CATACOMBS – CHURCH IN PERSECUTION – (as well as the church today in many places including China) – formed itself into small groups for support, for discretion, for safety.
- ZINZENDORF, HERNUTT COMMUNITY -- In the 18th century a Moravian community, under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf, living together, praying together for several generation for more than a hundred years, thereby launching the great missionary thrust of the Reformation. One of their converts was John Wesley, founder of Methodism.
- WESLEY – HOLY CLUB, CLASS MEETINGS . . . **no holiness apart from social holiness – interpersonal relationship and evidence of pursuit of social justice.**
 - John Wesley describes the discipline involved in class meetings as “watching over one another in love.”
 - John Wesley, the founder of Methodism and its descendents (including Salvationists) was so called because of this *method* of class meetings, which he developed for the discipling and maturing of the thousands and thousands of converts under his ministry. This was a means by which Wesley’s converts were able to continue in a life of obedient faith rather than becoming “disorderly walkers”. (John Wesley’s Class Meeting, Henderson)
 - The absence of such a plan – a method, a structure – was, in Wesley’s words, “birthing [the new converts] to the destroyer”. In other words, just as surely as it would be consider the height of irresponsibility and neglect, to bring a baby to physical birth and leave them to their own self-care – so it is with spiritual newborns. Wesley admonished that there was an absolute responsibility to make provision for the care of these recent converts to Christianity. Otherwise we were doing them no good at all to awaken them to the grace and mercy of God, only for them to be devoured by the destroyer, due to lack of discipleship made available by the church.
- George Whitefield (contemporary of John Wesley) whose labours “died with himself” – said, “Brother Wesley acted wisely – the souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class [small group for spiritual formation], and thus preserved the fruits of his labours. This I neglected and my people are a rope of sand.”(*The History of Methodism*, Holland M. McTyeire).
- The Wesleyan revolution is an illustration that long-lasting spiritual transformation is not the product of dynamic preaching or of correct doctrine. It comes only through serious disciple-building, in keeping with Christ’s Great Commission . . . The class meeting which Wesley developed was the instrument by which preaching and doctrine were harnessed into spiritual renewal. It carried the revolution. (Henderson, p.31)

- SA – The Salvation Army O & R for Ward and Penitent-Form Sergeants, 1922, USA – reveals a similar strategy in place as that of John Wesley's Class Meetings – in the SA in the early 20th century.
 - Every soldier and recruit would be part of a Ward.
 - 2 Ward Sergeants per Ward – one woman, one man – should watch over soldiers and recruits within Ward – watch over them spiritually, strive to keep them well-saved, sympathize with, advise them when they come into difficulty, do all possible to promote their happiness, holiness and usefulness in every way.
 - Ward Sergeant will take personal charge of every Convert in his/her Ward from the moment of introduction to Convert.
 - Ward Sergeant will hold an indoor meeting of the Soldiers and Recruits in his/her Ward once every week – to include, prayer, Scripture reading, personal testimony as to spiritual progress.
 - Clearly the early day Salvation Army had a method, a plan to nurture believers (recruits and soldiers alike) in a consistent and systematic way for their spiritual maturation and continued obedient faith.

REASON

- From SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR THE INCARCERATED – TIME OUT CHAIR FOR YOUNG CHILDREN – ISOLATION, LACK OF COMMUNITY IS PUNISHMENT, CAN MAKE US DISTRESSED, EVEN ILL.
- “BROCCOLI-IN-THE-TEETH” SYNDROME -- BLIND SPOTS – WHO WILL HELP US? WHO WILL TELL US?
 - If I have broccoli in my teeth those around me are more likely to know it before I do and those who love me will tell me about it.
 - Like wise, for the spiritual life, there are aspects of our lives that those around us are more likely to be aware of than we are ourselves. We call them blind spots.
 - The consistent involvement in small groups and the mutual accountability therein is aimed at preventing self-deception and remaining focused in discipleship under Christ.
- STRENGTHEN US WHEN WE ARE WEAK? ENCOURAGE US? We note that the Armor of God does not cover our backs – perhaps because we are to do that for one another.
- In the business world there are audits and check and balances to help organizations remain honest. How much more do we need an outside perspective to help us remain honest.

From Bill Thrall & Bruce McNichol - *Leadership Catalyst* (2003):

In describing developing integrity in leaders, point out that in order to develop we need environments where we trust and are trusted. They assert:

- *Wearing a mask thwarts my character development.*
- *Whatever I'm hiding makes me vulnerable to sin.*
- *A great gift you can give to a leader is to teach them to hide nothing.*

In a safe place:

- *I can be honest about who I am*
- *You are free to tell me who I am*
- JAMES 5:16 – CONFESS OUR FRAILTIES/WEAKNESSES TO BE HEALED (SINS TO BE FORGIVEN)
- WE NEED SOMEONE TO HELP SPUR US ON? Hebrews 10:24 (Wesley and Booth accountability questions). Try using the questions included at end of article in a small group or with a trusted accountability partner.

EXPERIENCE -- to help one another in continued obedient faith – to be holy.

- CONTEMPORARY – WILLOW CREEK church made a public confession and repentance of the neglect of disciple-making and declared a shift in their structure from a church WITH small groups to a church OF small groups (2007).
- Carl F. George, church growth researcher writes in Prepare Your Church for the Future:
 “I believe that the smaller group within the whole – called by dozens of terms, including *small groups* or the *cell group* – is a crucial but underdeveloped resource in most churches. It is, I contend, the most strategically significant foundation for spiritual formation and assimilation, for evangelism and leadership development, for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church”.
- Gilbert BILEZEKIAN uses the term “BALD SPOT CHRISTIANITY” (COMMUNITY 101) to describe the inadequacy of simply coming to a church building for an hour a week, sit in straight rows looking at the back of the head of the person seated in the row in front of you. That, Bilezekian says, it not the kind of church experience that results in spiritual growth and Christlike maturity.
 - Bilezikian uses the metaphor of “family” to describe what the church should be – “a group of people, few enough in numbers to sit around in a circle, facing each other and sharing the joy and the benefits of togetherness” (54). Bilezikian states, “Personal growth does not happen in isolation. It is the result of interactive relationships” (54).
- Bilezikian points out that wherever the church is a thriving community, even in the midst of persecution and suffering, it is structured on the basis of small groups (55).
- Schwarz’ research (Natural Church Development) concludes that the *most* important characteristic of healthy communities of faith and therefore people of faith, was the multiplication of small groups that are focused on discipleship (32).

- Northern New England Division Small Groups – Research project for my MA Thesis
 - Every officer in the Northern New England division participated in small groups for spiritual formation throughout the program year. This emphasis was given for a period of six years. During one of those years the participants were asked to describe their experience in the small groups. The officers/leaders participating in small groups throughout the Northern New England division describe their experience in small groups as beneficial to their spiritual formation, to their relationships, particularly with others in the small group. It was also beneficial to their sense of support and connectedness, and therefore their resistance to loneliness and discouragement, to their overall sense of health and wellness and to their own responsibilities in their local corps (church) and communities.
 - Additional descriptions by the officers themselves of the benefits of the small group experience include: a sense of connectedness, accountability, support, and community, as well as equipping for ministry, growth in discipleship and leadership development for the God-given essential functions of the church, and many more (see attached).
- We feel the pain personally when another believer falls from grace, stumbles into sin and moral failure, and even when another Christian demonstrates brokenness, carnality and compromise.
- My spiritual prosperity and strength in Christ are dynamically related to yours and vice versa.

More from the interview with Ron Sider in Christianity today upon the release of his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*.

[Our] culture is radically individualistic and relativistic. Whatever feels right for me is right for me; whatever feels right to you is right for you. That's the dominant value. It's considered outrageous for somebody to say somebody else is wrong.

But historic biblical faith understood the church as a new community. The basic New Testament images of the church are of the body of Christ, the people of God, and the family of God. All these stress the fact that we're talking about a new community—a new, visible social order. That new community in the New Testament was living so differently from the world that people would say, "Wow, what's going on here?" Jews were accepting Gentiles. The rich were accepting the poor and sharing with the poor. Men were accepting women as equals. It just astonished people because the church was so different from the world. It was countercultural.

Furthermore, [the New Testament church] understood that being a member of the body of Christ meant that you were accountable to each other. If one suffered, you all suffered. If one rejoiced, you all rejoiced.

One of the most important ways we develop mutual accountability in the local congregation is through small groups. It's almost impossible to follow Jesus either in [matters of] sex and marriage or in money and helping the poor by yourself. You

need the strong support of brothers and sisters. While the whole congregation should be like that, we need small groups to struggle with the specifics and talk about our struggles and get encouragement and prayer support. I wish every person in all of our churches . . . members were in a small group. (Sider – interview by Stan Guthrie of Christianity Today, April 2005, “The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience”).

Several of our local corps (churches) are the size of a small group. The issue is intentionality. When people come to The Salvation Army, where are they finding community? Where do they find a loving community to guide them in the spiritual life? Again the issue is intentionality.

From John Wesley to Willow Creek, no body of believers is too small or too large to grow, both qualitatively and quantitatively through spiritual formation small group participation.

The potential within The Salvation Army in the 21st century for a powerful witness to the holying power of God is enormous.

Small groups are a frugal means of developing disciples, offering healing to the broken, and a sense of belonging to the lonely and to us all, and to sustaining lives of continued obedient faith in Christ – lives of holy living.

This is the hour for Salvationists to claim our Wesleyan birthright of heart’s warmed, social holiness, societal transformation – through the method of spiritual formation small groups.

The world is in need of a holy witness of the people calling themselves as Christ’s followers, because without holiness – holiness in the church – no one will see the Lord.

Ephesians

5:

15-17

Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

In other words – we don’t have time to waste! The stakes are too high.

What Can I Do?

- Work at building communities of trust by being trustworthy.
- Join or start a small group bible study or accountability group.
- Seek out relationships that help you grow deeper in Christ.
- Submit yourself to character examination by another Christian.

To that end let us heed the words of Hebrews 10: 24-25

24 And **let us** consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 **[let us]** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

APPENDIX V

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CONNECTEDNESS/ SUPPORT (11)

- connectedness
- mutual accountability
- the joy and the benefits of togetherness
- meaningful community
- lessening of feelings of loneliness
- Opportunity to gain understanding from the insight and input of others
- Supportive fellowship
- authentic relationships are established
- Openness and caring
- readiness to accept help from the outside
- opportunities to experience the grace and love of God through fellow believers

SPIRITUAL GROWTH (11)

- spiritual formation
- grow in discipleship which results in more-effective pastors
- spiritual well-being
- cared for spiritually
- equipped for ministry
- mobilized for preaching the gospel
- evangelism
- spiritual support
- spiritual guidance
- spiritual growth and serious discipleship
- church health

OVERALL HEALTH (7)

- emotional well-being
- support during difficulties and troubles
- personal growth
- releases healing power to the people of God (James 5:16)
- acceptance that helps us repair our wounds
- leadership development for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church
- loved, served, celebrated, and admonished, begin to change

APPENDIX VI

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS – ACTUAL

CONNECTEDNESS/ SUPPORT (71)

- felt accepted
- fellowship is vital
- we are learning how to function in a healthy community
- affirming
- encouraging
- validating
- buildings relationships – teaching us what real relationships are about
- necessary for accountability
- Relational warmth
- Familiarity
- We know each other
- Closeness interpersonally
- Stronger sense of community
- We are relaxed and able to be ourselves
- No hiding who we really are
- Peer, loving care-frontation
- Not surface relationships but we dig deep
- Intimacy
- Commonality, shared work, resource sharing
- Intimate prayer times, non-threatening
- Caring for one another regularly
- We are known and accepted here
- Sense of family
- Relationships primary, curriculum secondary
- It forced me to build relationships
- It kept me from being aloof
- We are so far out this gave us connection
- At bigger divisional events – now we are connected
- Without small groups we would be disconnected
- Last retreat – there was much more openness amongst the officers
- It seems as if there is less competitiveness now
- Officers are more willing to seek prayer – this was not no so before
- Small Groups afford me opportunity to know a group of officers
- I realize now we have both similar and dissimilar challenges
- Division wide there is more closeness
- We can share joys and difficulties
- being more connected, less isolated
- Good group dynamics
- Variety of personalities and stages of life
- Group grew as interaction developed
- Continuity of groups is preferred
- Interaction with one another is beneficial
- Once a month is not enough
- we are getting to know each other,
- we enjoyed each other
- intergenerational mix was helpful and positive
- enjoyed fellowship and hospitality in home setting
- knowing we have the support of each other when times are tough and distressing
- This helped us know that someone was there for us both spiritually and physically
- Received encouragement from one another
- Having a “safe” place to share concerns
- Getting to know people
- Freedom to share burdens – privilege of bearing one another’s burdens
- God’s provision to me – to be open and transparent
- Encouragement – this should have been years ago – healthy freedom to share
- Love for each other
- Not isolated – nothing is impossible – fruitful
- People were missed when absent – a sense of connectedness and belonging
- More apt to call others – more at ease – likely to reach out for help when needed
- Newness to group – decision made to trust each other
- Calling each other for support
- peer accountability
- officer fellowship
- Fellowship
- brought a closeness between officers involved
- greater mutual respect, understanding and accountability
- enjoyed fellowship
- sharing is a very important part
- allowed personal growth and enriched peer relationships
- we support and encourage each other
- we are there for each other

SPIRITUAL GROWTH (25)

- beneficial experience for duplicating in local corps ministries
- iron sharpens iron
- We are accountable to one another and the disciplines
- This keeps us moving forward
- Help to attend to God's voice, obedience follows
- High level of spiritual growth and accountability
- Intimate prayer times, non-threatening
- Not building up burdens or bitterness
- Officers are more willing to seek prayer – this was not so before
- we have been forced to stretch in our walk with God and spouse
- being held spiritually accountable is a good thing
- This helped us know that someone was there for us both spiritually and physically
- Curriculum for Bible study helpful
- Helped develop leadership skills in remembering to remove focus from ourselves and place it where it belongs with God
- Yes! (strength given to fellow officers)
For instance if one of us is having a hard time, we can work through it in a safe environment and come through the struggle stronger
- We had some really awesome prayer time at the end of the session
- Freeing content – empowering information
- Accountability – awareness therefore of the divisional pulse – it's not just me – these are regional issues
- Heightened awareness of what the enemy and the Lord are doing

- Freedom to share burdens – privilege of bearing one another's burdens
- Shared prayer, strengthening each other
- Depth of sharing – liberating – talk about anything
- This has been a spiritual and emotional bank account to draw on
- Rapid growth – affirmation
- spiritually enriching and challenging

OVERALL HEALTH (33)

- we are learning how to function in a healthy community
- This keeps us moving forward
- Encouragement to keep going
- No hiding who we really are
- Not building up burdens or bitterness
- Safety then to move out
- This has been a good experience
- This has been very beneficial and positive
- It seems as if there is less competitiveness now
- Division wide there is more closeness
- We can share joys and difficulties
- Previously I remember the agony of other officers
- It was much more prevalent during sharing times
- It made us de-motivated to share our successes
- affirming
- encouraging
- validating

- Helped develop leadership skills in remembering to remove focus from ourselves and place it where it belongs with God
- We have learned that authentic community life is hard to come by in this division, but it is wonderful when it does happen
- Yes! (strength given to fellow officers)
For instance if one of us is having a hard time, we can work through it in a safe environment and come through the struggle stronger
- Privilege to participate
- Encouragement – this should have been years ago – healthy freedom to share
- God's provision to me – to be open and transparent
- High integrity – trustworthy, maturity
- This has been a spiritual and emotional bank account to draw on
- Rapid growth – affirmation
- Able to dump – empty it out – share – and then move on – don't stay there
- Wellness – I am more well because of this group
-
- effective in knowledge/skill building
- overall health
- It is important to be part of this
- Without . . . the accountability group . . . would not be doing as well
- in the beginning I was dead set against these small groups. I felt uncomfortable and felt I did not have anything to offer . . . but over the last 3-4 years I know I need them. Thank you!

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Introduction to Discipleship

By Colonel Janet Munn

What is discipleship? How did Jesus make disciples? How can I become a disciple? How can I be a disciple-maker? Why should I prioritise discipleship? How can I be disciplined in The Salvation Army?

If you are asking these questions, you are not the only one. In fact, I think you would find many, who are asking the exact same questions. This three-part series of articles contains some insights into discipleship.

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Introduction to Discipleship

A Definition

Rick Warren defines discipleship as; ‘the process of transformation that changes us to be increasingly more like Christ through the Word, the Spirit and circumstance.’ (Rick Warren, Purpose-Driven Church)

What we learn from Rick Warren is that discipleship means to be in a constant transformation process. We are always developing and striving to become more like Christ. Discipleship involves a relationship with God, where we do our part to maintain that relationship and God does his part.

If you want to dig deeper, these are the Bible verses that Rick Warren based his definitions on: John 17:17, 2 Cor. 3:18, Rom. 8:28-29, 1 Cor. 3:7, Eph. 4:22-23, Rom. 12:1-2.

Discipleship and The Salvation Army

In Salvation Army we express the need for discipleship in our articles of faith. Doctrines 9 and 10 say:

‘We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ’

‘We believe it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’.

Discipleship is a means of continued obedient faith. It is something we actively have to work on. We have to do our part:

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

(Philippians 2: 12-13)

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, we read about God's part and receive the promise that he will do his part:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.

May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

God WILL sanctify us, but we still have to work hard to continue in obedient faith.

We can't do God's part and he won't do ours.

'Jesus did not say, "Go and get decisions'. He said, 'Go and make disciples'. Too much evangelism has concentrated on bringing the unbeliever to a point of decision only' wrote General John Larsson.

How can we in The Salvation Army help those within our influence become 'increasingly more like Christ'? Not necessarily enrolments but apprenticeship with Jesus Christ.

Why prioritise discipleship?

First of all Jesus says it directly to his disciples in what we know as The Great Commission:

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28: 18-20)

Secondly, Barna and Gallup Research polls indicate that rates of premarital sex, adultery, divorce, bigotry, and domestic violence among Christians are the same as that of the general population. Even in nations where church attendance is large and enrolments are many, we have yet to see a transforming effect on those societies.

Is this the best we can hope for disciples of Jesus Christ to live? Is this holiness and societal transformation?

Dallas Willard writes:

There is an obvious Great Disparity between, on the one hand, the hope for life expressed in Jesus – found real in the Bible and in many shining examples from among his followers – and on the other hand, the actual day-to-day behaviour, inner life, and social presence of most of those who now profess adherence to him.

If the new birth and the power of the Holy Spirit do not result in transformed living by transformed people there are basically 2 possible reasons:

1. God's provision is inadequate – including perhaps the possibility that what God promised and commanded is completely unrealistic and even impossible, thereby making the Lord out to be a cosmic despot.
2. We (most Christians) do not give ourselves to [our walk with Christ] in a way that allows our lives to be taken over by it. (Dallas Willard, The Great Omission, 2006)

William Booth also saw a need for discipleship and he had a similar view to Dallas Willard:

“I have been thinking much that some of our Officers need to give more attention to the development of the work of the Divine Spirit in their Soldiers. Many of our people, I fear, have not progressed very far beyond the A B C of spiritual experience. I do not mean that some of these do not enjoy a Full Salvation. I believe they do. . . But, then, as you know, Holiness is something more than an act – of surrender on their part and of cleansing on the part of the Holy Spirit – it is life. It is true that it begins in an act, but it necessitates also a continual progress. Purity should lead to maturity...” (William Booth, Talks with Officers – The General, 1921)

[In the next two articles we will explore the four essential components of discipleship and how discipleship is unfolded in The Salvation Army.] Colonel Janet Munn

Discipleship – Part Two

By Colonel Janet Munn

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If you are asking these questions, you are not the only one. In fact, I think you would find many, who are asking the exact same questions. This three-part series of articles contains some insights into discipleship.

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Four Essential Components Evident in Jesus’ Life and Leadership Relationship! Relationship! Relationship! Relationship!

Mentoring and Role Models

People grow through relationships. Therefore, leadership must be relational for maximum influence.

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. (Matthew 9:9-10)

Consider this:

Jesus chose to be available, accessible and vulnerable to a wide variety of individuals; in one-on-one conversations and interactions. In fact, He was the ultimate mentor. He taught thousands on hillsides but was superb in one-on-one situations. He invested in the individual – regardless of age, status, gender – from the rich young ruler to the Samaritan woman to Nicodemus the Pharisee to the haemorrhaging woman to the thief on the cross.

Jesus also deeply invested in the three among the twelve disciples – Peter, James and John – with whom there are more recorded mentoring dialogues in the gospels than any other individuals.

Consider the impact of these three on following through on the Great Commission.

Small Group Participation

People grow through participation in a small group community of like-minded people, who share a common passion. In a small group there is vulnerability and acceptance and a chance to give and receive prayer

Jesus and his twelve disciples can be seen as a small group:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. (Matthew 5:1-2)

Jesus' primary model for disciple-making was that of a small group, the twelve. That was the context he used for investing deeply in developing the first generation of Christian disciples. Jesus certainly had alone time, sought out solitude to pray and commune with God, but he developed disciples in community.

Consider this:

Jesus chose to be a member of a small group. In fact, He was the ultimate small-group leader. He taught thousands on hillsides and was superb in one-on-one situations, but when it came time to pour His life into the people He knew would be the most critical to the spread of the gospel, He chose to invest a huge portion of His time and discipling efforts into the lives of just twelve (young) people.

In other words, the incarnate Son of God began his strategy to reach the world with the love of God by starting a ragtag youth group.

Personal Spiritual Ministry

– giving and receiving personal ministry (i.e. prayer ministry, preaching/teaching, etc.)

People grow through giving and receiving personal ministry:

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:1-5)

Consider this:

Jesus chose to not only give but also receive personal ministry. In fact, He was the ultimate in ministering through prayer and Scripture. He integrated Scripture and prayer into his lifestyle and relationships. He preached and taught the Word to large and small groups, as well as to individuals. He drove out demons and healed the sick. In Jesus' own time of need, as he approached the crucifixion, he requested prayer for himself

from his friends. He received the ministry of the “sinful woman” as she anointed him “for burial” and blessed her for it.

Mission Opportunities

People grow by going out in mission together:

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2)

Consider this:

Jesus was a missional man. In fact, He was the ultimate missionary. He taught his disciples to be and to do the same. When the popular thing to do was to respond to the demands of the multitudes, Jesus remained clear on his life’s mission and “steadfastly set his face” toward the cross – his mission focus. (Luke 9:51)

All Four Necessary

All four discipleship components mentioned in this article are necessary for maximum effectiveness in growing disciples into maturity in Christ – giving evidence of holy living and perseverance long term.

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

For Personal Reflection

Go through these questions and consider your own journey in a life of discipleship.

A. Mentoring

1. Who was or is your mentor? Someone who influenced you personally for the better, as a significant formational influence in your life in Christ.
2. Mentoring – Who are you currently mentoring? What young person are you influencing and investing in now?

B. Small Groups

1. What small group community impacted your life significantly?
2. What small group are you now part of that continues to nourish your soul?

C. Personal Spiritual Ministry

1. Describe an experience when you received significant benefit from a ministry time such as – a sermon, someone praying for you in person, an encounter with the Lord, or a revelation – that changed your spiritual journey.

2. How do you approach ministry to others? How do you lead ministry times in prayer these days?

D. Mission Opportunities

1. What mission experience changed you spiritually?
2. What are the mission opportunities currently available to you that strengthen your life in Christ?

[In the third and last article we will explore how discipleship is unfolded in The Salvation Army.]

Discipleship – Part Three

By Colonel Janet Munn

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— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Discipleship in The Salvation Army

[This is the third article of the three-part series on discipleship, written by Colonel Janet Munn]

Salvation Army Programmatic Structure in Relationships

The Salvation Army has a tradition of discipleship built right into the structure. Have you been a part of the following, consider:

- Cradle Roll
- YP Company
- Junior Soldiers
- Corps Cadets
- Senior Soldiers
- Soldiers' meetings
- Local officership
- Candidateship
- Officer Training

From birth through adulthood, including every age group and vocation, The Salvation Army has already in place a context for discipleship. Add to this list, Women's Ministries, social service recipients, children's and youth programmes galore, as well as musical sections, and the potential for highly effective discipleship of the multitudes that come within our influence, is profound – were there intentional effort applied systematically and in authentic relational ways.

Orders and Regulations for Ward and Penitent-form Sergeants, 1922

There was in place in 1922, a remarkably systematic strategy for disciple-making in The Salvation Army in the form of Wards and Ward Sergeants. These were “for the purpose of following up, encouraging, and helping the Converts, making them into Soldiers.” Every seeker at the Mercy-Seat would immediately be introduced to the Ward Sergeant, who would “look after their spiritual welfare in every possible way.” This responsibility

for spiritual development by the Ward Sergeant of the Seeker/Convert would continue “both before and after . . . enrolment.”

Every Soldier was also to be involved in a Ward, according to neighbourhood, and the Ward meetings were to take place once a week, and were “for the unconverted people as well.” Each Soldier and Recruit present was to speak of their spiritual condition and their work for the Lord in soul-saving. The Ward meetings would end with an invitation as needed. The Ward Sergeant was to “keep the Ward Meeting on strictly spiritual lines” and in the hope that every person was able to “go away feeling right with God and man.”

The Ward system was intentional, systematic and relational, and that, nearly one hundred years ago. The Ward system demonstrates Salvation Army DNA coming from John Wesley’s methodical small group accountability system that brought about societal transformation.

Where are we now?

An example from Denmark: *Transformers - Discipleship, Leadership and Mission*

The purpose of *Transformers* is: To help teenagers do and experience a transformation spiritually, physically, emotionally, creatively and socially; for teenagers to be inspired by God’s Word and a desire to help others to a better life.

Transformers is a 12-13 week course, run as an addition to the everyday lives of teenagers. It is important that school is not neglected because of *Transformers*, and it is therefore designed to recognize responsibilities, such as homework.

Three weekends with teaching, worship, prayer and fellowship are shared throughout the *Transformers* programme; one weekend at the beginning of the 12 weeks, one after 8 weeks and one final weekend.

Each teenager is given a mentor, who will support, encourage, give feedback and help the teenager to reflect.

The following is an overview of the *Transformers* course contents:

- A weekly logbook
- A selected book to read
- A group chosen project
- A selected mentor
- 3 weekends of teaching and fellowship
- 1 mission day in a selected city

The results and impact of the *Transformers* programme is clear and visible throughout Denmark. Of those who participated in *Transformers*, 45% have made a commitment as a Disciple of Christ in The Salvation Army, becoming Salvation Army soldiers. Out of the remaining 55% of programme participants, most are moving toward Soldiership. These young *transformed* disciples are some of the 46% of soldiers enrolled in Denmark in 2011 under 25 years of age.

Reported by Louise Wahl and Major Joan Münch

An example from Australia Eastern: LIFE Groups

The LIFE Leadership handbook by AUE says:

“Life groups are all about relationship – about doing life together. They’re about developing trust and accountability, and they’re about having a safe place to talk and ask questions. They’re about developing Kingdom of Heaven life skills like encouragement, serving and praying for one another. And they’re about engaging with and learning from Scripture”

A phone survey of every corps in the territory was conducted prior to the launch of LIFE groups, and then again two years later. The results showed:

- The number of 13-25 year olds engaged in a discipleship program from 2009-2011 had increased by 111%.
- The number of 13-25 year olds being discipled with a Salvo resource has risen by 230%.

Reported by Claire Hill and Ashlee Sheppard

In recent years The Salvation Army has seen the creation of incarnational training communities such as Saved 2 Save, Revolution Hawaii, The War College, Railton School for Youth Worker Training, 614 corps, and Transformers -- that are dedicated to equipping young adults for ministry and mission which makes for effective discipleship. The renewed emphasis on prayer throughout the international Salvation Army is an evidence of grace among us in these days, and a hopeful sign for the future regarding Salvationists’ participation in the Great Commission. With more than 500 Salvation Army centres throughout all five zones involved in 24/7 prayer and 121 territories participating in the Worldwide Prayer Meeting on Thursday mornings, Salvationists are activated and systematic in prayer in greater ways than in the generations prior to the existence of the internet. Surely this investment in prayer is nourishing discipleship the world over.

Advantages of Prioritising Discipleship

- A. It doesn’t cost money.
- B. It is applied in the real world, in local communities and contexts.
- C. It is gender and age inclusive.
- D. All learning styles are engaged (thinking, feeling, and doing).
- E. Literacy is not essential.
- F. It is inclusive of the non-believer and so has evangelistic impact.
- G. Already built into Salvation Army structure – just needs the relational priority

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

The Challenge

I would like to finish this three part series with a quote from Captain Rowan Castle, Territorial Youth Secretary, from the Australia Southern Territory:

***“WE NEED A REVOLUTION OF ORDINARY DISCIPLESHIP IN THE REAL WORLD
FOR THE LONG TERM”***

Will YOU be the Revolution?

How Long Lord, How Long?

By Colonel Janet Munn

Reprinted from JMunn.CSLD.Newsletter.August2011.

Long before the woman appears pregnant and brings forth her child there is life growing within her. Similarly, all those hours memorizing vocabulary words and conjugating verbs, only to feel completely bewildered in listening to this foreign language. But then, seemingly suddenly, the riddles are unraveled, the babble is sensible, the language is understood.

So in prayer – with great determination, pressing in, not giving up, always believing, earnest and deep heart cries – sometimes even after years of seeing nothing change, suddenly – breakthrough! In a moment the miracle comes, she is healed, delivered, rescued. He is brought to his senses. After all those years. After a long battle. Suddenly, finally, victory comes. Something was happening all along. What took so long? What if we'd given up sooner?

Jesus repeatedly described the Kingdom of Heaven as like a seed, or a farmer who plants the seed and waters it consistently, doesn't know how it grows, but it surely does. Often imperceptible yet totally reliable growth is happening in the seed cared for by the farmer, and in the Kingdom of God when God's people pray.

Key Scripture: Luke 18: 1-8

The ideas developed in this Scripture include the struggle by the powerless for justice (18: 2-3), demonstrated in Jesus' selection of a widow, a vulnerable woman, as the "hero" (18:1, 3), and the necessity of relentless perseverance, fuelled by the imagination of what can be, until justice is meted out (18: 3-7).

The Struggle of the Powerless for Justice

"In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" Luke 18: 2-3

Jesus tells a parable of a widow in need of justice, but the judge arbitrating her case is unjust. The widow is without resources of any kind and has no hope of ever extracting justice from such a judge. She is a symbol of all who are poor and defenseless in the face of injustice. Yet, despite her lowliness in society she recognizes a deeper claim to recognition. This story told by Jesus shatters stereotypes and highlights the power of the seeming powerless.

Some have called the Gospel of Luke "The Gospel of the Outcast". The earliest Christian communities were people who had been without a future, but now they had hope again; they were the people on the margins in their society, but now they had community again.

Read Luke 18: 1-8

- What are the injustices you see in the world – close at hand or around the globe? How can we pray for these?
- Who are the powerless, the vulnerable, in our day, like the widow was in Jesus' day? How can you, how can we Christians, help them?
- When do you feel most powerless? What can you do about it? What can you do with the sense of powerlessness?
- Try praying out loud from the book of Psalms, for example, from Psalm 6 and 13 where David prayed, "How long, LORD?"

The Image of God -- As Judge or Vulnerable Widow?

"Finally [the judge] said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" Luke 18: 4-5

The traditional interpretation of the unjust judge of Luke 18 is that the judge represents God, not in the sense of corrupting justice, but in the sense of supreme power and authority. This does affirm one aspect of the image of God.

We must remember that the theme of the vindication of the powerless is a constant one in the Scriptures, and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth continued this identification of the chosen of God with the poor. In two of Luke's earlier parables, the woman represents God (the Kingdom likened to a woman with yeast in Luke 13:20-21 and to a woman searching for a lost coin in Luke 15:8- 10).

Here in the Luke 18 parable the widow demonstrates a God-like quality – the relentless pursuit of justice. She embodies godly power in the midst of apparent powerlessness. This is our God, the God of compassion who brings good news to the poor, does not break the bruised reed or extinguish the smoking wick. This gives hope to those who wait in darkness, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and in the persistent widow of Luke 18. We as followers of Jesus are invited to the same: to draw on the power of weakness to overcome deathdealing powers.

- Describe some characteristics of God from both the Old and New Testaments.
- What aspects of God's character are especially important to you at this time in your life?
- Consider how the LORD is revealed in this parable in both the judge and the widow.
- What hope do you receive from thinking about these things?

Relentless Perseverance Fuelled by Imagination

There was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' . . . And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Luke 18: 3, 7

The powerlessness of the widow in this parable is beyond doubt. Her case looks hopeless. The woman's only asset is her persistence. In the Kingdom of God as told by Jesus in this parable, her persistence is enough. In teaching this parable Jesus not only demonstrates a concern for a widow, but even the implication that this woman's conduct – persistent, relentless, importunate, annoying perhaps -- was a model to the disciples of divinely affirmed behavior. It is difficult to imagine a stronger endorsement of the widow's persistence than that given by Jesus.

Through this teaching Jesus calls us to persist in challenging injustice because the way things are is not necessarily the way things are meant to be. This includes countless cultural practices that need to be challenged with the new thing that has happened and continues to happen through the entrance in the flesh, of Jesus Christ into the human story. Existing culture must be challenged and at times confronted with the redemptive word of Scripture

The parable of the persistent widow expresses the potential impact of refusing to give up on a vision, an imagination of justice restored.

- For what have you been persevering in prayer? What are the things for which you need God to “suddenly” break in?
- What are your dreams for how things can be rather than how they are?
- How can we encourage each other to persevere, and never give up?

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Luke 18:1

You don't have to see God to know him.

Faith, which works by love, can see in the dark.

Lyell M. Rader

A Call To War

By Colonel Janet Munn

The authority God delegates to sincere followers is eminently practical. It is not merely about sitting in heaven with the angels and saints and martyrs and 24 elders and four living beings. It is about winning the war on earth right now. And the devil struggles with all his energy to dissuade, discourage, distort so that we settle for our current level of obedience. Our clear understanding and embrace of this thoroughly biblical authority will empower us to confidently and victoriously confront the enemy in every situation.

The Authority of the Believer: Exercising Our Dominion in Christ

God gave the dominion of earth to humans

A. God gave the dominion of the earth to humans forever. He releases His power in the earthly realm in response to redeemed humans living in agreement with Him (in their individual sphere of influence). The Spirit moves in response to what God's people say and do. Jesus will rule the earth forever in partnership with His Bride who is filled with adoring obedience.

Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion... over all the earth... God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over... every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26-28) 'Let Us make humankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over... every... thing... upon the earth.' ... God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over... every living thing that moves upon the earth.' (Genesis 1:26-28 NRSV)

The heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth He has given to human beings. (Psalm 115:16 NRSV)

What are human beings that You are mindful of them... You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; You have put all things under their feet. (Psalm 8:406 NRSV)

For all things are yours: whether...the world or life or death, or things present or things to come – all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23 NKJV)

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me... (John 17:24 NKJV)

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... (Revelation 3:21 NKJV)

B. When God gave the governing authority of the earth to Adam, he had the right to use it in any way that he chose. He did the unthinkable with it. He committed high treason and gave his authority over the earth to satan (Luke 4:5-6 NKJV). At that time, satan became “the god of this world.”

This authority...has been delivered to me [satan], and I give it to whomever I wish. (Luke 4:6 NKJV)

Whose minds the god of this age has blinded...lest the light of the gospel...shine on them. (2 Corinthians 4:4 NKJV)

C. At the cross, Jesus as a Man defeated satan and all demonic powers and made a public spectacle of them before all in heaven and hell. He has won the victory, but it must be enforced in this age. Authority is delegated power. A police officer stops a car by the authority of the government, not his physical power. Like the policeman, we must put our hand up and invoke the name of Jesus.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [His death and resurrection]. (Colossians 2:15 NKJV)

D. We must enforce Jesus’ authority on earth. The enemy’s attacks against us will continue if we accept them. There are two common errors in responding to satan’s attack. **First, to ask God to resist satan for us.** We must not ask God to do what He entrusted to us. As God will not plant the seeds and pull the weeds for the farmer, so He will not rebuke the devil for us. **Second, to accept satan’s attack under the banner of honouring the sovereignty of God.** They say, “Jesus, I trust Your leadership.” We trust His leadership best when we obey His command to actively resist what the devil presents to us. It is a misapplication of the glorious doctrine of God’s sovereignty to passively accept what we must actively resist. There is no “cease fire” in our spiritual conflict.

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7 NKJV)

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith... (1 Peter 5:8-9 NKJV)

E. We must use our authority against satan, who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy God’s blessing in our life (by fear, addictions, emotional oppression, division, sickness, financial oppression, etc.). Jesus gives insight into satan’s nature and tactics against us whenever he is involved in our life.

The thief [satan] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. (John 10:10 NKJV)

F. The principalities and powers speak of the invisible demonic hierarchy in the spirit realm. Our primary problems are not of human origin, but are invisible enemies. To

stand (v. 13) is to refuse to accept satan's attacks. God's Word is our weapon. We resist satan's attacks by speaking the Word. Heightened strife or negative emotions often involve satan's flaming missiles striking us.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...in the heavenly places. Take up the whole armor of God... having done all, to stand... taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one... Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God... (Ephesians 6:12-17)

G. Our problems are often the result of several factors working together including psychological issues (our mindset, belief systems, and life choices), physiological issues (diet, alcohol, chemicals, etc.), sociological issues (what others do to us), and spiritual (demonic attack). By using our authority, we can remove the added pressure that demons bring to our problems. This makes it easier to solve physiological, psychological, and sociological problems. Exercising authority against satan's attack does not automatically cancel all the consequences of our wrong choices or the effects of what others do to us. There are varying degrees of demonic oppression.

H. Fear, rejection, and addictive urges are a form of demonic oppression that must be rebuked. If they are allowed to gain dominance in our thinking, they will dominate our life with despair. We must take authority over the spirit of fear. It must not be accepted or allowed to grow.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Our spiritual authority is based on Jesus' victory and exaltation

A. Our spiritual authority is based on our union with Jesus. The authority that Jesus received as an "exalted Man" is given to His people. God gave Jesus to the Church (v. 22) as our head (v. 22) and made us His body or the vehicle through which He expresses His power on earth (v. 23).

The Father of glory, may give to you... revelation in the knowledge of Him... that you may know... The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe... which He [the Father] worked in Christ when He raised Him...and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places... He put all things under His [Jesus'] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him... (Ephesians 1:17-23 NKJV)

We have the same category of power within us that God used when He raised Jesus from the dead. Money can't buy it. Threats can't make it happen. Military power/natural weapons can't compare to this power.

In 1 Corinthians 12 the emphasis is on the people of God, the Body of Christ connected to each other. But in Ephesians 1 the emphasis is on the Body connected to Jesus, the Head – forever and ever.

B. We must take our place of authority in Christ as those seated in heavenly places with Jesus (Ephesians 1:3, 20-22; 2:6). Having been raised to sit with Jesus in heavenly places, we are given access to God's throne. When we pray according to God's will, our prayers reach His throne and find approval, resulting in the release of power. We must know who we are in Christ.

Raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ... (Ephesians 2:6 NKJV)

C. The command of faith doesn't always bring results instantly. Do not become sluggish, but...through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:12 NKJV)

D. Our authority is based on what Jesus accomplished, not on our moods, feelings, fervor or recent victories.

"Not by [human] might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6 NKJV)

Examples of wrestling in prayer:

Take (wield) the Sword of the Spirit: A human being agreeing with Jesus. Speaking the Word of God and keeping at it – that is wielding the Sword of the Spirit. (Don't endure it – speak to it.)

- 1 "I refuse to accept this any more. I refuse passivity but I rise up against it in the authority of Jesus Christ, who has conquered every foe."
2. "I will steadfastly resist."
3. "In the name of Jesus I cancel your assignment against me."
4. "In the name of Jesus, go, now – (be specific). Leave my marriage, my children, my parents, my finances, my thought life, my relationships."
5. "Take your hands off my marriage. I cancel your assignment against me in Jesus' name."
6. "I plead the blood of Jesus Christ over my body."
7. "I take authority over... fear... lust... perversion... suicide... demonic harassment and torment."

8. "In the name of Jesus I bind that spirit of fear."
9. "Release Your glory, Lord. Release Your manifest presence now, Lord."

We call Salvationists (and all warriors of Jesus everywhere) worldwide to join spiritual battle on the grounds of a sober reading of Scripture, a conviction of the triumph of Christ, the inviolable freedom and dignity of persons, and a commitment to the redemption of the world in all its dimensions – physical, spiritual, social, economic and political.

We affirm that Christ our Lord calls us to join him in holy war against evil in all its forms and against every power that stands against the reign of God. We fight in the power of the Spirit in the assurance of ultimate and absolute victory through Christ's redemptive work. (from "Called to Be God's People" – International Spiritual Life Commission – bracket added by Munn and Court)

(Speak the word – don't just think it)

Retirement Salute

By Captain Nicole Poore

Retirement Salute
By Captain Nicola Poore

There are some people who leave such an imprint on your life that you are forever changed because of their influence and investment. The reality is, that a great deal of what people appreciate about my character, leadership and ministry, is the fruit of Janet and Richard's investment in me over the years.

Please allow me the privilege of honouring you and your ministry on this occasion of your retirement as Salvation Army Officers.

I first met Janet in 2009 at a holiness conference for creative types in Sydney (Brengele Create). Janet had flown from London to be one of the guest speakers, and she led daily sessions about Spiritual Disciplines. I was among the youngest in attendance, and that week at Collaroy is an enduring milestone in my life and spiritual formation journey.

Some 9 months later, The Salvation Army hosted a 'World Youth Convention' in Sweden in July 2010. One thousand young Salvos from around the world descended on Stockholm for teaching and worship. Janet and Richard preached together at one of the sessions. I mean, they literally preached together... they shared the platform; giving space and honour to one another in a kind of preaching 'tag-team' as their content and style flowed seamlessly. It was beautiful and powerful. I had never seen this kind of ministry partnership in marriage before.

It was also at the WYC in Sweden that I first surrendered to a calling into full-time ministry as a Salvation Army Officer. It was Janet who knelt with me and prayed the words of John 10:27 with me.

Fast forward 4 years, and Janet & Richard moved to Sydney to take up respective appointments in the Australia Eastern Territory. No sooner had the appointment bulletin been sent, than I reached out to Janet about journeying with me as my mentor. In the ensuing months and years we would meet regularly to discuss life and faith, leadership and discipleship. It was a mixture of spiritual direction and coaching. Those were sacred and transformative times; too sacred to share. I'm so grateful, Janet.

It was in my second-year at Training College that Janet was then appointed the Training Principal at SFOT. Thanks be to God.

Richard and Janet – a few words for you.

Richard – your heart is stirred by a noble theme, "increase my capacity to love." May God answer your prayer. And may God continue to anoint and strengthen your voice.

You are a bonafide wordsmith – with the ability to craft words with care and with power, whether in spoken or written form. It's a gift that I hope you will continue to use.

Janet – I am yet to meet anybody quite like you. The concentration of Christ in you has a gravitational pull that draws others into his presence. It is rare and it is beautiful. Thank you for living out your own words, and being as “yielded to Jesus as you know how to be.”

And to you both -

Your marriage and ministry partnership is ground-breaking. Together you have broken virtually every mould there is and have set new precedents, holy precedents, for egalitarian ministry within The Salvation Army. In this way, you celebrate one another, recognizing mutual giftedness in different ways, and you release each other to function and flourish in ministry. Your marriage is a blueprint, for which I and many others are grateful.

Thank you, both. Thanks be to God.

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Shared with such a deep love and appreciation of you both. 🙏❤️ — with Richard Munn and Janet White Munn.