

SALVATIONISM 301

Captains John & Allison Norton

INTRODUCTION Mission

Captains John & Allison Norton recently completed two terms in the Russia\CIS Command.

They are passionate preachers and sincere students of the Word, wrestling regularly with how The Salvation Army must continually adapt to remain true to its principles and to become effective in the new millennium.

The Nortons have started four congregations as well as having served as Command Youth and Candidates Secretaries. John & Allison contribute our chapter on MISSION.

What is Mission?

No, not missions. This is not a three week mission trip to Mexico we're talking about! This is a life-long endeavour. In the immortal words of Colonel Pearson, *we'll tear hell's throne to pieces and win the world for Jesus*. This remains the *raison d'être* of The Salvation Army. Every open air held, every band piece played, every Junior Soldier Class taught, every campaign planned, every old folks home visited, every prison lesson preached, every song sung, every word prayed is aimed at fulfilling the mission to win the world for Jesus. The Nortons tackle this essential chapter in a manner guaranteed to help prepare you for the mission.

RESOURCES:

BOOKS:

William Booth. SALVATION SOLDIERY.
William Booth. THE SEVEN SPIRITS.
Catherine Booth. AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY.
Catherine Booth. POPULAR CHRISTIANITY.
George Scott Railton. HEATHEN ENGLAND.
George Scott Railton. 21 YEARS SALVATION ARMY.
William Booth. SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST.
Phil Wall. I'LL FIGHT: HOLINESS AT WAR.
Ralph Neighbour Jr. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
John Dawson. TAKING OUR CITIES FOR GOD.
Ted Haggard. PRIMARY PURPOSE.

MOVIES:

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

ONLINE:

Journal Of Aggressive Christianity: armybarmy.com/JAC/

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MISSION One

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Mark 16:9-20



*"The world for God, the world for God;
I give my heart, I'll do my part;
The world for God, the world for God,
I give my heart, I will do my part."*
Evangeline Booth.



The early Salvationists thought positively. They believed they were on the verge of completing what the first disciples began. They were not satisfied as we are today in simply planting new corps in each city they invaded, but they believed in changing and taking a whole city captive for God. It is called primitive Salvationism.

There would be no joy in attending an evangelistic meeting with a half empty hall when it could have been full and overflowing. There would be no joy in being satisfied with sowing seeds – they wanted to reap! The whole city would be changed. The world would be changed. **Have we lowered our standards? What are your expectations? Is it possible we might actually complete the Great Commission? When?**

Often in leadership seminars or management studies there is great emphasis given to 'visioning'. The idea is that great leaders have great visions and that each of us needs to have our own great vision in order to be a great leader. The problem with this kind of thinking for Christians is that it only goes so far– ultimately we already have a vision from our chief leader, Jesus. He has cast the vision. Our task is to catch his vision, not to create our own new one.

God's vision, given to us by Jesus, is to save humanity. He wants the world to Himself. This means every man, woman, and child, in every land, speaking every language, and with every religious and cultural tradition, coming to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It means God wants to eradicate sin and all its effects. He wants love to reign supreme. He wants to put an end to social evils– poverty, disease, and even death.

In Mark 16:14 we find the disciples all sitting around a table eating. In the NASB they are not simply eating, they are reclining at the table. They are comfortable, content, not concerned about anything. If they are anything like me when I'm hungry, they probably had their heads down looking at the one thing important for the moment– food! Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith. It is as if He wants them to 'look up', beyond their food, beyond what is before them in this moment, to greater things. He wants to turn their minds from material things of the moment to spiritual matters of much greater importance. He wants them to remember the purpose for which He lived and died– to call the world to repentance and faith. Jesus tells the disciples the crux of the matter: **"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."**

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Lloyd Auchard wrote: *"It was the first rain of the season and my windshield got worse as I drove. It wasn't long before my focus was on my windshield and how my wipers were doing. Then suddenly I realized that I was about to rear-end the back of a big semi truck and trailer! We have the same problem in the Church. Whenever we become so preoccupied with our own lives and how we are doing morally, or with our fellowship and study as ends in themselves, we have misplaced our focus."*

We forget that we are really involved in God's plan for the world. Putting aside for a moment the problems and concerns of this day, we want to look up and see the bigger picture.

God is doing something today in the world that is bigger than you and me. It is bigger than our corps. It is bigger than The Salvation Army. It is even bigger than all believers in all the congregations put together. He is calling the world to Himself. Our mission is to catch his vision and work with Him to win the world for God.

"Every branch of the military has its own hospital units; every military unit has its own doctors or medics; but not every hospital has its own army. The church is to be a military outfit with a hospital unit. That unit heals the hurts, cares for the wounds, comforts the weary, and encourages the fainthearted, then sends them back into the battle. The church which is only a hospital and neglects its mission will soon become a funeral parlour." Douglas W. Boyer



- What are the implications of Jesus' command to take the gospel into the world for The Salvation Army? For your local corps?
- What do you think is the practical meaning of Mark 16:17-18 ? (see verse 20 as well).
- How has this great vision of Jesus changed the purpose of your life? What do you need to do about it?



Make a mission statement for your life—the mission at Williams Lake Corps is to win the world for Jesus starting in the Cariboo. Go for a simple statement that explains what you are all about.



Read Isaiah 6



“Not called,” did you say? Not heard the call, I think you should say. He has been calling loudly ever since He spoke your sins forgiven- if you are forgiven at all- entreating and beseeching you to be His ambassador. Put your ear down to the Bible, and hear Him bid you go and pull poor sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitying wail for help. Go and stand by the gates of hell, and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father’s house, and bid their brothers, and sisters, and servants and masters not to come there. And then look the Christ in face, whose mercy you profess to have got, and whose words you have promised to obey, and tell Him whether you will join us heart and soul and body and circumstances in this march to publish His mercy to all the world”
(William Booth, THE GENERAL’S LETTERS).

Holiness is not something that begins by doing, but by being.

We note three things of particular significance in this sixth chapter of Isaiah:

1. Isaiah is called to a ministry of doing
2. Isaiah’s calling happens in the context of experiencing God’s holiness and recognizing his own spiritual impurity.
3. The message Isaiah was given to speak was negative and unpopular.

Ministry of Doing

“Who will go for us?” – asks the Lord (verse 8). “Go and tell the people...” (verse 9)

If God is the Lord of grace, then we Christians are the instruments of that grace. If God has a world that He wants brought to Himself, He also has a plan to use us as His instruments. God’s one complete and perfect plan is to save the world.

So God needs people willing to be workers in this plan. Salvation Army soldiers wear two Ss on the lapels of their uniforms that can be said to represent the slogan, ‘Saved to save’. Not saved to sit or even saved to stand. Saved to save, to do something. When William Booth realized that there were poor homeless men sleeping under the bridges in the east end of London he said to his son Bramwell, “Do something!” Be a part of making God’s plan for the world a reality.

God’s Holiness and My Spiritual Impurity

Here is the crux of the matter: Winning the world for God cannot be separated from first ensuring that your own heart and soul and mind are won for God. Jesus said, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Mark 8:36). We could paraphrase this for us to say, “What good is it for a man to win the world for Jesus, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?”

We have met too many good Christians who, having been called by God to a great task for the Kingdom, have sacrificed the means for the end. They have tried to achieve their God-given goals and vision at any cost. The results are always tragic. The method with which we strive is important. We cannot sacrifice our own holiness for the sake of any goal, no matter how great or good we think it will be for the Kingdom or for The Salvation Army.

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MISSION Two



Isaiah, standing before the great throne of the King of Kings, realized he was unclean. We all need to go through that process every once in a while, perhaps more often than we would like to admit. "Holy, holy, holy." Three times for emphasis, reminding us of God's holiness even when we don't want to hear it. "Holy, holy, holy." Like an old record with its needle stuck. "Holy, holy, holy." Aaah! Okay God, that's enough of that! I admit it. You are holy and pure and right. I am unclean. Take my sins away!

It really is all about holiness. Being IS more important than doing. First things first. Focus on being the person God wants you to be. Then, after years have passed, you will look back and see that you also ended up doing the things God wanted you to do.

Negative and Unpopular Message

Isaiah's first message after agreeing with God to 'go' was to tell his congregation that God wouldn't let them hear him anymore and was about to destroy them! That is a strong message. Why can't we just preach love and good deeds? Why all the doom and gloom?

The issue, of course, is about saying and doing what God tells us, regardless of its popularity. Perhaps it is about the times we need to speak up for Christ at work or school? Perhaps it is a prophetic word, or preach, or a message about sin with which we know we need to confront someone? Perhaps it is about the times we need to refrain from participating in an activity? Perhaps it is an unclean joke or one that goes too far? Perhaps it is just about our everyday lifestyle, speaking to others with honesty and integrity?

The message will not always be popular or positive. Our contemporary culture resists confrontation, suggesting that peaceful co-existence means holding in our own beliefs and accepting others for who they are. But this can lead to compromise if we aren't careful.

We must be the light and salt of the world.



1. Isaiah was part of the Plan, fulfilling God's will at a specific moment in history. Are you part of the Plan today? What is God calling you to do?
2. Are you holy? Are you focusing your energies and time on doing? On being? Are you really who you claim to be?
3. What is the message God is giving you to tell to his people? How will you handle the unpopularity of being God's messenger?



Speak to someone today about Jesus—anyone, preferably someone you know. Take time to tell them what a difference He has made in your life and watch what happens when you live mission.



Read Romans 12



"The only time a leader should not be in front of any army is when it is in retreat."

George B. Smith.



The crying call today within the Body is for leadership. This call is being heard in every Christian organization, including The Salvation Army. We don't need just more leaders though— we need more **GOOD** leaders!

To begin with we need to distinguish between managers and leaders— both of which we need— but who do very different jobs. Usually, in the name of leadership, we have been guilty of developing training and leadership programmes that produce managers, not leaders.

What is the difference between a leader and a manager? A leader is one who helps set goals and direction for an organization. A manager, on the other hand, is the one who helps ensure that we reach those goals that have been set. In other words, a manager drives the car but the leader makes sure we are on the right road. Too often we have so-called leaders (really managers) that are guiding us along the way at great speed to everyone's delight only to discover too late once we have reached the finish line that the prize is not something we want or need.

The Body needs more entrepreneurial leadership. We need more adventurers, more risk takers. The problem is that many of us have become managers, occupying our time in committees and boardrooms. We need to loosen up, get out into the world, and start producing. Does this sound like a business pep-talk and not words for Christ's people in ministry? Well, we're convinced that we can learn a few lessons from the world.

Businessmen have goals— to make money. And we have goals too— to win the world for God. So we need to get busy with the main thing at hand— prayer, soul winning, listening to the Spirit, and fighting sin and evil. Too often we come up with lame plans in our church boardrooms, THQ committees, or corps councils that should never see the light of day. We don't pray enough or vision enough or have courage enough to do what God wants us to do. **We need leadership!**

"Strategies are okay in boardrooms that even a child would say are bound to fail. The problem is, there is never a child in the boardroom" (Victor Palmieri, Fortune magazine, Feb 24, 1992). Jesus said, "Unless you become like a little child, you will not inherit the kingdom of heaven."

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MISSION Three



Leaders are people with a God-given vision, who can direct us where we are supposed to be going. Large goals often mean large results. Small goals usually produce small results. When we believe that God is interested in large goals then we too will be interested in large results. If we feel that God is a small god, a God who only can succeed in small areas, then we will only ever be blessed with small blessings. On the other hand, if we believe that God can do large incalculable miracles beyond our understanding or imagination, then we will be blessed and receive.

Let's conclude here also by noting that not everyone is called or should be a leader. In fact, the Bible makes it very clear that all of us have different spiritual gifts to be used in different ways. No one is more important than anyone else. Therefore, we need to put those who are visionary leaders into the front positions. And if we have the gift of management (ensuring that things get done in the right and most effective way) or service or encouragement or healing or whatever... let us do what we are called to do and quit trying to compete with those who have been given vision and called to be the front leaders.



1. What is the purpose of leadership?
2. Can you think of any Bible characters who were visionary leaders? Any who did not have the gift of leadership? Any who had the gift of management?
3. What gifts do you have? Are they being used properly?



What is your vision for your future? Why not write it out so that you have it focus. Spend some time in prayer asking God to fill you with a vision for your future and then write it down and make it a matter of daily prayer.

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MISSION Four



"Jesus wept" (John 11:35).



"Try tears" (William Booth).



As a boy who attended Sunday school because his parents made him go, I learned tricks to keep my teachers off my back. One of the feats I learned was to memorize John 11:35, "Jesus wept," as it is the shortest verse in the Bible. It got me out of a bind, to my great delight, whenever I was called upon for a memory verse.

In more recent years this verse has come to have more meaning for me. It is really a profound statement of Christ's compassion, feeling of loss for a friend, and very real humanity. "Jesus wept." It is no wonder that the 33 AD Salvos had no choice but to resist Docetism (the belief that the humanity of Jesus was not genuine but that He merely appeared to be human: docetism comes from the Greek verb *dokein*, 'to seem') by formally condemning it.

There stands Jesus beside the grave of His friend. There stands the True Living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Creator of the universe. There stands the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. Oh, and by the way, take a look- He is weeping. He is overwhelmed with compassion. He is blubbering out loud now- He's lost it. Perhaps we are embarrassed- He is not in control of himself. Others might say He is weak and not much of a leader. Real men don't cry. There He is. Just standing there. **Weeping.**

There is more man in Him than any man who ever lived.

Yesterday I, John, visited some of our corps people in the city of St. Petersburg, Russia, where we are corps officers. Let me tell you what I learned on this average day. Natasha lost her husband just last month to cancer. He was 42 years old and left behind not only a young widow but two boys who are not yet in their teens. The family wasn't able to scrape together the money to afford the \$5,000 for chemo-therapy. The doctors said the tumor in his brain was probably too late to treat anyway, but it really bothered him that he couldn't even afford the treatment if he wanted it. He suffered at home for two months. He died in agony on a hot summer day. Yesterday I learned that Natasha recently started drinking as an escape to her loneliness and financial problems.

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Valentina, another one of our faithful corps members, broke her right arm last month. She lives in a single room, in a communal apartment, which means besides her bedroom she has to share her apartment with strangers living in other rooms. She told me yesterday that she went to pick up her monthly pension, all of \$38, her only source of income. However, because she couldn't sign her name as usual with her right hand, and because the clerk said her left-handed signature didn't look anything like the signature in her passport, she was sent away empty-handed. As she has no family of her own, she called me to ask for help in getting through this bureaucratic nightmare.

My final visit yesterday was to another older lady, a regular at our Sunday worship meetings, who has been reading with great interest for many years about things spiritual. The books in her tiny room revealed her interest in such occult practices as horoscopes and transcendental meditation. I explained to her that God loved her and that Jesus died for her. She said she understood what I was saying intellectually, but could not comprehend in her heart that God really cared for her personally. She said that she felt God had punished her in life and was perhaps angry with her and unable to really love her. She said she was confused about who God really is and what he wants from her. I asked her if she wanted to invite God in prayer to reveal Himself to her in truth. She said no, she wasn't ready for that yet, but did allow me to pray for her before I left.

Jesus wept.

Do I weep? Do you weep?



1. When was the last time you were truly moved by someone else's circumstances? What did you do about it?
2. Do you have to go to a foreign country to meet people who need your care and to know about Christ's love? What can you do in your neighborhood, workplace, Corps?
3. If God called you to serve Him somewhere away from your home, how would you respond? Do you have a heart for mission? Do you have a heart for people? Do you have a heart for getting involved in peoples' lives? Are you willing to inconvenience yourself to care?

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MISSION Five



2 Chronicles 7:14: *"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*



"Find out those who will join you. Tell your captain how you feel, if you are not a Captain: if you are, tell your corps how you feel. Let others whose blood is fired and whose hearts are melted after the same fashion join hands with you. Make a Mount Carmel of some ante-room, or barracks, or kitchen, and offer yourself up as a sacrifice, body, soul, and spirit, and believe and wait until you receive the holy fire"
(William Booth, THE GENERAL'S LETTERS).



The problem today is not that we have too little religion but that we have too much! Many of us live in cultures where it is popular to call oneself a Christian, even sometimes to call oneself a born-again or evangelical Christian. But sadly this is often nothing more than naming a past religious experience that was once burning in our hearts but today is nothing more than a smouldering, dying fire. There is no flame. Christ has little to do with the reality of our everyday lives.

The call then is for revival. We need to be revived.

"Revival is a spontaneous spiritual awakening by the Holy Spirit among professing Christians. It results in a deepened religious experience, holy living, evangelism, and missions. Revival should not be confused with evangelism, which is a result of revival" (The International Dictionary of the Christian Church. Grand Rapids: Regency, 1978).

Revival is given by the Holy Spirit; it cannot be started by human effort. But quickly we must add that revival is not being held back because God is unwilling to send it, but rather because we are unable to receive it. Our hearts are not ready; we are comfortable in our lukewarm Christianity and in our petty pleasures.

Revival begins with prayer. Christians pray in earnest and realize through their communication with God that He is not pleased with them. This leads to repentance. Only then is God able to send His reviving Spirit.

Revival always brings about an increased interest in spiritual things. Christians get less interested in sports, movies, restaurants and church social events, and more interested in praying, repenting, and living holy lives.

Revival always results in holy living. Most revivals have included a public confession of sin. God will not bless us if we have secret sin. There is a tendency in the congregations today for people to confess sin only in private to God, seeking His forgiveness alone. However, repentance includes the intention and desire to make right the wrongs we have done. Whenever possible repentance will include repayment or restoring righteousness to where it belongs. Although this is not possible in many instances, public confession of sin is at least an attempt to make this restitution. The congregation therefore needs to be ready to receive repentance, not ready to condemn those in need of forgiveness, but with arms wide open, ready to forgive.

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Revival results in supernatural experiences of the Holy Spirit, although this should not become the emphasis in the revival experience. God wants to pour out His blessings and we can expect to see miracles, prophecies, and wonders.

Revival brings change within the Army. The emphasis goes away from administrative structures, power struggles, and programs, to time spent in prayer meetings, holy living, and an emphasis on the Word and Spirit.

Revival results in evangelism to those outside the Body. The changes that take place inside the church act as a magnet to those outside. Christians are bolder in proclaiming the gospel. Often revival is accompanied by a multitude of conversions. Evangelism is a product of revival, not revival itself. Revival involves, by definition, the reviving of Christians inside congregations.

HOW WE CAN GET READY FOR REVIVAL?

2 Chronicles 7:14: *"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

This text shows four requirements from us that will result in three blessings from God. If we will humble ourselves, pray, seek, and turn- THEN God will hear, forgive, and heal. Notice this is a classic 'If, Then' formula. God promised to revive us if we do what He says. Again, although revival is all grace (it is a gift of God), its condition for being released depends on us.

What I find interesting here is that the three things God promises to do are things that we usually take for granted. We usually, even in non-revival times, expect that God will hear our prayers, and forgive our sins, and heal our land. We expect God will do these things. But this text makes clear that unless we humble ourselves He will not hear our prayers. And unless we pray He will not bless and heal us. And unless we turn from doing wickedness He will not forgive us our sins. These are heavy demands. This is radical religion. This is tough love. Notice also that this verse is clearly addressing God's people. Revival is not about reaching the unsaved. It is primarily about reaching us.



1. Are you a Christian? Really?
2. Is Christ real in your everyday life?
3. How would you define revival?
4. What do you think is preventing revival in your Corps?



Talk to a Christian friend and ask them about praying together regularly for revival. Get into an accountability relationship with them... ask them to hold you to your personal mission.

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MISSION Six



"Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things will be given to you" (Matthew 6:33).



"Humility is to rise to one's full stature by the side of Jesus Christ, and then to realise what pygmies we are in His shadow. This cuts a man down to size, in other words, blesses him with a sense of proportion"

(Frederick Coutts, THE SPLENDOUR OF HOLINESS).

"For 40 years as a scholar Moses learned to be somebody. For the next 40 years as a herdsman he learned to be a nobody. Only then did God call him to become the great emancipator, legislator, warrior, and poet"

(Robert Hoggard, SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES).



Humble Ourselves

The opposite of humility is pride. The number one reason why we don't have revival is because of our pride. Why? Because the root of all evil is pride. Pride was the first sin. Lucifer, the most beautiful of all angels, became so full of pride that he felt he could take God's place. Pride was also the first sin of humanity in that Adam and Eve became so convinced of their own goodness and superiority that they questioned God's command to not eat from the tree.

Humility is the process of looking at oneself with sober judgment (Romans 12:3), aware of who we really are and what we would be outside of Christ. We are sinners, lost and condemned, but for the grace of God. We have no reason to think of ourselves better than we ought.

Pray

Larry Lea grew his church from 13 people to 11,000 in eight years. When he was asked about such amazing growth he said, "I didn't start a church, I started a prayer meeting."

Prayer is nothing more than communication with God. Communication includes both speaking and listening. Most of us are much better speakers than listeners. Therefore we need to cultivate the habit of listening to God speak to us. The secret to revival is to quit babbling to God in prayer and to stop, wait, and listen for him to speak to us.

We have said in our corps that the most important thing we can do in our week is to pray. Through this effort we are seeing dramatic changes in people's lives.

Seek God's Face

Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things will be given to you." In this day and age we seek everything but God first. We seek pleasure, family, friends, money, power... everything but God!

We worship idols, and are just as guilty as those who worshipped idols of stone or wood in ages past. Put God in the first place... behind put your money, time, career, and family.

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Turn From Our Wicked Ways

A great hindrance to revival is an unwillingness to give up our sinful pleasures and habits. We confess our sins but have no intention of changing our lifestyles. God cannot honour this kind of repentance. He will not hear this kind of prayer for forgiveness. We continue in our sin, fooled to think that we are somehow all right with God. In reality, we are in danger of the very flames of hell itself.

With all the emphasis on living in the Spirit today we have ignored the fact that the clear commands of God are being violated. We are justifying and rationalizing our sin. We break the two great commandments of Jesus and the ten commandments of Moses and yet because we claim to be 'free in the Spirit' we feel everything is all right between us and God. **NO and a thousand times no!** He does not hear us when we refuse to repent and turn from our sin.

Only when we meet these four conditions will God

1. Hear from heaven.
2. Forgive our sin.
3. Heal our land.

AGREEMENT, UNITY, AND PRAYER

Jonathan Edwards suggested three basic requirements that must occur among all God's people if they want to see spiritual awakening: 1. Explicit Agreement; 2. Visible Unity; 3. Extraordinary Prayer. In many corps we have visited we regret to say that there is not agreement among the believers about our spiritual condition. One person, full of pride, saying, 'no, I do not need to repent' - is a barrier to revival. One person, comfortable, saying, 'no, my city is fine and my city does not need to repent' - is a barrier to revival. We need agreement on doctrinal beliefs, on leadership and church structure, on worship style, on corps goals, and on programs, mission, purpose.

We must have **visible unity** and that unity must be actively shown. That means putting an end to criticism. We must have unity with headquarters, with other congregations, with our corps officers, with our corps local officers, and with our soldiers and seekers. We must be one. If revival comes, it will be limited by our unity. Criticism is water on the fire. Unity, though, is a matter of degrees - unity within a single small group, wider to the local corps, wider to the whole city, or denomination.

Extraordinary prayer means attendance at prayer meeting! It means prayer at home, in public, at church, and at work. Maybe it means cancelling band practice to have a prayer meeting. It means calling on God to revive and send a new outpouring of his Spirit upon us. **Our mission is to change the world. Draw a circle on the floor, stand in the circle, and let the winning of the world begin inside that circle.**



1. How does the command of Jesus to take the gospel to the whole world relate to the revival of Christians?
2. How is your prayer life?
3. List three action steps you will take this week in order to become more ready for revival.

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MISSION Seven



"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand" (Romans 15:20-21).



"Christ would not have become what we are unless we were capable of becoming what He is. He came down to our measurements in order to bring us up to His."
George B. Smith



Crossing-Cultures- Two groups of Christians met in Europe, one from America and the other from Germany. At the dinner table several of the American believers began to smoke. The German faithful were aghast. In fact, the Germans were so shocked, they almost dropped their beer.

Hoping to take the Gospel to other peoples and lands forces us to confront our own religious culture. What is important? What is crucial? What is gospel and what is cultural?

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel here Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand".
(Romans 15:20-21).

Devoted followers of Christ have sincerely tried to respond to His command to go into all the world with his Good News. To this end the Body has usually been enthusiastic to endorse those who traverse cultural boundaries for the propagation of the faith. However, the Christian community has been slow to distinguish between our encultured religious traditions and the Biblical fundamentals that are necessary to salvation. We must determine the basic principles of the Gospel and attempt to transmit them alone into another culture.

The question remains for us today, for how does a North American separate her faith from her culture, and present only her faith to the African village girl? How is it possible that a South Pacific national can learn to love the God of the European missionary?

The answer lies in the model set before us by Christ himself. In a sense, Jesus also was a cross-cultural missionary. Notice that He didn't come down out of heaven and live like the king He really was. Think about it. He left the splendour and comfort of heaven to go to the earth, to be born as a vulnerable baby, to live in a new culture, to learn a new language. He did all of that for the purpose of fulfilling his God-given mission. How similar are the experiences of dedicated missionaries to the incarnation of Christ!

Thus missionaries use the term 'incarnational cross-cultural ministry' to express that philosophy of mission which leads to practical lifestyle choices, making them more like locals than tourists. Unfortunately, this ideal is rarely realized. The standard for many missionaries is to live in a mission compound, surrounded by other missionaries, enjoying many of the luxuries of home. Even missionaries who do not live in a mission compound often live at a standard much higher than the average national. In such a context it is difficult to truly understand the local people and how they perceive 'our' God.

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MISSION Seven



Incarnational cross-cultural missions means trying to become as much as possible like the people. To speak the language they speak, to eat the foods they eat, to live in the kind of homes they live in. It means that just as Jesus became a Jew, we too must become one among the people to whom we are called to minister. Only in this way will the message of Christ truly be able to be transmitted to the target people.

Through incarnational missions we identify with the people we are trying to reach. We share their burdens. We participate in their joys and in their sufferings. This is the example of Christ to us. We know what it is to walk in their shoes. In return for sacrificing the comforts of home, the incarnational missionary gains a perspective on the culture that enables him to reach beyond his own culture and understand how the message of Jesus Christ will be received in the new one. It is a challenging and rewarding venture. God's willingness to come down to earth to dwell with us, His incarnation, is the greatest model for missions.

"Christ would not have become what we are unless we were capable of becoming what He is. He came down to our measurements in order to bring us up to His." George B. Smith



- Who is the most difficult person for you to relate to? How would you need to change yourself to be able to relate better to this person? Are you willing to do it?
- What are the biblical fundamentals that are necessary to salvation? What aspects of your faith are simply cultural or traditional?
- What would you be willing to live without for the sake of the gospel? What comforts do you take for granted?

GROUP WORK:

Share the most significant thing you've learned (or did) from this week with the members of your group.

Tell them about your personal mission statement and spend some time in prayer for one another for the fulfillment of mission in our lives.

Think of a mission project for you to do together as a group and set a time to meet next week to actually do it.

