

# **FULLNESS – PRAYER**

An eBook by Colonel Richard Munn  
*also known as SA 401*

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## **FULLNESS – PRAYER**

By Colonel Richard Munn

### **Introduction**

The following are a series of 7 eclectic meditations that reveal the multi-faceted nature of prayer – the fullness of prayer. They can be processed individually, or as a group. They are intended for Salvationists who are seeking a versatile prayer life, one that mirrors the engagement ethos of The Salvation Army.

While there is certainly a genuine place for solitude, retreat and contemplation in prayer, for the Salvationist it is more likely that prayer will be expressive, robust, and on the offense. ‘Muscular Piety’ is how Allister Smith describes Salvationist spiritual formation.

In the pages that follow you will find scriptures, insights, suggested applications and questions to ponder concerning:

- **Confrontation** – Spiritual formation must enable us to effectively live in a gritty world. Do we have the inner fortitude to engage and make principled protest?
- **The God Who Listens** – In the cacophony of community there is a God who listens to us. Are we returning the favor?
- **In His Hands** – Spiritual Formation is sometimes messy, even painful. Are we aware that through it all, we remain firmly in the potter’s hands?
- **The War Cry** – God seemingly delights in marauding through enemy territory. He does so with triumphant glee. Does our faith have this chutzpah?
- **We Have a Dream** – The Salvation Army was birthed from a team of flamboyantly creative dreamers. Where have all the dreamers gone?
- **M\*A\*S\*H** – Mobile Army Spiritual Hospitals serve as healing centers in the hell of battle. Are our Corps effective MASH units?
- **Desert Warfare** – Jesus withdrew into the desert and then promptly ignited into action. It would seem the two are linked. Can the solitude of prayer produce ‘Salvo Desert Rats?’

“On our knees, let us look again at our own homes, our communities, and our world, careening out of control toward the next century. If you believe with me that God is calling His Army to prayer, then decide now to do something about it - and do it now, for Jesus' sake, and for the salvation of the world for which He died. Let us go forward - on our knees!” (**General Paul A. Rader (R)** London, November 1994)

## CONFRONTATION

"Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"  
(2 Samuel 12:7)

*"In Germany they came first for the communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."*

**Martin Niemoller**

Lutheran pastor in 1930's Germany

**INTRODUCTION:** In the movie *Annie Hall* we see a conversation between a man and a woman where what is actually said is contrasted with what is actually meant being typed on the bottom of the screen.

It does seem that we can all too easily say one thing with our mouths and think something completely different in our minds. Quite often our motivation is to maintain the status quo.

It can be very costly to confront authority structures and people in power over us. However, there are sometimes events and circumstances that propel us to speak the truth. We can do no other. Such confrontations – forged in prayer – can turn the tide of events, for the good of all concerned. (This section leans on teaching by E. Stanley Jones)

**SCRIPTURE:** (2 Samuel 11 – 12) Nathan is confrontational - startlingly so. And yet, this is no impulsive, impetuous, or reckless action. What is the key? He was "sent by the Lord" (12:1). Nathan is 'commissioned' to confront despicably murderous injustice.

He approaches his 'supervisor' – who had violated four of the 10 commandments in one action – and after inductively absorbing King David he utters what has been described as the most dramatic sentence in the Old Testament – "You are the man!" The outcome is that David would ultimately find the forgiveness of God.

**APPLICATION:** What can we learn that will guide us in this matter?

**1. Accept that confrontation is part of community life.** We are naive to think that there will be community harmony all the time and should not be too afraid of differences of opinion. In fact, we should relish the vigorous exchange of ideas. Sometimes it's a matter of life and death that somebody speaks up.

**2. Be sure the confrontation is God ordained.** Nathan was in the central will of God. This was not a tempestuous hot-headed diatribe, but was a carefully worked out, prayed through God-ordained power encounter.

Are you overly confrontational? – You need to back off a little and think about the matter first.

Are you overly reticent? – You need to become more courageously involved in other people lives.

- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish (confront) one another with all wisdom." Colossians 3:16
- "If your brother wrongs you, go and have it out with him at once just between the two of you." (Phillips - Matthew 18:15)

We mustn't let things fester, building up with ferocity, replaying clever come backs, imagining eruptions, because when some minor issue arises, it can be guaranteed, our reactions will be way out of proportion. Instead, it is imperative that we address the matter quickly, calmly, and prayerfully

**3. Be willing to receive confrontations ourselves.** Nathan literally means 'God has given.' Nathan was a gift from God to David - a person who loved him enough to tell him the truth. E. Stanley Jones writes, "My critics are the unpaid guardians of my soul." Our critics usually have something right. David does get this right. He immediately confesses, "I have sinned against the Lord."

**4. God ordained confrontation will actually bind people together in a stronger relationship.** Nathan now acts as an agent of forgiveness for David. In fact, much later on, Nathan is the name of a subsequent child of David and Bathsheba. Deep bonding took place for that to happen.

**5. Loving confrontation between individuals allows us to confront ourselves and to be confronted by Christ.** David sees his sinfulness and is drawn closer to God. He journals a prayer, "Create in me a clean heart O God." (Psalm 51)

The ultimate goal is not confrontation for the sake of confrontation - it is to bring growth in Christ-likeness, it is to promote love and understanding. We should not be afraid to tell the truth to those we care about.

#### **TO PONDER:**

- Have you confronted lately? Did it meet the standard of Christ?
- Do you need to be a Nathan this week? Are you hesitating? Why?
- Does it seem like you are always confronting? Why?

- Like David, are you making choices that you condemn others for making?
- Have you been confronted lately? Did someone speak some truth to you? What are you going to do about it?
- Do you need a friend like Nathan? Ask God for one.

## THE GOD WHO LISTENS

But when the people said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD.  
(1 Samuel 8:6)

*"A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer was listening."*

**Soren Kierkegaard**

*O help me Lord*

*To play the listener's part,*

*To seal my lips*

*And open wide my heart!*

**John Gowans**

**INTRODUCTION:** The history of the Ancient Near East during the 2000 years before Christ is one story after another of rising and falling fortunes for nation after nation. People lived in perpetual fear of neighboring states, with the potential for invasion and the transfer of power. It was part of the fabric of life.

**SCRIPTURE:** (1 Samuel 8:1 – 21). These forces are at work in the panic request of the newly formed people of Israel to the beloved prophet Samuel. For 40 years and more Samuel had held together a loose federation of states identified as the 12 tribes of Israel, bound together by worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The concept was new – a people bound together under God and led by a man of God; not a King, not a military leader, not a tribal chief. By the blessing of God, and sheer depth of character Samuel made it all work. But now there was a problem: Samuel was aging rapidly and his sons were corrupt. And so, the elders ask for a king - 'to lead us, such as all the other nations have.'

If one thing stung Samuel it was the notion of 'being like other nations.'

Here we see the greatness of Samuel: He prays. He goes to his knees before God. And, as had happened time and time before he hears from God, who says; 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it isn't you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.' 'Listen to them,' he says a second time.

God is listening to Samuel. He comforts a hurting Samuel. And Samuel obviously listened to God, because what follows is a clear list of what will happen to this new federation that wants to become kingdom. Here is the painful irony: "The people refused to listen to Samuel."

God is listening to the people. God listens to Samuel. God instructs Samuel to listen to the people. Samuel listens to God. Samuel listens to the people. But, **the people refused to listen** to Samuel.

**APPLICATION** - What can we learn from the story?

**We pray to a God who listens.** He dialogues with people. He allows them to make choices. He listens to us. He knows how to bring glory to Himself even through the unwise requests and actions of his people. In that process He even brings us along to maturity of faith and emotion.

**Prayer must include listening.** Like the people of Israel as we mature in faith and identity, we must learn to listen to God. In that posture we discover what He wants. It liberates us from haranguing him unremittently. We don't ask God for what we think is good; we ask him for what he thinks is good for us. To do that takes listening.

**We must listen to each other.** One the simplest and respectful things we can do for is to listen to each other. It takes work. We've all had the experience of talking to someone who isn't really listening to us. We don't like it. Listening is quite profound expression of humility.

Richard Foster says: "First we listen.... We listen to people and we listen to God. Sometimes people share their deepest needs in the most casual offhand way. But, if we are listening, really listening, there is often within us, an inner 'yes,' which is a divine invitation to prayer. So I ask politely if they would like prayer for the situation. I have yet to have one person turn me down - and I have done this in airports and shopping malls and crowded hallways."

**We must listen as a community.** God speaks to in congregations. A congregation can hear God's voice. It is imperative for health and unity. Morton Kelsey once embarked on such a journey with his congregation. Their conclusion: "We can receive directions as clearly as those given Ananias... rise and go to the street called Straight."

**TO PONDER:**

- Is God trying to speak to you? Do you need to listen to him instead of speaking to him?
- As you grow in spiritual maturity do you need to speak less and listen more?
- Who next to you is sharing from the heart? Are you listening to that person?
- Are you angry at God right now because He hasn't blessed you the way you thought he would?

- Is God speaking to your congregation? Who does He want you to be? What does He want you to do?
- Say out loud the words of old: "Master speak, Thy servant heareth."



## IN HIS HANDS

"Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand."

Jeremiah 18:6

*I'm in his hands, I'm in His hands;*

*Whate'er the future holds*

*I'm in His hands,*

*The days I cannot see*

*Have all been planned for me;*

*His way is best, you see;*

*I'm in His hands*

**Stanley Ditmer**

**INTRODUCTION:** No one uses a visual aid like Christ; seeds, coins, lamps, salt, farmers, bread, shepherds, and fishermen – all form a canopy of every day occupations and objects giving insight into the Kingdom Of God. And the people loved him for it. What a delightful contrast to the religious teachers of the day who focused on the minor and insignificant details of law.

What would Jesus use to illustrate today - gasoline, batteries, satellites, and computers, perhaps? Tony Campolo gets pretty excited about the forgiveness of Jesus being the equivalent of the recordings of our sin being irretrievably erased – a major hit on the delete button.

**SCRIPTURE:** Jeremiah 18:1 – 11. The visual aid from Jeremiah is probably one of the most recognizable in all scripture. He sees the potter at work, a familiar sight for sure.

Jeremiah sees the whirring wheel and the hand of the craftsman creating in clay the tangible and substantive from the inner genius of the potter. Vessel after vessel is created from messy goop, fashioned and then laid aside to be sun baked. Inanimate material seems to live under the nurture and guidance of the potter. Beauty and usefulness emerge from formless mess.

Then, something unusual happens:

**"...the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot..."**

A handful of clay is marred - a pebble, corrupted clay, a distorted shape beyond repair - and the potter is beaten by it. He stops rotating the wheel, collapses the spoiled vessel, removes the impediment, remedies the constituency of the clay, kneads the clay into plasticity again, restarts the wheel, and under his hand the formerly defective clay grows into another vessel, this time in perfect image and design.

Then the application comes in an instant: 'Change your ways around completely, or you're going to be flattened, your blemishes will be removed, you'll be made supple again and I'll form another nation, and I'll keep up the process until a perfect nation is formed in my hands.'

**APPLICATION:** What can we learn that will guide us in this matter?

**God Fashioning the Community of Faith:** If God calls the church to repentance and the church acts in an obstinate way - as can sometimes happen - then God with all the authority of the potter can take the church, flatten it in an instant, remove the blemish, make it supple again, and build another church more reflective of his desired image. Like a passionate artist, God the potter is constantly massaging, and refashioning His church until the vessel is perfect. He simply will not be satisfied with second rate, defective work.

**God Fashioning the Believer:** We are human - 'humus' - formed from the clay of the earth. Our prototype is to be fashioned into the image of Christ. But, because of stubbornness of heart, flagrant disobedience or unwillingness to accept the sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Christ we are flawed vessels. There are impediments to that fashioning process. The grit of sin, the pollution of arrogance, the imbalanced form of our choices - these have to be worked on constantly, massaged, plied, kneaded, reformed. Sometimes the situation is so unacceptable; the potter flattens our world, and begins again.

- Deceiving **Jacob** - reformed by God by the brook, wrestling with God, getting his hip out of joint in the process, and rising refashioned and purified in the image of God.
- Arrogant **David** - at the height of his fame and popularity, abusing his power and authority and in the resulting mayhem, loss of all near and dear to him, purged and refashioned into a man after the very heart of God.
- Denying **Peter** - stung with the look of Christ in the courtyard, refashioned in the bold apostle, the rock upon whom the church was built.
- Persecuting **Paul** - stripped of his self-righteousness on the road to Damascus, refashioned in the Arabian Desert for three years, emerging as the greatest missionary and theologian ever known.

**God's Fashioning Hands:** With patience and perseverance the potter works. With the physical and intimate connection of an artist, obsessively pouring passion into the object of his work, the posture of the potter, fussing, molding, bending over almost protectively, every fiber of the artist devoted to the object of work, restless until the work is perfect, feet moving, attention riveted, hands

fidgiting and reshaping – we can say, **throughout** the process, **‘we’re in his hands.’**

**TO PONDER:**

- Does The Salvation Army need reshaping?
- Are you supple enough for reforming?
- What impurity needs to be removed from your life?
- Are there indications that God is refashioning you?
- If it’s messy right now - can you accept this as God’s restorative purpose in you?
- God is reforming his church and sometimes stretching, sometimes painful. Discuss
- “We are ready, Lord. Collapse what is not pleasing to You. Work with us. Knead us. Build us up again - this time closer to Your image. We’re in Your hands!”

## THE WAR CRY

"The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.  
And in His temple all cry, "Glory!"  
Psalm 29:9

Why should the devil have all the best tunes?"

**William Booth**

**INTRODUCTION:** In the world of NCAA sports nothing appears more sacred and protected than the College Fight songs. They are the campus national anthems and are often sing with vigor to rally athletes in their moment of need.

There are ancient rituals operating here, where music, rhythm and lyrics were used in battle. Remember the scene in the movie *Zulu* where Michael Caine leads his weary battalion singing 'Men of Harlech' before the terror of Zulu drum beats?

In such settings the capture of a flag, trophy, or some other such symbol is considered a great coup. It can dishearten the opposition in an instant. Parading the emasculated trophy before the enemy then becomes the height of derision.

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 29 performs exactly such a function. This Psalm of raw power was originally a word-for-word a battle song for the Canaanite god Baal, used by the enemies of God to bolster troops in warfare, and pay homage to Baal.

If there is one enemy of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob it is Baal.

David, under the anointing of God, takes this enemy battle song, uses sanctified resourcefulness, keeps the rhythm, keeps the imagery, keeps the cadence, and replaces Baal with the name Yahweh. Eighteen times the name Baal is replaced by the name Yahweh! In so doing David captures the mascot. He emasculates the enemy and rallies the troops.

There is an insidious side to this fertility god Baal. He's not just about rain storms and crops. Child sacrifice, temple prostitution, rampant sexuality were all a pervading part of Canaanite culture. No wonder God despises Baal, is unalterably opposed to Baal, and cannot tolerate Baal.

With the stroke of a quill David crushes any pretensions of Baal with the raw, unsurpassed greatness of Yahweh. This is a 'Nor'easter' of biblical proportions, coming down out of the north through sky, sea, land, mountains, forests and wilderness. And it happens in an instant. And this is just the voice of God!

Where are the faithful ones in this 'twister?' They are still worshipping. At the beginning God calls for people to ascribe to him glory - well He gets their attention, and they do it. God's people will have nothing to fear in His presence; they sing a song of victory, a war cry of triumph - Glory! This is a brilliant and powerful Psalm.

**APPLICATION:** What can we learn that will guide us in this matter?

**Allow God to reclaim your body.** Bodily appetites can easily fall under the power of evil. Baal seems to specialize in this. Our very sexuality - such beautiful fragility designed for marital intimacy – can be crudely exposed and tossed casually about causing untold pain and damage. Even our propensity to gluttony, and addictive substances - these are all influences of evil. Don't give Baal the authority. His is an evil war song. Let God reclaim our bodily brokenness. His strength, and His glory, and His holiness can reside in our bodies.

**Allow God to reclaim your mind.** What do you think about, and spend time with, and allow into the inner recesses of your understanding? Do you still cuddle diabolic memories - past sins you've committed, or sins inflicted upon you, malevolently replaying retorts and confrontations? Don't give Baal the authority. His is an evil war song. Let God reclaim your mind. His strength, and His glory, and His holiness can inhabit your mind.

**Allow God to reclaim your emotions.** Are you addicted, in captivity and bondage, to skepticism and pessimism? It's not a personality trait. It's a miserable way to live. It's not the fruit of the spirit. Don't give Baal the authority. His is an evil war song. Let God reclaim your emotions. His strength, and His glory, and His holiness can guide your emotions.

**Allow God to reclaim your relationships.** It's so like Baal to sever the fabric of human relationship that we need and that belong to God. The people to who we owe our greatest loyalty and love, we so easily violate and blaspheme. Those marital and familial relationships belong to God. Don't give Baal the authority. His is an evil war song. Let God reclaim your relationships. His strength, and His glory, and His holiness can be present in your relationships.

**TO PONDER:**

- Is this kind of song of victory your war cry?
- Where in your life can God in Christ commandeer that which the enemy of your soul has taken away?
- What can you do to experience the vigor and ruthlessness that taunt this usurper of what rightfully belongs to God?
- How can you take the initiative against the forces of darkness? Not just maintaining a defensive posture, but reclaiming that which belongs to God?

- Cry out a war cry to the glory of God! Shout out “Glory!” Make your war cry resound with the holiness of God!

## **WE HAVE A DREAM**

“At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream.”

1 Kings 3:5

On one of my recent journeys, as I gazed from the coach window, I was led into a train of thought concerning the condition of the multitudes around me. [...] I saw a dark and stormy ocean. [...] In that ocean I thought I saw myriads of poor human beings plunging and floating, shouting and shrieking, cursing and struggling and drowning; and as they cursed and screamed they rose and shrieked again, and then some sank to rise no more.

**William Booth**

**INTRODUCTION:** On April 14, 1865 Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Adding to his legend was the report that he had a premonition of his death in a dream the night before.

1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated. This too, added legend to the greatness of the man. Adding to his legend were his last recorded words, 'I have seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I have seen the Promised Land.' There was a prophetic sense of the tragedy that was to follow. It was a premonition of his impending and untimely death.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Kings 3:1 – 15. King Solomon also had a dream, and as a result he and the nation were forever changed. In his dream Solomon is visited by God: "Ask whatever you want Me to give you." Solomon asks for a 'discerning heart to govern the people and distinguish between right and wrong.' God is pleased, grants the request and bestows riches and honor as well.

Then we read, "Solomon awoke - and he realized it had been a dream." From that dream emerged a new man and a king the like of which was never equaled.

Scripture reveals story after story of people who hear from God in dreams:

- Abraham - covenant as patriarch of a great people (Genesis 15)
- Jacob - stairway to heaven (Genesis 28)
- Joseph - the 'dreamer' (Genesis 37)
- Gideon - military victory as a result of a soldier's dream (Judges 7)
- Joseph - 5 dreams in the opening of Matthew (Matthew 1-2)
- Peter - vision of a large sheet (Acts 10)
- Paul - dream of a Macedonian man asking for help (Acts 16)
- John - vision of revelation (Revelation 1-22)

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways..." (Hebrews 1:1)

"Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams." (Acts 2:17)

One of the painful disclosures in the book of Lamentations is that there are no more prophets – literally, 'no more dreamers.'

For centuries dreams have been one of the most common ways that God has communicated with human beings. To neglect such communication can separate us from one of the most significant ways God reaches out to us. There may be few better ways of learning to observe the hand of God in than the practice of listening to these messengers of the night.

**APPLICATION:** (This section leans on Richard Foster's CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE)

1. **Pray and invite God to inform you through your dreams.** Tell God of your willingness to allow Him to speak to you in this way. Pray for protection. Ask God to surround you with the light of His protection as He ministers to your spirit.

2. **Record your dreams.** Patterns may well begin to emerge. Patterns that will reveal God's will for you. While it is foolish to think that every dream is a revelation from God, it is only more foolish to think that all dreams are irrational.

3. **Ask for interpretation.** Share your dreams with a trusted friend or spouse; a person with wisdom and spiritual insight. The role of the interpreter is often the key to unlocking the meaning of the dream.

4. **Apply the results.** Christians who have rediscovered the role of dreams in their pilgrimage report new spiritual vitality and greater meaning in their prayer life. This has even resulted in greater incentive to action and social justice. Martin Luther King was a dreamer.

5. **Be prepared to risk.** It's risky for us to journey into the unknown. But, without risk we peter out to and waste away with boredom. Don't become stultifying and conventional. Exude the mystery of God. Cultural religion simply cannot emanate the mystery that we need, and in which God is found. In the end it is found wanting.

**TO PONDER:**

- Has God ever revealed Himself to you through dreams? Share this.
- If necessary, ask for an interpretation.



- Do you frequently dream specific images or visions? What are they?
- Share a vision you have for The Salvation Army.

## **M\*A\*S\*H** **(Mobile Army Spiritual Hospitals)**

“When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying His hands on each one, He healed them.”  
(Luke 4:40)

“Healing is an integral part of the ministry of The Salvation Army, including its medical work, but not confined to it.”

### **Commissioner Paul duPlessis**

**INTRODUCTION:** A West Coast newspaper woman who chanced to see inscribed on the corner stone of a large church in New York City the instructions Jesus gave His followers; "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." On impulse she walked around to the rectory door and asked to see the rector. "I saw your sign," she stated abruptly without any further explanation. "Do you?"

"My sign? Do I what?" asked the bewildered cleric.

"Are you doing what your sign says? Do you heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons?" Then without waiting for the astonished cleric to reply, she continued, "If you don't you shouldn't advertise."

**SCRIPTURE:** We read numerable accounts of Jesus healing people. There are 26 specific healing miracles recorded in the New Testament.

- **Matthew** – “When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."” (8:16-17)
- **Mark** – “Wherever He went--into villages, towns or countryside--they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged Him to let them touch even the edge of His cloak, and all who touched Him were healed.” (6:56)
- **Luke** – “The people all tried to touch Him, because power was coming from Him and healing them all.” (6:19)
- **John** – “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.” (9:11)

The idea that God sends disease is foreign to the Gospels. He does not send it; rather He is seeking continually to banish it. There is no record that Jesus was ever sick. Sickness is not natural; Jesus came to destroy it. He regards disease as part of the Kingdom of evil.

The ideal for humans is health of body, mind, and spirit.

**APPLICATION:** What can we learn that will guide us in this matter?

**God Wills Wholeness** – We are designed to be healthy. It is important to vigorously believe this. Do not blame God for sickness. He does not send disease, and as we see above, Jesus continually tried to destroy it. However, we need to avoid becoming “absolutist.” Inferring that all diseases must be cured in this life or else there is sin or lack of faith in the sufferer leaves a lot of wreckage.

Part of the penalty for our sin is sickness and disease and the greatest medicine is conversion, salvation in Christ. ‘Salvation’ and ‘health’ are closely interrelated words. Even the secular press reports: “The more religious people are, the healthier they remain as they age.”

**Salvation For The Total Person** – This includes body, mind, and soul. A Hindu prayed, “Teach me how to get rid of my body – it’s my enemy.” Such thinking is foreign to the Christian faith. One function of the incarnation is to reveal the glory of humanity; to show that the human body has intrinsic value. The Apostle Paul says, “The body is for the Lord. The Lord is for the body.” (I Corinthians 6)

**Choose Health** – We must follow the basic laws of health. When we watch junk, listen to junk, eat junk, then we can’t complain that ‘my life is junk.’ Instead, we must think healthy thoughts, commit to healthy relationships and develop healthy habits if we wish to be healthy. We simply cannot harbor fears, resentments, guilt, and anger without a physical result – there is a connection.

**One Ministry of the Church Includes Healing** – Healing prayer should be a normal part of the Christian life. It need not be a dominant preoccupation, but it should not be undervalued, either. If preaching restores the soul, and teaching restores the mind, then healing restores the body. Ignore this and we are not being fully obedient to the gospel.

We may well hesitate because healing prayer is faith stretching. Of *only* Jesus could it be said, “He cured all of them.” As we do not stop evangelism because everyone is not converted, we do not stop praying for healing because everyone is not healed.

(This section is informed by notes on teaching from E. Stanley Jones)

**TO PONDER:**

- Do you know persons in whom a miracle of healing has taken place?
- Have you ever experienced such a healing?
- Is good health a Christian responsibility?

- Have your thoughts/emotions ever made you sick?
- There a connection between our relationship to God and our health. Discuss.
- Why did Jesus devote so much time to a ministry of healing?
- The gift of healing is given to a community of faith, rather than specially gifted individuals. Discuss.
- Is your corps a healing corps?

## **DESERT WARFARE**

“The Spirit sent him out into the desert.”

Mark 1:12

*“Mid all the traffic of the ways,  
Turmoils without, within,  
Make in my heart a quiet place,  
And come and dwell therein.”*

**SASB # 777 – William Dunkerley (John Oxenham)**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The fear of being alone sometimes drives us towards being ‘busy.’ Unfinished tasks clutter the week, and we soon have the haunting sense that we are unable to fulfill our obligations. “We are almost always aware of being behind schedule,” writes Henri Nouwen.

Noise and busyness can fill our lives to the brim, and in so doing, prevent the Spirit of God from connection and renewal. And sometimes, of course, this is exactly what we want. Because when the searching light of the Spirit illuminates our dark places, we don't like what we see. By keeping feverishly preoccupied, the Holy Spirit is kept out.

This stands in complete contrast to Jesus - who never seemed rushed or harried and who began his ministry with 40 days alone in the wilderness.

**SCRIPTURE:** (Mark 1:9 – 15)

The very same Holy Spirit that descends upon Jesus as he comes up and out of the River Jordan drives Jesus out to the desert. There is tremendous propulsion – out into the shattering silence of the Palestinian desert.

This is not by accident. Mark begins his gospel with Isaiah preparing the way in the desert. Quickly follows it with John the Baptist thundering hellfire and brimstone in the desert. And now, Jesus is alone, in the desert. He quickly moves from the glory of His baptism to the 'battle in the wilderness.'

During this time Jesus communes with God in a penetrating way, and faces Himself at the same time. This awesome accomplishment, this thorough cleansing, this intense devotion provides Jesus with reservoirs of strength for the next years of ministry. It was a pattern He would repeat - in miniature - with frequency.

**APPLICATION:** What can we learn that will guide us in this matter?

This is something we must do. We can't just talk about 'solitude of the heart.' It needs to work its way into our experiences. We are talking about action here.

**1. Daily Solitudes** - Take advantage of the naturally quieter moments that punctuate every day.

- Early moments in bed.
- Morning coffee before the work of day.
- Silent prayer before a meal.
- Driving without the radio on
- Looking at the stars

**2. Quiet Places** - Find a place designed for silence and solitude; a place - just for you. Go there regularly. Sit in this sanctuary and pray. You can do that. This is a call from loneliness to solitude; to silence amidst the cacophony of life; to a state of mind and heart, more than a location. In solitude and silence you are free to listen to God.

**3. Annual Desert Warfare** - Once a year withdraw for the purpose of reorienting your life goals. What do you want to be doing one year from now? 10 years from now? People tend to overestimate what they can do in a year, and underestimate what they can accomplish in 10 years. In the quiet of these moments, listen to the thunder of God's silence. This is desert warfare. There will be wild beasts in your solitude that you will have to face, but, there will also be angels ready to minister to you.

**4. Ultimate Engagement** - In many ways this is hard for Salvationists. We are an activist movement; we are more comfortable with action. However, desert solitude is not intended to last indefinitely. Jesus leaves the desert and pronounces that now is the time – the kingdom has come! He calls the disciples and explodes with power and effect. “He speaks as one with authority,” is the observation, ‘not like the other religious leaders.’ You too, will now be prepared for engagement with the world. Having gone through desert warfare, you will be a better soldier in the great salvation war.

#### **TO PONDER:**

- What might cause us to be afraid of being alone?
- Have you ever withdrawn for the purposes of spiritual formation?
- Why do you think the desert is historically a place where people go meet with God?
- The remarkable immediate impact of Jesus’ ministry is intrinsically linked to his wilderness solitude. Discuss.
- What are your experiences of Salvation Army ‘retreats’?