

Therefore I Will

A series based on the 'Therefore I Wills' of the *Soldier's Covenant*

Sermon Notes



The Salvation Army New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
1. The <i>Soldier's Covenant</i> explained.....	6
2. Disciplines that will enable me to grow in grace.....	10
3. Living by Kingdom values.....	15
4. Integrity leads to credibility	19
5. Including Christ in all my relationships	23
6. Making family life a priority.....	27
7. On being a faithful steward.....	31
8. I will practice abstinence	35
9. I will be loyal to Salvation Army purposes	39
10. Involvement in mission.....	44
11. Embodying the spirit of Salvationism in my daily living.....	48
12. Renewal: I will be a true soldier of Jesus Christ, in The Salvation Army	53

Introduction

In 2010, The Salvation Army in New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga launched an extension to the Territorial Strategic Mission Plan (TSMP) referred to as TSMP: The Next Chapter, containing four updated goals.

This booklet is part of a series of sermon outlines and study guides to help you grapple with the goals, their biblical mandates, and how you might apply the Bible's teaching around the goals in your life.

This particular booklet contains twelve individual sermons to explain the elements of the *Soldier's Covenant*. The series starts with an explanation and rationale for soldiership. Then follows a series of sermons based around the 'I will ...' statements contained within the *Covenant*. The final sermon is a call to soldiership and soldiership renewal. The individual sermons are:

1. The *Soldier's Covenant* explained.
2. I will adopt the disciplines that will enable me to grow in grace.
3. I will intentionally live by Kingdom values
4. I will develop credibility by seeking integrity
5. I will include Christ in all my relationships
6. I will make family life a priority
7. I will be a faithful steward
8. I will practice abstinence
9. I will be loyal to Salvation Army purposes
10. I will actively involve myself in mission
11. I will embody the spirit of Salvationism in my daily living
12. I will be a true soldier of Jesus Christ, in The Salvation Army

Structure

You are encouraged to use all or any of these outlines as you find them useful. While designed as a series on the *Soldier's Covenant*, they stand alone and can be used as one-offs or as a part series. Each one is designed to take between 10 and 15 minutes, allowing plenty of scope for you to personalise the sermon to reflect your own style and experiences.

Each outline follows the same format:

- ❑ **Overview:** a summary of the sermon's main idea and the topics it covers
- ❑ **Outline:** the actual sermon outline
- ❑ **Application:** James 1:22 says 'But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says (NLT).' The application section is key to each sermon, offering ideas as to how listeners might respond and apply the message to their own lives
- ❑ **Other resources:** links for further study and ideas for your worship services.

One approach to planning a worship service is to use the time leading up to the sermon to get people thinking about the topic so that they are more receptive to the message. This could be through a thought-provoking introduction, choice of songs for congregational singing, a drama, personal story, vocal or instrumental solo, short clip from a DVD, etc. Some ideas for each sermon are including under worship resources.

SERMON 1

The *Soldier's Covenant* explained

2 Timothy 2:1-13

'Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.' (2 Timothy 2:3-5)

Overview

The purpose of this sermon is to introduce the series seeking to explain the clauses of the *Soldier's Covenant*.

The Salvation Army's pre-eminent form of membership is soldiership. In some respects, William Booth, in adopting a militaristic form of Church governance was less interested in forming a following as enlisting recruits for an order – called soldiership. The *Soldier's Covenant* calls for a total commitment to the way of Christ and includes sacrificial clauses.

The expectation inherent in soldiership is of a disciple of Jesus making Christian commitment the absolute priority in life, with The Salvation Army being the primary vehicle of service.

In calling people to soldiership, a leader needs to ensure there are challenging assignments and service areas available to the soldier, as befits the serious and far-reaching commitment a soldier makes. Soldiership as an option may well have suffered for want of significant mission related causes in which to be involved.

Topics: What is a Salvation Army Soldier? The Call to Soldiership is a Biblical concept. Why be a soldier of The Salvation Army?

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key goals of The Salvation Army's Mission Plan is to encourage dynamic soldiership across the Territory. The countries of our Territory (NZFT) have urgent need of people of passion and purpose, prepared to commit themselves to building the Kingdom of Heaven in our towns and cities.

Over the next [x] weeks we will look together at what it means to be a dynamic disciple of Jesus through service and mission within The Salvation Army.

As an introduction to the series it is important we should look together at the nature of soldiership, and at the *Soldier's Covenant*, from which our sermon series will come.

2. WHAT IS A SALVATION ARMY SOLDIER?

Our Orders and Regulations for soldiers provide a definition:

'A soldier is one who has accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and who desires to fulfil membership of His Church on earth as a soldier of The Salvation Army.'

The guidelines for soldiership are set out in a document known as the *Soldier's Covenant* – a document on which is printed the eleven statements of Salvation Army doctrine and a series of statements relating to the role of a Salvation Army soldier. [Show / project the document]

The covenant, known originally as *The Articles of War*, was initially introduced in 1882 to give set parameters for those wishing to become soldiers. The *Soldier's Covenant* became a requirement for all soldiers in 1890.

Acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is the pre-requisite to soldiership. A soldier of The Salvation Army is first and foremost a convinced and committed disciple of Jesus. The Salvation Army provides a nurturing environment for the disciple of Jesus and an opportunity to engage with others in building the kingdom of God.

Salvation Army soldiership is much more than simply becoming a member. The covenant clauses we will look at in coming weeks cover almost every aspect of life. The expectation is that a soldier will see being a disciple of Jesus as the pre-eminent passion of life. The call of soldiership is to self-denial and service in the interest of others.

Acceptance of the covenant admits a recruit to the world-wide fellowship of soldiers of The Salvation Army, currently serving in 120 countries.

3. THE CALL TO SOLDIERSHIP IS A BIBLICAL CONCEPT

The Centurian seeking the help of Jesus on behalf of one of his soldiers, described himself as 'one under authority' (Matthew 8:9).

In giving advice to Timothy, Paul said:

'Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.' (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

Note the elements of ‘hardness’ and ‘keeping out of civilian affairs’ and pleasing your commanding officer’. (While it would be nice if you lived to please this ‘commanding officer’, Paul had in mind the supreme commander!) You can never do too much for a good ‘boss’.

Jesus came casting the vision of a virtual kingdom, the Kingdom of God, transcending all national boundaries. The link between a kingdom and soldiers is natural and Salvation Army Soldiers are expected to be as disciplined as regular soldiers in establishing the Kingdom of God.

The mission of the salvation soldier is to bring into being an entirely new concept of Kingdom. The soldier disciple of Jesus is to fight for the introduction into every society, the spiritual principles of the Kingdom of God.

4. WHY BE A SOLDIER OF THE SALVATION ARMY

1. The building of God’s Kingdom needs soldier-like disciples of Jesus. The image of Soldiership reinforces the concept of discipleship – intentionality, purpose, sacrifice, determination, preparedness, and training.

Military recruits begin their training with boot camp – a period of physical activity designed to instil attitudes of loyalty and obedience. [Personal experience illustration here?] Discipleship with Jesus demands a disciplined and loyal response. Jesus said those followers not prepared to deny themselves, to take up His cause and follow, were not worthy of him.

2. The Salvation Army, in being true to its historical calling, is engaged in aggressive kingdom building and needs committed help. We are at work in 120 countries. [Describe national and international examples. Describe local efforts or potential efforts.]
3. Our Corps, this Territory has a pressing need for pray-ers, servers, carers, lobbyists, innovators, prophets – soldiers, prepared to push the war forward. [Cast a vision of what your Corps / Territory is seeking to do towards aggressively building the Kingdom of God].

Application

Are you a soldier? Appreciate the importance of your role. Refresh your understanding of the role of a soldier as we go through this series. Be prepared to re-commit yourself to discipleship with Jesus and service through The Salvation Army.

You are not yet a soldier? Why not? If you are already a disciple of Jesus, you are already enjoying involvement in this worldwide movement raised up by God. Why would you not commit to soldiership within The Salvation Army so as to offer your gifts and talents in kingdom building in a disciplined and sacrificial way. The need is great. There's a whole community out there without a God-inspired, shepherd's guidance.

You are not yet a disciple? Why would you not begin the journey into discipleship by deciding today, now, to learn of Jesus and follow him?

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ See *The History of the Salvation Army Volume Two* – Robert Sandall – page 23.
- ❑ 'The Founder Speaks Again' (page 49)

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ The *Soldier's Covenant* can be downloaded from The Salvation Army's website or be purchased from the Salvation Army Resources Department in plain or decorative format
- ❑ Have a military person speak of the disciplines of modern soldiership
- ❑ Show a video clip from the OWSOMS series depicting aspects of Salvation Army 'warfare'
- ❑ Select worship songs that cast a vision of the Kingdom of God and a disciplined approach to kingdom building, for example:
 - This kingdom
 - Blessed be your name
 - Who is on the Lord's side
 - Shine Jesus shine

SERMON 2

Disciplines that will enable me to grow in grace

Romans 8:1-11

'You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.' (Romans 8:8-10)

Overview

The purpose of this sermon is to remind the congregation that the key to effective soldiership is not in human endeavour but is in the development of strength of character; the work of the Spirit of God within us.

A soldier is one who has accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and who desires to fulfil membership of His Church on earth as a soldier of The Salvation Army. In this sermon, the emphasis should be upon Jesus as Lord. The soldier's strength is not in his gifts and talents alone, but is in the empowerment of the Spirit of Jesus within.

Topics: Why is inner strength necessary? What do I need to do to develop inner strength?

Outline

1 INTRODUCTION

The sermon today is one of a series focusing our thinking upon the Territorial goal of recruiting and developing dynamic disciples of Jesus. Last time we looked at the nature of soldiership and recognized that the *Soldier's Covenant* provides the guidelines for the particularly aggressive approach to discipleship expected of a Salvation Army Soldier.

Today we will focus upon the first clause of the *Soldier's Covenant* which reads:

'I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible.'

The first thing to note is that the process whereby we grow is grace facilitated by the Spirit of God. We are an inside out Army – our strength is an inner strength which arises from what the spirit of God can do within us, flowing out

into our lives. This inner strength is the 'plus', that makes the disciple of Jesus more than merely human! This inner strength enhances and complements our outward gifts and talents and abilities.

The primary requirement of a soldier of Jesus Christ in the Army, is not talent or gifts or experience of life, but the attributes of the life of Christ within. To paraphrase Paul to the Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 13) 'One might speak outstandingly, but without the attributes of love and joy and peace, speech may be as a noisy gong'.

2. WHY IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNER STRENGTH NECESSARY?

Because the human condition is pathetically weak! While we make our way with some success in the everyday world, applying accumulated knowledge and wisdom, showing the benefits of education and training, or demonstrating a high degree of physical development on the sporting field, we are continually confronted with our weakness in the realm of the spirit.

We do not like to be called sinners. Yet our weakness is inescapable when we consider the benchmarks of sin :

- ❑ not doing all we might in supporting family and friends
- ❑ stepping over the line between right and wrong in areas such as truth and honesty
- ❑ yielding impulsively to passion and anger
- ❑ being blatantly lawless, deliberately seeking to get away with dishonesty
- ❑ failing in our duty to those around us.

Who among us would say we have strength of spirit sufficient to keep us above sin? We need the indwelling and promised presence of Jesus if we are going to be inwardly strong. We need to be inwardly strong if we are going to be effective disciples in a troubled world.

No soldier can be a disciple of Christ without being guided by the Spirit of Christ. It is the indwelling Spirit that gives and sustains life, gives power, overcomes weakness makes us more than merely human

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (3:16) regarding inner strength reads like this: '*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being.*'

Our text for today puts it this way:

'You, however, are controlled by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.'
(Romans 8:8-10)

It's a matter of control! The soldier / disciple of Jesus gives up the rights to being themselves in favour of allowing the spirit of Jesus to guide everything they say and do.

3. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO DEVELOP INNER STRENGTH?

Admit your inner paucity of spirit and your need of an inner strength beyond your natural capability continually invite the Spirit's indwelling. Measure yourself against scriptural benchmarks. The following 'benchmarks' are the fruits of the spirit of God as identified by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. Ask yourself:

- Has my expression of day to day *love* been warm?
- Have I consistently experienced a deep-seated *joy* in living?
- Do I know a continuing sense of *peace* in my troubled world?
- Am I able to consistently show *patience* in practice?
- Am I always *kind*?
- Do I demonstrate *goodness* in my dealings with others?
- Is *gentleness* evident in my manners?
- Can I be relied upon to do as I said I would? Am I *faithful*?
- Am I calm and *self-controlled* in every situation?

Recognition of shortcomings will help to focus you on your needs.

Resolve in your mind to be inwardly strong by the grace of God. Seek to be like Jesus in spirit. Let his mind be in you (Philippians 2:5).

Spend a little time each day giving thought to the ways and mind of Jesus, using prayer and helpful reading.

Determine to know of Jesus through reading the Gospels from the New Testament (some research indicates the level of knowledge of Jesus is not high among Salvationists).

Be consistent in attendance and participation in worship and be active in service in the name of Jesus.

In short, the disciple of Jesus allows the spirit of Jesus into every part of life and in doing so becomes inwardly strong!

Application

Are you attempting to live the Christian way in your own strength?

Is your witness generally weak – not particularly dynamic?

Are you lacking in compassion for the people of your community?

Do you see that if the Spirit of God lived within you in fullness, His strength would flow out from you?

Do you know the inner strengthening of The Spirit?

Are you exhibiting the benchmarks which indicate his indwelling – Love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:19-23) or are the negatives of envy, jealousy, anger, hatred and ill-discipline all too evident?

Would you like to be an effective soldier of Jesus in The Salvation Army? Then be controlled and guided by the spirit of Christ, belong to Christ and be inwardly strong.

The clause of the *Soldier's Covenant* reads:

'I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible.'

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ Research the background and depth of meaning behind Paul's teaching in Romans 8, Ephesians 3 and Galatians 5.
- ❑ Give consideration to what inner spiritual strength means in your life so as to be able to testify with confidence

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Display the benchmarks from Galatians for congregational viewing and reflection
- ❑ Take the opportunity to promote home groups or study opportunities designed to develop spirituality among your people.
- ❑ Interview a member of your congregation or someone who is into fitness or sport – ask them to describe the steps they take to be physically fit. Point out the parallel between physical and spiritual fitness.

- ❑ Bring a piece of gym equipment onto the stage and invite its use while speaking of inner fitness as well as outer fitness.
- ❑ Select songs that speak of inner strength or the search for inner strength
 - Once I thought I walked with Jesus, yet such changeable feelings had
 - For the mighty moving of your spirit in our hearts from day to day
 - Amazing Grace (My chains are gone)
 - Holy Spirit Come – heal our hearts
 - In my life Lord, be glorified
 - Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh

SERMON 3

Living by Kingdom values

Matthew 5:1-7 The Beatitudes – some of the values of the Kingdom

Overview

The purpose of this sermon is to remind listeners that they must understand and live by the values of the kingdom if they would be effective soldier disciples.

People were amazed at the teaching of Jesus. Common people heard him gladly. What was in the teaching of Jesus that caught attention? A casual glance at the beatitudes and the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount will indicate the contrast between Kingdom attitudes and those of a secular and material society.

The sermon seeks to identify some differences as examples with a view to motivating hearers into discipleship and soldiership.

Topics: Kingdom values compared with default world values. Understanding and living by the values of the Kingdom.

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

Do you subscribe to a magazine? (Hold up or display a range of available magazines.) What are the three major areas of focus a magazine projects?

May I suggest the emphasis is upon food, fashion and drink.

In contrast do you recall the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:25?

‘Do not worry about your life, what you eat or drink, or for your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than important than food and the body more important than clothes?’ (Matthew 6:25)

Food, Fashion and Drink! But note the different approaches – one says you can’t possibly live without them; the other says the Kingdom of God and righteousness are far more important!

There is a large difference between the values of the world and the values of the Kingdom of God. People were amazed at the teaching of Jesus. They said ‘Never man spoke like this man.’ Imagine being in the crowd when he spoke. Jesus offered a different set of values; a different approach to life.

Over recent weeks we have begun to look at clauses of the *Soldier’s Covenant*, the document setting out the parameters guiding the disciple of Jesus who seeks

to be of service through the Salvation Army. Today we will focus upon the second clause which reads:

*'I will make the values of **the Kingdom of God** and not the values of the world the standard for my life.'*

The soldier disciple of Jesus marches to a different drum from the average man of the world.

2. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM THAT ARE DIFFERENT?

Our chosen passage of scripture is taken from the beginning of the 'sermon on the mount' - a summary of the themes Jesus taught those who would follow Him. 'The Beatitudes' as they are known, say that to be truly blessed, a number of values need to be held to.

Jesus taught:

- ❑ Be aware of your own shortcomings – don't gloss over them. A frank admittance of your recognition of sinfulness is the beginning of spiritual health
- ❑ Bring comfort to those who are hurting. Don't just live for yourself
- ❑ Be meek, self-contained, inwardly strong, not demanding and blindly ambitious. True strength is derived from inner health
- ❑ Seek to be truthful /righteous in all your dealings. Trust and integrity bring their own reward
- ❑ Show mercy, be prepared to forgive, be compassionate, not vengeful
- ❑ Be gentle, slow to cause offence, rather than being abrasive and hurtful
- ❑ Be at peace with yourself and especially with others, have no enemies
- ❑ Go out of your way to be transparently good and helpful and kind.

Jesus went on to say things like:

'You have heard it said 'an eye for an eye but I say love your enemies.'
(Matthew 5:38,44)

'Do not murder ... But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.' (Matthew 5:21-22)

In effect, he was saying that you commit murder in spirit when you gossip away a man's good reputation.

Compare this teaching with the default position held by too many people in our world – who live for themselves, who are angry and unforgiving, strangers to peace and goodness, and lacking inner strength and self-esteem. In another context, Jesus called them sheep without a shepherd!

3. WHY MUST THE SOLDIER DISCIPLE OF JESUS UNDERSTAND AND LIVE BY THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM?

Because:

- ❑ The values of the Kingdom of God are the values that lead to abundant life. To value and find love, peace, and joy through giving and receiving kindness and goodness, mercy and comfort, is to experience stability and depth in life. The blessings of a Kingdom values life transforms the individual, whole families and can change large communities.
- ❑ The applied values of the Kingdom of God contribute to that which sets the Soldier of Jesus apart from the default values of the secular world in which we live and which draws attention to the Jesus way of life.
- ❑ The values of the Kingdom of God are the counterpoint to the default way of the world with its entrenched emphasis upon individual rights, self-centredness and materialism.

4. HOW CAN WE DEVELOP OUR ABILITY TO LIVE BY KINGDOM VALUES?

We won't be able to live by the values of the Kingdom if we don't know what they are! Make an understanding of the teaching of Jesus a perpetual focus of your personal devotional life.

Look for and attend, or if you have to, start a Corps life group having the teachings of Jesus as its main theme. Examine the teachings of Jesus, discuss them in company with others of your group and resolve to live by the values Jesus taught.

Consciously offer to God your willingness to understand and live by the values Jesus taught. Invite His Holy Spirit to be your guide. Pray and work at being like Jesus.

Be intentional in relation to living to the values of Jesus. Look for opportunities in day to day life to present the values of the Kingdom in the face of the default world attitude.

Application

Do you know what Jesus taught? Are you aware of the differences between world and Kingdom values? Are you living to the values Jesus taught? Are you making a difference?

Why not begin? Join a home group; begin a study programme. Determine to live by Kingdom Values.

The soldier disciple of Jesus, serving in The Salvation Army says:

*'I will make the values of **the Kingdom of God** and not the values of the world the standard for my life.'*

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ Show some magazines to see what 'the world' is normalising. Demonstrate that advertising resources are promoting a way of life almost diametrically opposed from that offered by Jesus
- ❑ Ken Francis in his paper 'Therefore I Will Repel the Enemy' writes:
'I see Satan making inroads into our culture in every direction. Scarcely a voice is raised against the foetal deaths of thousands. The voices that are, are scorned. Men and women buy and buy and secure themselves in the spoils of the day, as if this brings safety and meaning, reputation and normalcy. Hollywood tells men and women what to think, how to act, how to live and says 'this is normal'. Man, the gullible, smothers himself in it like slip, slop, slap and raises not a protest.'
- ❑ The beatitudes have been generally paraphrased under point two of these notes. A personal understanding of the meaning and application of these beatitudes should be undertaken to ensure confidence in presentation

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Songs might include statements of faith like
 - I believe that God the Father can be seen
 - On Christ alone my hope is found (On Christ the solid rock I stand)
- ❑ Choruses focusing on Jesus, such as:
 - To be like Jesus
 - I'm set apart for Jesus
 - Jesus, what a beautiful name, etc.
- ❑ Project a list of 'values' onto a screen, and invite a panel (or the congregation) sort them into their priority order. This will help your people to already be thinking values when you come to speak. Perhaps the list could be under the headings 'Wants', 'Needs' and 'Desires' and could include food, clothing, shelter, a better car, a new computer, an education, my family's safety, a mortgage free house, peace of mind, loving friends ...

SERMON 4

Integrity leads to credibility

1 Timothy 3:1-13

‘Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Jesus.’ (1 Timothy 3:13)

Overview

To remind listeners that an effective soldier must consistently demonstrate Christian integrity to be credible.

A professing Christian is a person under observation. Hypocrisy is a turn-off. Prominent Christians falling from grace or lacking integrity do much harm to the Church. Inconsistent behaviour denies credibility.

It follows that if a disciple is to be effective, credibility is essential and credibility stems from absolute integrity. This sermon harks back to the need for inner strength, and points to the need for a careful guarding of one’s daily living.

Topics: What is Christian integrity? Why is integrity so important? How can Christian integrity be developed?

Outline

INTRODUCTION

Over recent weeks we have been looking at clauses of the *Soldier’s Covenant*, the document setting out the parameters guiding the disciple of Jesus who seeks to be of service through the Salvation Army. Today we will focus upon the clause which reads:

‘I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.’

How do you feel about Tiger Woods? Do you feel a bit sorry for him? He has had such a fall from grace! Divorced, reputation tarnished! He loved his Dad, was the all American dream boy, so good at golf, so loved by crowds and sponsors, beautiful wife and children. Do you feel for his beautiful wife?

Integrity has been described as openness, honesty, incorruptibility. Tiger seemed to be such a man of integrity, worthy of trust. Now he lacks credibility? We think a little less of him and he may always be tainted by this experience!

God forbid that we who profess to be disciples of Jesus, should lose our integrity and cause the name of Jesus to lose credibility as a result!

2. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY?

Christian integrity (honesty, incorruptibility) is about living a life that brings honour to God in every circumstance. It's about not letting God down through inconsistency, or denial.

Christian integrity is about being consistently good. It stems from a life dedicated to the values of the kingdom of God, reinforced by earnest prayers for inner strength and an intimate knowledge of the Jesus way gathered from consistent reading of the New Testament Gospels.

Christian integrity is about staying away from that which is likely to compromise or lead others astray. Paul (1 Corinthians 10:23-24) pointed out that not everything was expedient, meaning that some things may be OK for you, but if they lead others astray or let the name of Jesus down, they are not OK.

Christian integrity is the essential quality that builds credibility and reputation. It is integrity, shown by the faithful and consistent expression of love in action that has led to The Salvation Army's world-wide reputation as a movement to be trusted.

3. WHY IS INTEGRITY SO IMPORTANT?

Christian integrity is important because what we are speaks much more loudly than that which we say! A speech marking an occasion may be full of commendations and promises. The delivery of the promises will be that which is remembered and which builds credibility. We may well profess loyalty to Jesus, but it will be the integrity of the way in which we live which will develop our credibility.

Christian integrity is important because in seeking to build the Kingdom of God, we are actively engaged in encouraging people from our community to join us. Why would they link up with a movement lacking integrity, because of the inconsistent way in which members of that movement behave? Would you link up with a club that lacked integrity and credibility?

Christian integrity is important because nothing will destroy our credibility faster than a lack of integrity. Those who profess goodness must demonstrate goodness.

Politicians don't enjoy a good press! In part because their speech seeks to portray them as people of integrity, worthy of our vote and the right people to

guide our country forward. When they fail as they regularly do – read the papers! Listen to ‘This week in politics’ on TV – we place politicians even further down the list (if possible) of those we look up to. A lack of integrity leads to a loss of credibility.

But what about the continuing disclosures here and especially in Europe at present regarding the Church’s involvement in the abuse of children? What damage is done to the cause of Christ when pastors fail miserably in practising what they preach! What damage is done to the image of Christ when a Christian disciple lets the side down through a lack of integrity, shown in inconsistency and pretence?

4. HOW CAN CHRISTIAN INTEGRITY BE DEVELOPED?

There is no magic formula here. Christian integrity can be developed by a focus upon the good and positive at the expense of the double entendre.

R.A Torrey, a notable saint from the late nineteenth century wrote of the means whereby a depth of spirituality and inner strength might be cultivated.

He said we should:

- Learn about the way of Jesus by consistently reading The Word.
- Be aware of our shortcomings and that we should confess them daily, seeking offered forgiveness.
- Invite The Holy Spirit to empower us for service.
- Pray for opportunity to witness faithfully as to our faith.
- Be obedient to His leadings.

Application

Is your life witness constant? Can you always be relied upon to demonstrate Christian integrity?

In writing to Timothy, (our scripture reading for today) Paul listed a number of attributes to be expected in a Christian disciple. They include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being above reproach | <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful in marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Even tempered | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-controlled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respectable in reputation | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitable in practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Able to testify of grace | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate in all things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gentle in spirit | <input type="checkbox"/> Successful in parenting |

The soldier disciple of Jesus says:

'I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.'

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ The requirements of an overseer / deacon / woman in 1 Timothy 3 will reward a closer look at the elements of integrity within the Church.
- ❑ Current examples of people losing integrity and credibility can be found in even a casual reading of the week's newspapers. A search of the internet will also yield examples.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Suggested songs:
 - I would be true, for there are those who trust me
 - The Power of your love
 - Glorify your name
 - This is my desire to honour you
 - Jesus calls me I will follow
 - We are witnesses for Jesus in the home and in the mart
- ❑ Ask your congregation, as a form of testimony, to identify and speak of the person of integrity who most influenced their Christian life development. What was there about that person that was influential?
- ❑ Do you have someone in your congregation who could speak of their coming to faith as a result of a person of Christian integrity? Have them present a written testimony in line with the direction of your sermon.

SERMON 5

Including Christ in all my relationships

Romans 12:9-21

'Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone'. (Romans 12:17)

Overview

To remind listeners that the soldier / disciple of Jesus must practice Christian ideals in all manner of relationships. This sermon builds on that dealing with credibility and integrity. The key word is consistency.

There is no such thing as a Sunday Christian, Indeed the easiest place to be a Christian is in company with others of like mind – as in worship where everyone is expected to be nice and Christian-like.

Perhaps the hardest place to consistently demonstrate Christ is in the home where people know you so well. But to take Christ into the sports club, or into the board room, or political debate requires determination and courage.

Perhaps the lizard known as the chameleon can be helpful in a negative sense, given its ability to change colour depending on its circumstances and environment.

Topics: Why maintain Christian ideals within my relationships? Christian ideals that particularly relate to relationships. How to develop consistency in living by Christian ideals.

Outline

1.INTRODUCTION

A question for you! What are the colours of The Salvation Army? [Yellow, red and blue as in our flag]

Did you know that colours have meanings?

- ❑ Red is the colour of strength
- ❑ Yellow is the colour of joy and happiness, and
- ❑ Blue is the colour of trust, loyalty, stability and faith.

Good colours for the movement that is The Salvation Army aren't they?

But what is the colour of the soldier disciple of Jesus?

Over recent weeks we have been looking at clauses included in the *Soldier's Covenant*. This week's clause reads:

'I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others; my family and neighbours, my colleagues and fellow Salvationists, those to whom and for whom I am responsible, and the wider community.'

The word that comes to my mind as I read this is 'consistency'. The practice of Christian ideals begins in the home, and spreads in all areas of work and leisure.

2. WHY SHOULD I MAINTAIN CHRISTIAN IDEALS WITHIN MY RELATIONSHIPS?

We should maintain Christian ideals within all of our relationships because the way of Jesus is the way of life, not a part of a way of life (an option to be prioritised along with a host of other interests.) If Christ is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all!

Horatius Bonar in writing a hymn for the Church (SASB 7) said:

'So shall no part of day and night from sacredness be free, but all my life in every step be fellowship with Thee.'

It is expected of us that we will be soldier disciples of Jesus at worship on Sunday, at work on Monday, at the movies on Thursday, on Saturday while shouting at the referee on the park etc, and in each circumstance we need to keep to our ideals.

We should maintain Christian ideals within all of our relationships because a failure to practise as we preach destroys any credibility we might have built up.

A lack of consistency harms the cause of Christ by weakening our witness.

On the positive side, consistency has its own spiritual rewards. To live out Christian ideals with all whom we are in contact is to enjoy barrier free relationships and a conscience at peace.

3. WHAT ARE THE CHRISTIAN IDEALS THAT PARTICULARLY RELATE TO RELATIONSHIPS?

Jesus warned his disciples to be careful when making judgements. (Matthew 7:1-5) We seldom have all the facts of the matter before us.

Two Battle of Britain airmen out of uniform, eating lunch in a restaurant, were each given a white feather – the symbol of cowardice – by a presumptuous woman. One airman had just been released from hospital to recover from injuries received when shot down. The other had just returned from Buckingham Palace having been decorated for bravery.

Jesus taught the ideal of always finding the best in others regardless of their faults. In this regard, living unselfishly, showing respect, suspending judgement, demonstrating personal transparency, and above all, being consistent would seem to be important.

Unlike the 'Smith's Dwarf' chameleon lizard, known to be able to change body colour so as to blend into surroundings as a form of camouflage, the soldier disciple of Jesus maintains Christian ideals in every circumstance of life. Whatever the colour that best suits a soldier disciple, that colour does not change with circumstances or location.

Our chosen scripture reading for today has Paul offering guidelines for Christian behaviour in relationships. (Read Romans 12:15–18.) Note the key words in the reading – bless, rejoice, harmony, humility, peace. His teaching is summed up in verse 17. 'Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.'

4. HOW CAN CONSISTENCY IN LIVING BY CHRISTIAN IDEALS BE DEVELOPED?

There can be no better starting point than that of making a list of Christian ideals, drawn from scripture; benchmarks such as the 10 commandments from Exodus 20, or the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Or consider the passage of scripture from Colossians 3, headed 'Rules for Holy Living' and include a list of things to avoid as well as the putting on of such values as compassion, kindness and humility.

Present your list in prayer before God and seek his Spirit's power as you commit to living the ideals out in daily living.

Work at deepening your understanding of the ways of God. Don't neglect attendance at worship, or your personal search for understanding. Practise the presence of Christ as you go about your day to day duties.

Application

So what is the colour of the soldier disciple – one colour, unchanging?

Among the many colours that might suit – orange, green, purple, black – I suggest the right colour is white.

White represents light, goodness, innocence and purity. It is said to be the colour of perfection – just right for a disciple of Jesus!

White is Biblical – angels appear in white raiment?

White indicates a removal of the red stain of sin.

There are a number of songs in the The Salvation Army song book that reinforce this:

- ❑ 'Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow' (436)
- ❑ 'Wash me in the blood of the Lamb and I shall be whiter than snow' (459)

White needs care as it shows the dirt easily. The disciple of Jesus must take care in relationships and must take care in the process of staying clean before God

Are you in need of washing – to be whiter than snow?

Can Christian ideals be seen in all of your relationships?

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ For an expansion of colour meanings enter 'the meaning of colours' into Google's search option
- ❑ Your sermon might be more colourful by referring to the extraordinary ability of a chameleon lizard to change colour according to location. We don't want soldier disciples changing colour by the day and duty.
- ❑ In the event the idea of looking out scriptural benchmarks makes sense, a handout containing references or lists could be considered. Some work may be required in searching out the lists.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Does anyone have a lizard? Can a children's feature be constructed around a story about a proud lizard who boasted of his ability to change to match any colour on offer, but who exploded when placed on tartan or polka dots? A lesson in the Christian ideal of humility or contentment?
- ❑ Songs chosen may pick up on the colour theme. A Salvation Army song book concordance will identify songs including:
 - colour, such as: Deep were the scarlet stains of sin
 - relationships, such as: God loves you, and I love you, and that's the way it should be; Let there be peace on earth and let it begin in me.
- ❑ Do you know a couple who are enjoying a new level of relationship after a period of strain, or attendance at a marriage enrichment course? Could they speak of the principles guiding their relationship?
- ❑ Can you enlist the help of a local marriage guidance counsellor to speak of the principles governing inter-personal relationships?

SERMON 6

Making family life a priority

Matthew 5:27–32 (the Stability of the family)

Acts 6:1-6 (Care for ‘widows’ and those outside family life)

Overview

The soldier / disciples of Jesus must seek to strengthen ‘family’ life so as to provide stability for the older and younger generations. The ideal to be pursued is that of maximum stability for the family unit.

While not always politically correct in this secular age, the ideal of a three generational family should be encouraged, whereby parents committed to each other are supported by their parents as they care for their children. In turn children and their parents have regard for each other and the older generation.

However, ‘family’ must include the many variations of the ideal. Widows, widowers, singles, single parents, de facto couples and people in same sex relationships, need to be afforded support and encouragement. The Church congregation embodying the vision Jesus espoused of the Kingdom of God on earth, is the ideal environment in which to promote family in an all inclusive way.

Topics: The Biblical concept of marriage and family life. The importance of stable family life. A wider application of the covenant clause.

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

Over recent weeks we have been looking at the *Soldier’s Covenant*, the document setting out the commitment expected of a soldier disciples of Jesus within The Salvation Army. The selected clause for today reads:

‘I will uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life.’

While the *Soldier’s Covenant* is accepted by an individual, I suggest that the upholding of family life is the responsibility of all members of a Christian congregation. A ‘family’ may be described in many different ways arising from choice and circumstance.

Our approach to this clause then will relate firstly to the nuclear family, but then to the corporate family of God, His Church

2. WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE?

The Biblical concept of marriage suggests that a man and a woman will leave their respective families by which they have been nurtured and trained, in order to become a single unit. (Genesis 2.:24. Matthew 19:5)

In turn this two-now-one unit provides a stable and loving environment for a new generation of children. In parenting their children, the two-now-one unit will receive the guidance and encouragement of two sets of grandparents, the outcome being the probability of the new generation reaching maturity having a balanced understanding of life and its responsibilities and in turn ready to enter into their own two-into-one relationship.

In the time of Jesus, teaching regarding marriage was positive, the suggestion being that marriage and children was a blessing to God. The wedding at Cana was said to be typical of a marriage celebration, which event lasted for as long as a week – no wonder the wine ran out!

The problem however, was not in the concept of marriage, but in the practice of divorce, whereby a relationship intended to be stable for the sake of the next generation, was rendered shaky. The status of women was low. Only a man could initiate divorce proceedings, and the grounds for such proceedings had been reduced to a level bordering on pettiness.

In this context, Jesus had much to say about divorce, because he saw an increasing breakdown in family life having a detrimental effect upon the new generation. Family life should be stable and constant.

There is however a certain pragmatism about the teaching of Jesus. He knew human nature. He recognised that loss of relationship between the two-now-one unit for a variety of reasons could develop into an intolerable situation, equally harmful to a new generation.

The teaching of Jesus might therefore be recognised as primarily supportive of the two-now-one unit plus four (grandparents) as the best way to ensure a stable environment in which to nurture the new generation.

Obviously great care should be taken to ensure the compatibility of the two who will become one in the interest of long term stability. The merging of two individuals into an homogenous unit requires preparation and prayer. The seemingly casual approach to the setting up of a family unit, taken by many in these days, may well be reaping an unwanted harvest.

It is this ideal, included in the *Soldier's Covenant*, the soldier disciple of Jesus agrees to uphold.

3. WHY IS STABLE FAMILY LIFE SO IMPORTANT?

It is important because it is intended to provide a solid platform for nurture and development of the next generation. The two-now-one unit shares a common vision and value system and a child grows confidently within the single view framework provided. [Add a personal illustration here?]

It is important because it incorporates the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the grandparents and the application of practical assistance in times of stress is made available to the next two generations. [Personal illustration?]

It is important because stable family life has a wide ranging effect upon the social health of the nation. Newspapers provide stories on an almost daily basis of people before courts on trial or as victims, who continue to suffer daily the effects of poor parenting, inappropriate role modelling, physical and emotional abuse and neglect. The Salvation Army's Family Tracing Service holds hundreds of files relating to estrangement and family breakdown arising from the lack of stable home life. [Wave a newspaper around?]

4. THE WIDER APPLICATION OF THE COVENANT CLAUSE

An initial interpretation of this clause might suggest a narrow and exclusive approach to marriage and family.

However, a community is made up of a wide range of family units, many varying from the Biblical ideal by choice or circumstance. What of the single parent competently and successfully nurturing and caring for children? Or the widow(er) living alone estranged from children and grandchildren? Or the 'single' individual? Or the de facto relationship and the same sex partnership?

There is a sense in which the church is a large family community, called upon to bear one another's burdens, to comfort and support those who struggle, to look to the well-being of those in need and to deny self in the interest of others. The clause that reads: 'I will uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life,' is a call upon all who follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The soldier disciple of Jesus will seek the well-being of the church community's marriage and family life, regardless of its shape or condition. The church is unique in that it has within its congregation people of every age and stage in life, experiencing every facet of prosperity and poverty, health and illness, joy and pain. Such a task requires grace and inner strength marked by tolerance and understanding and servant-hood.

Application

Work at your two-into-one unit relationship regardless of your current marital status. Recognise its importance within your family circle and the role modelling you are giving to your children.

Foster your intergenerational relationships. Honour your parents for their contribution to your lives and support them in their needs.

Become an honorary aunty or uncle to a child or a teen.

Serve as a de facto grandparent for an immigrant family.

Become the chief supporter of someone living alone.

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ It is important that you are comfortable with the interpretation of the Biblical concept of marriage. Does Jesus teach against divorce because of the appalling attitude of the day towards women and relationships? Is his emphasis designed to encourage family stability?
- ❑ A look at the early church's desire to meet the needs of its people by a form of communal care is worth looking at. The selection of seven men of quality to 'wait on tables' provides a picture of communal care or the strengthening of the family.
- ❑ Look at your congregation from a pastoral point of view so as to identify the range of pain endured from week to week – bereavement, redundancy, behavioural difficulties, debt, loneliness etc. To strengthen marriage and family is a good mission for a congregation.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Songs about the family of God:
 - I love this family of God
 - I'm the child of a King
 - This is my Father's world
 - As for me and my house, we're gonna (going to) serve the Lord
- ❑ Do you have in your congregation someone who quietly supports others and who might speak of motivation for doing so? Fostering children, visiting shut-ins? Uncle to some teenagers?

On being a faithful steward

Romans 12:1-8. (a living sacrifice – body, soul and spirit preserved blameless)

Overview

To remind listeners that the soldier/disciple of Jesus must be a good steward of material and physical resources, accountable as unto God. The essence of Christianity is community as distinct from self-interest. Sinfulness may be described as self-centred living, the effect of which is to profit at the expense of others. The Christian experience in repentance includes a radical turn from self to others and community. It follows that the Christian emphasis is upon regarding personal possessions and corporate possessions as being for the betterment of everyone. As God has become the focal point for living, so the Christian lives to fulfil God's will and becomes a steward of all that is.

Topics: The Biblical concept of stewardship. Christian Stewardship Defined. The elements of good stewardship

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's lesson, one of a series based on the *Soldier's Covenant* has as its focus the clause which reads:

'I will be a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God.'

What is a steward?

- ❑ One who arranges the food for a club
- ❑ One who looks after passengers on a plane or a boat or a train
- ❑ One who supervises the activities of a race track – a track steward for horse or car races

In a Biblical sense, one to whom a responsibility has been entrusted. In a Christian context Stewardship begins and ends with the understanding of God's ownership of all.

2. STEWARDSHIP IS BIBLICAL

*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."
(Psalm 24:1)*

"To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." (Deuteronomy 10:14)

"The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." (Leviticus 25:23)

An example of stewardship is in Genesis 2:15. *'And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.'* – the drive to *'serve the garden in which we have been placed.'* Many moderate and progressive evangelicals see environmentalism as a consequence of stewardship.

Matthew 25:14-30 records a story Jesus told. A man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted his property to them. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. Two were recognized for their faithfulness and one was denounced as wicked and lazy. The parable basically teaches that people are accountable and responsible to God for the way they use the resources they are given. They are expected to 'steward' or 'manage' these for the One who owns and has given them for this purpose.

A biblical world view of stewardship can be consciously defined as: 'Utilising and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation.' The central essence of biblical world view stewardship is managing everything God brings into the believer's life in a manner that honours God and impacts eternity.

3. WHAT IS SOLDIER DISCIPLE STEWARDSHIP?

Stewardship in a Christian context refers to the responsibility that Christians have in maintaining and using wisely the gifts that God has bestowed.

Stewardship in Christianity follows from the belief that human beings are created by the same God who created the entire universe and everything in it.

In Christian tradition stewardship also refers to the way time, talents, material possessions, or wealth are used or given for the service of God.

The distinctive nature of soldier disciple stewardship is set out clearly in the clause from the *Soldier's Covenant*:

'My time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit.'

All we have and are belongs to God and is to be used in his service.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GOOD STEWARD

Many Christians practise the spiritual discipline of intentional financial stewardship, giving to churches or other ministries. In addition, a significant number commit time in service to the needy or in other areas, often utilising and donating specialised skills and abilities.

An example would be found in the heavy participation in relief and rebuilding projects following the Haitian earthquake by members of evangelical Christian churches. Though many governmental and non-religious benevolence organisations have participated, the contributions by religious believers and organisations are recognized as motivated by concepts of concern for the well-being of others, mercy and stewardship.

For others charity begins at home. Where would we be without Family Store volunteers, or welcome sergeants, musicians, administrators and leaders of various Corps sections? Or what of the army of disciples of Jesus who go about doing good among neighbours and friends, offering practical skills, giving time and energy in driving good work committees and donating hours of time to meeting the needs of others.

Good stewardship means ensuring that all you are capable of is made available to meet the needs of others in such a way as to co-operate with God's purposes.

It means utilising every resource and skill in the interest of others.

3. STEWARDSHIP IS EXPECTED OF THE SOLDIER DISCIPLE

We who profess to follow Jesus have been blessed beyond measure by means of the grace of God. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth:

'Christ's love compels us we who live should no longer live for ourselves but for him who died for us.' (2 Corinthians 5:15)

In the face of entrenched selfishness and self-seeking in our secular world, there is an urgent need for people who will choose to live counter-culturally, demonstrating selfless love and compassion among all who have need.

In a wider sense we have all been appointed guardians of the world in which we live. We are accountable to God and to all others for the way in which we waste or conserve the natural resources of our planet.

Application

The congregation to which you are giving your time for worship plays a vital part in meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of its attendees. The friendship you offer, the kindly greetings, the acts of service you provide, the financial contributions you make, are all elements of stewardship.

What more could be done? The people of our congregation bring their hurts and needs to worship week by week, and hopefully are touched and helped by the warmth of welcome we offer. Our wider community has many people who struggle to live well day by day. You live among them! Could you serve them in the name of Jesus giving time, gifts, mind and spirit to them?

Be proactive. Make yourself accountable to God. Seek for opportunities to use your accumulated skills and possessions in meeting the presenting needs of all with whom you come in contact.

'I will be a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God.'

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ The preacher must decide the parameters of stewardship. In one sense we have confined stewardship to acts of service given within the congregation and to financial giving. The middle ground is the important area – that of reaching out in acts of love and compassion to the marginalised people of our community, offering them a place in our Christian community and engaging in acts of healing and help. The further ground relates to ecology and conservation.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ During the meeting, invite those of the congregation who are involved in service within the Corps in some way or another to stand and be recognised with applause. Invite those who are engaged in service in the community – school boards, Rotary / Lions, Neighbourhood Watch to stand and also be recognised. Invite those who belong to a community based club to stand and be recognised (the assumption is that in belonging, your people are giving of time and possessions as stewards).

SERMON 8

I will practice abstinence

2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 7:1

Overview

To teach listeners The Salvation Army's stand on substance abuse and to give reasons why a soldier / disciple of Jesus must refrain from the use of artificial stimulants. Jesus came to make available what we know as 'abundant life' – a quality of life that is obtainable through adherence to his teachings, faith in his sacrificial death, service for others in his name and continuous freedom from guilt.

For some reason the world around us seems to think that abundant life is only available outside of natural experience and must be stimulated artificially.

In order to show up the better way, the salvation soldier is a living example of what is possible. Further, Christian responsibility requires the disciple of Jesus to protest the extraordinary cost of the abuse of stimulants in our society, whether they be prescribed, chosen as part of lifestyle, or seen as a source of lucrative income. There's a justice issue here.

Topics: The Salvationist's position on abstinence. A look at the cost of alcohol to our country. The case for abstinence.

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

The Salvation Army's doctrine and ethics places it in the mainstream of evangelical faith and practice. the *Soldier's Covenant* that we have been considering over the past few weeks reads along the general lines of membership to be found in most denominations, save for one clause.

The soldier disciple of Jesus in The Salvation Army voluntarily vows to abstain from the use of artificial stimulants and addictive activities. That clause reads:

'I will abstain from alcoholic drink, tobacco, the non-medical use of addictive drugs, gambling, pornography, the occult and all else that could enslave the body or spirit.'

2. CONSIDER WITH ME THE SALVATIONIST POSITION

We see ourselves as temples of the living God; clean before God, open to His leadings; unaffected by the influence of stimulants making us less than natural. We are a holiness movement seeking to encourage our people to be pure in heart and mind and deed before God.

‘For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”’ (2 Corinthians 6:16)

We see ourselves as stewards, not only in relation to possessions and resources, but with a strong sense of calling towards being our brother’s keeper. We work with people addicted to harmful substances, but also with the flow-on effects of substance abuse that touch a high percentage of families in need and seeking financial and material support through food banks, etc.

We have a deep concern for the culture existing in New Zealand which has normalised substance abuse and is daily reaping a devastating reward in areas of health, road safety and family violence. We seek to live counter-culturally, offering a substance abuse-free fellowship, providing shelter for the addicted and demonstrating the viability of a way of life free of harmful substances.

We seek to maintain and promote the highest of ethical standards in daily living as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We are deeply concerned that high profile industries obtain their significant profits through the production of harmful drugs – alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, or by the encouragement of gambling. Just as we would seek only to invest our savings ethically, so we refuse to support these harmful industries by buying and consuming their products.

We see ourselves as having a prophetic voice, speaking out to the nation in protest against the influence on government policy of vested interests and the blatant promoting of harmful products by means of extensive sponsorship and advertising. Given the high social cost to the nation, a government that fails to address the issues by means of amended legislation is failing in its duty.

We are deeply concerned for a nation that seems to think that the only way to enjoy life is to exchange spiritual and emotional health for artificial stimulants. A party cannot get under way until alcohol has released inhibitions. A healthy buzz obtained through natural interaction with friends is inadequate and must be supplemented by a party pill that takes you ‘out of it’. We seek to promote a natural way of life that obtains its buzz through the release of the potential for abundant life that lies within all of us.

3. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE?

While it is a difficult and complex task to attribute a cost to alcohol abuse or misuse recent studies estimated that the sum of social costs of alcohol harm is in excess of \$2.5 billion per year. It cost the public health sector \$655 million, crime and related costs added up to \$240 million, social welfare \$200 million and other alcohol-harm related government spending \$330 million. Lost productivity alone cost New Zealand \$1.17 billion a year (Easton 2002).

According to the Police National Alcohol Assessment (April 2009) alcohol is a factor in around half of all homicides, one third of (over 20,000 a year) violent offences, one third (over 28,000 a year) of family violence offences and one in five road crashes.

The busiest times for police during the week are always 9.00pm to 3.00am on Friday and Saturday when officers break up alcohol fuelled fights, take intoxicated people to safety, drive home under-aged drinkers as young as 12 and when doing so are regularly abused and assaulted by drunken youths.

4. THE CASE FOR ABSTINENCE

There exists a critical need for people who are proud to stand apart from the crowd in caring for body, mind and spirit as God would want. The ability to enjoy all of the finer experiences of life is enhanced by means of a drug free way of life. It is possible to enjoy life with a clear mind!

The drug free life is one of the options available to us in our commitment to live counter-culturally, by refusing to be drawn into the culture of excess. In doing so and in declaring our congregating to be drug free we continue to provide an alternative haven for those affected by the havoc of addiction and a safe place of belonging for the community.

In the face of the extraordinary cost to New Zealand in many terms, of the damage caused by the abuse and misuse of harmful substances, there is a case for a credible voice to be raised in protest. The soldier disciple in The Salvation Army serves as a protester, standing out as an individual for a better way. The Salvation Army as an abstaining movement stands as a corporate protest. Surely to speak out against the harm done on behalf of affected citizens is a moral and ethical thing to do.

Application

It is this clause in the *Soldier's Covenant* that sets the Salvation Army Soldier apart, even from Christians of other denominations:

'I will abstain from alcoholic drink, tobacco, the non-medical use of addictive drugs, gambling, pornography, the occult and all else that could enslave the body or spirit.'

In effect it is a voluntary vow taken for very good reasons:

- ❑ To live a clean life as befits the temple of the living God
- ❑ To be a good steward, seeking to preserve a quality of life for all.
- ❑ To be ethically upright, refusing to support any enterprise that harms society.
- ❑ To have the credibility to speak out against vested interest, poor legislation and moral decay in relation to harmful drugs.
- ❑ To demonstrate an abundantly satisfying way of life that is drug free.

Are you a committed soldier? God bless you! Don't let the prevailing attitudes of society lead you into compromise.

You could be a soldier? Here is your chance to take a stand on a moral issue harming the country more than any other. Given your knowledge of the way in which God calls his people to holiness of life and for justice, why would you not step up to make a difference?

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ Conduct further research into the effect of gambling and pornography.
- ❑ Develop a clear understanding of the Bible's attitude to 'strong drink' given the historical lack of clean drinking water. Paul took a strong stand against immorality – sexual abuse and pornography
- ❑ Make submissions to Government over planned changes to legislation. Are moral and ethical causes on your Pastoral Care Council agenda?

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Include a testimony from one of your congregation or community who has been a victim of substance abuse or addicted in some way
- ❑ Songs focusing on the positive, such as:
 - I'm set apart for Jesus to be a king and priest
 - I would be your holy temple, sacred and indwelt by thee
 - This my desire, to honour you (Lord I give you my heart)
 - In my life Lord, be glorified

I will be loyal to Salvation Army purposes

Matthew 9:35–10:10

Overview

To remind listeners that The Salvation Army has a distinctive emphasis and reason for being and to call for pride in the movement. Our reading of history recognises the hand of God upon William and Catherine Booth as they were led into ministry to people just like the publicans and sinners of the day of Jesus. The Salvation Army continues to have a distinct calling to the marginalised of society, teaching the life principles Jesus taught, casting the vision of the kingdom of heaven on earth and conducting a compassionate healing of life's hurts, ministry.

Topics: The purposes of The Salvation Army. Being faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Army?

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

These are days of mission and vision statements, strategic plans and the setting of goals. Over a number of years now, The Salvation Army's leadership has given time and thought to the strategic direction required of a vibrant movement that seeks to walk closely in the footsteps of Jesus.

But while the wording changes so as to bring a freshness of approach to bear, the purposes of The Salvation Army are anchored in the Gospel story and are ageless. Today's focus on the *Soldier's Covenant* is upon the clause:

'I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged'

2. WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF THE SALVATION ARMY?

In part this question is answered in the 'I Will' clause – sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in his name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged.

A second approach to the purposes of The Salvation Army can be found in the four goals of the Territorial Strategic Mission Plan (TSMP: The Next Chapter):

1. Make dynamic disciples of Jesus
2. Increase the number of soldiers
3. Take significant steps to eradicate poverty and injustice
4. Be a connected, streamlined and mission-focused Army.

From a New Testament perspective, the purposes of the Army might be defined by examining the ministry of Jesus. Our scripture reading for today can be broken down so as to identify a number of purposes.

'Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.' (Matthew 9:35)

Jesus went from town to town:

- ❑ Teaching the values of the kingdom of heaven
- ❑ Preaching the vision of a virtual kingdom on earth in which God's will is done as in heaven
- ❑ Healing every disease and sickness.

Could it be said that the purposes of The Salvation Army are to teach principles for abundant living; to cast a vision of the ideal society in which God's ways are supreme; and to engage in a healing ministry focused on marginalised people?

The passage of scripture provides some insights into the mind and heart of Jesus.

'When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.' (verse 36)

As Jesus went from town to town interacting with the people, he had deep sympathy for them. They were harassed and helpless – like sheep without a shepherd. Given that it is not hard to find people in our town who feel harassed and helpless, we could do worse than to pray for the spirit of compassion Jesus had. We might also emulate Jesus by seeking to interact with the people of our community. One of the retreats of the Army in recent years has been off the streets of our town and into our buildings.

Jesus wasn't content to see the distress of the people – he resolved to find a way to ease their plight.

In verse 37, he called his disciples to prayer, asking them to pray to the Lord of the Harvest for workers prepared to give themselves to the meeting of need.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (verses 37-38)

We have done well in this territory in committing the work of The Salvation Army to God in prayer. We would do well to continue to ask God to confirm our planning direction and to send workers (new disciples) into the field.

Jesus followed up the call for prayer with decisive action. In the next verse, he called his disciples to him, gave them authority to carry his message and ministry and sent them out to meet need.

'He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.' (Matthew 10:1)

In this context the purposes of The Salvation Army in following Jesus are to carry the ministry of Jesus to the people of the streets of our towns. Our task is to interact with needy people, seeing their needs with eyes of compassion, seeking the mind and heart of God for these people, volunteering ourselves and recruiting others to engage in the ministry of teaching, vision casting and alleviating the effects of poverty of resources and spirit.

3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH GOD RAISED UP THE ARMY?

Faithfulness means we must keep making the main thing the main thing! Our focus is to be upon recruiting, teaching and training soldier disciples of Jesus. In turn our soldier disciples cast the vision of a society on earth in which God's will is done as in heaven, among those people who need our compassionate touch of healing!

We can be so easily distracted! Matters of style and culture are important but secondary to our purposes. If the way we go about mission is not achieving the purposes for which we exist, something needs to change and it's not our purpose!

Congregational life in our Corps is great. Good music, good friends, good programme, good teaching, (great preaching!) wonderful food. It is easy to feel that all is well with the world in which we live, but to lose contact with the streets of our town where harassed and helpless people live and to lose a sense of compassion for those people. If a sense of contentment predominates, something needs to change (and it's not the compassion for struggling people!)

To be true to the purposes for which God raised up the Army, every Corps must have a viable expression of work designed to carry forward the healing ministry of Jesus. There are needs to be met among our congregation today – the need for a kindly word, an offer of hospitality, a gift of time and skill to carry out a simple repair or to provide a casserole. Beyond the congregation are the needs of a community for budget advice, a food parcel, some kindly advice, a community meal, a club to belong to and above all else the opportunity to become part of the Corps' worshipping community.

To follow Jesus within The Salvation Army is not a couch potato experience. There's a work to be done, a purpose to be fulfilled, principles to be taught, a vision to be cast and healing to be carried out.

4. OUR CORPS PLAN FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

[Take opportunity to remind the congregation of the way in which their Corps is seeking to fulfil the purposes for which the Army was raised up.

Speak of the challenges of a ministry to harassed and helpless people in the neighbourhood.

Speak of the quality of ministry currently being provided by the Corps as it fulfils the purposes for which it exists.

Call your people to prayer and action towards a clearly defined goal.]

Application

Be faithful. Don't bore holes in the ship in which you are sailing! There can be few things more destructive to a community than destructive criticism. Be proud of your corps. Work hard to have it fulfil its distinctive mission.

Be faithful. Post-denominationalism is harmful to the Church. While you may not be committed to this congregation for ever, be slow to jump ship for another Church for reasons of self-interest. Be proactive in finding the way to contribute to Corps purposes that is fulfilling.

Be faithful. The purposes for which God raised up the Army are of eternal significance. Giving spasmodic attention to Corps purposes in favour of other interests relegates God's work to a lower priority. When push comes to shove, re-schedule the other interests in favour of making the ministry of Jesus through your Corps numero uno!

'I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged'

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ Examine the degree to which your Corps is fulfilling the purpose for which it is called to exist. Identify its strengths and weaknesses. If you don't already have a plan, take the time to develop a way forward for your congregation and include this in your sermon. The resources available to you will determine the complexity of your strategy, but to achieve even a modest short-term win will assist momentum.
- ❑ Further study of the ministry of Jesus as set out in the suggested reading of scripture for today will be rewarding. The heart and mind and strategy of Jesus is timeless.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Mission songs, such as:
 - We are witnesses for Jesus in the home and in the mart
 - Shine Jesus shine – fill this land with the Father's glory
 - Unless I am moved with compassion, how dwelleth thy spirit in me?
 - Jesus calls me I must follow, follow Him today
 - I want to see the Kingdom of God in my generation
 - Just where he needs me, my Lord has placed me
- ❑ Can you enlist the services of your community's constable or one of the staff of a nearby social services centre to speak of life in your community? Awareness of need is a good starting point for purpose.

Involvement in mission

Acts 2:42-47

Overview

An important requirement of the soldier / disciple is that of consistent involvement in the life of the worshipping Corps. The *Soldier's Covenant* clause identifies life, work, worship and witness as relating to the mission of the Corps.

The life of the Corps is its morale and spirit as evidenced by the way it displays a spirit toward all who attend. The work of the Corps is measured by its efficiency in recruiting and training soldier disciples of Jesus. The worship of the Corps relates to the way in which its people are made aware of the presence of God. The witness of the Corps relates to its interaction with the community, identifying and meeting need in the name of Jesus.

The purpose of the sermon is to call current and future soldiers to give of themselves wholeheartedly to each of the four aspects of Corps life.

Topics: What is the life of the Corps? What is the work of the Corps? What is the worship of the Corps? What is the witness of the Corps?

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

Over recent weeks we have looked at a number of clauses of the document known as the *Soldier's Covenant*, which sets out the conditions of soldiership within The Salvation Army and provides guidelines for serving soldiers. Today's clause reads:

'I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.'

Do you delight to get up on Sunday morning so as to make your way to the Army meeting? Are you like the Psalmist who said *'I rejoiced with those who said to me "Let us go to the house of the Lord"'* (Psalm 122:1).

The key to enjoyment within The Salvation Army is involvement. The acceptance of even a small responsibility brings about a sense of belonging – an opportunity to interact with others as you serve them and a sense of satisfaction when your service is delivered.

The call today is to ask you to consider the depth of your involvement in the life and work of our Corps. The covenant clause identifies life, work, worship and witness as the four elements of the Corps mission. Let's look at each one in turn, using the selected scripture as a guide.

2. WHAT IS THE LIFE OF THE CORPS?

The people of the first century Church, 'broke bread and ate together *with glad and sincere hearts.*' (Acts 2:46)

There is much to be enjoyed within The Salvation Army community. Where else can you belong to a fellowship that will include new born babies through to the most senior of senior citizens, and find yourself accepted and appreciated?

Music plays an important part in Corps life. We sing as best we can, supported wonderfully by musicians who share their skills with us.

Opportunity for conversation over morning tea or lunch develops friendship and enables an understanding of the joys and challenges of modern life.

Hopefully a feeling of happiness shown in laughter and smiles is in evident and newcomers are drawn in to the atmosphere of togetherness by the strength of a welcome and conversation.

You can feel safe in a Salvation Army fellowship. The prevailing attitude is one of only seeking the best each for the other.

Is that why you look forward to getting up to go to the Army on Sunday?

But this wonderful atmosphere and feeling of belonging and togetherness does not happen by chance. It comes about because God's soldier disciples resolve to 'be involved as far as they are able in the (life) of the Corps!' They start the smiling, the conversation, the singing, the laughter, the reaching out to new folk, because they want to make this place like a little bit of heaven.

3. WHAT IS THE WORK OF THE CORPS?

'They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching.' (Acts 2:42)

The primary work of a Salvation Army Corps is to make disciples of Jesus.

It is the teaching of Jesus, developed by the leaders' of the early church that contributed markedly to the quality of fellowship enjoyed within the Corps. When the Spirit of God is released through his soldier disciples, there is love and joy and peace and patience and kindness – as Paul records in Galatians 5:22.

The presentation of an aspect of Biblical teaching is an important part of proceedings when we gather together. From time to time, a course is offered [for example 'Alpha', 'Christianity Explained' – what do you provide?] to provide

opportunity for all-comers to learn a little more about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Our Corps has a home group programme in place so that people can meet together in smaller groups to support each other and discuss Christian faith and practice. These groups of five to ten people develop a close friendship and contribute greatly to the work of developing disciples of Jesus.

But this wonderful teaching ministry does not happen by chance. It comes about because God's soldier disciples resolve to 'be involved as far as they are able in the (work) of the Corps!' They listen carefully to the teaching offered them from week to week, take time during the week to teach themselves about the ways of Jesus and either assume responsibility for the leadership or make it their priority to attend a home group so as to learn themselves and support others. Their conversation with others reveals their desire to contribute to the work of the Corps in making disciples.

4. WHAT IS THE WORSHIP OF THE CORPS?

'The members of the early Church spent much time 'Praising God'' (Acts 2:47)

Salvation Army worship has always been vibrant and alive. The God we serve loves us! He keeps us in a state of forgiveness as we confess our sins. He enables us to live well by seeking to live His life through us and in so doing helps us live abundantly. How can we keep from singing His praise and expressing our joy in living?

In most meetings for worship there is a surprise in store. A testimony, a new song, a dramatic presentation, a panel discussion, a contribution from our musicians – all contributing to the means whereby we praise God.

One or two people are welcomers, others take up a collection, someone tells a children's story. Kid's Church is conducted.

Somewhere in the midst of a range of opportunity, the presence of God is appreciated, worship and adoration is offered, new inspiration from God is received and everyone is blessed!

But this wonderful experience of worship does not happen by chance. It comes about because God's soldier disciples resolve to 'be involved as far as they are able in the (worship) of the Corps!' They respond willingly when asked to contribute in some way to the meetings for worship. They join in the prayers. They take note of the Scripture readings and absorb the lesson of the sermon. For them worship is an opportunity to participate. And everyone is blessed because of their contribution.

5. WHAT IS THE WITNESS OF THE CORPS?

'Many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the Apostles. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.' (Acts 2:43)

The witness of the Corps is the influence it exerts on its community. The richness of fellowship and knowledge of God's grace is too good not to share. God's soldier disciples witness to that love by sharing it with others.

The result is shown in ministries to hurting people and a readiness to invite all who will accept the opportunity to join in fellowship and receive the same life changing teaching of Jesus that has transformed them. Hospitals and prisons are visited, homes for the elderly and shut-ins are served, and hotels and shopping malls are places of witness. Family Stores are supported and community meals are served, in the name of Jesus. Many wonderful signs of grace are in evidence.

But this wonderful experience of witness does not happen by chance. It comes about because God's soldier disciples are 'involved as far as they are able in the (witness) of the Corps!' They respond willingly when asked to contribute to programmes that meet presenting needs and boldly seek to raise the profile of their Corps in the community. Everyone is blessed because of their contribution, and the Lord *adds to their number daily those who are being saved.*

Application

The soldier disciple is key to the on going work of The Salvation Army. Contribute to the best of your ability and the strength of your resources to the life of the Corps. Do your best to make it a little bit like heaven.

Play your part in the process of making disciples of Jesus. Work at your own commitment and be there for others who are on the way.

Enter earnestly into worship as befits our response to a loving God.

Play your part in raising the profile of the Corps before the people. Serve in love those who seem to be like sheep without a shepherd.

'I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.'

Other Resources

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Take time during the meeting to identify and recognise those of your Corps who hold responsibility for its life and witness.

Embodying the spirit of Salvationism in my daily living

Judges 7 (selected verses)

Overview

The Salvation Army holds a unique place within the Christian Church. Its militaristic structure sets it apart as does its approach to sacramental worship. Strongly evangelical in doctrine and mission and committed to the alleviating of poverty and injustice on a world-wide front, The Salvation Army is not just another Church.

In an age when many Christians choose a spiritual home for reasons of style and convenience, the uniqueness of the movement can be blurred and the sharp edge of its purposes dulled. Soldier disciples of Jesus within The Salvation Army are called upon to be loyal to the distinctive principles and practices of the movement.

Topics: A visible and vocal Army. The principles of the movement. The practices of the movement. The spirit of Salvationism.

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

Our Reading of the story of Gideon leading a selected number of the people of Israel to a resounding victory provides the background to today's look at the *Soldier's Covenant*.

It's a great story! Gideon's small band of soldiers were carefully chosen for their watchfulness, were organised and trained, and had a well thought out plan.

Though few in number they managed to give the impression of strength by taking up strategic positions around the perimeter of the Midianite camp.

At the appropriate time they made themselves highly visible by means of their lanterns, giving the impression of large numbers.

They were vocal! They shouted, made a loud noise causing confusion enough to cause their enemy to turn tail and run!

Doesn't this story remind you of The Salvation Army? Visible and vocal and victorious!

Today's clause reads:

'I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of Salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution.'

The Salvation Army holds a unique place within the Christian Church. Its militaristic structure sets it apart as does its approach to sacramental worship. Strongly evangelical in doctrine and mission and committed to the alleviating of poverty and injustice on a world-wide front, The Salvation Army is not just another Church. It's a commando force – Gideon's band

In an age when many Christians choose a spiritual home for reasons of style and convenience, the uniqueness of the movement can be blurred and the sharp edge of its purposes dulled. Soldier disciples of Jesus within The Salvation Army are called upon to be loyal to the distinctive principles and practices of the movement.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MOVEMENT

The Salvation Army is mainstream Christian at heart. The Bible is our handbook. Our statement of doctrine is in line with the widely held beliefs of the Church. We are positioned within the Church as 'evangelical', having a strong focus upon the gospels and in particular the life and witness and saving work of Jesus Christ.

We maintain a strong emphasis upon mission, recognising that too many people in our community are 'lost' and accepting the injunction of Jesus to teach, preach, serve and heal in his name. While our primary focus is local, we have a world-wide view, given our place in an international movement.

A distinctive is our non-liturgical approach to sacramental worship. However, few of our congregational meetings for worship are without significant symbolism or visual aid, seeking to enhance an awareness of the sacrifice Jesus made for us. The Salvation Army flag, the Mercy Seat and in many instances the presence of a cross are permanent reminders of God's grace. In addition, imaginative approaches to encourage worship, repentance and commitment are frequently used.

We are a disciplined movement, calling our people to commitment to mission, asking for loyalty and consistency, and requiring acceptance of a temperate and self-denying way of life.

3. THE PRACTICES OF THE MOVEMENT

The Salvation Army is a single entity world-wide. Although divided into zones and territories for purposes of administration, the movement operates under a central administration based in London.

In times of emergency and disaster, resources in terms of man-power, materials and finance can be applied within a matter of hours.

Where injustice and abuse and other forms of social evil exist, the international network of informed Salvationists, engaged in social service delivery from day to day, works together to assist Government and social agencies in addressing the issues.

Within each Territory, the same singleness of doctrine, purpose and to some extent style, under a central control means disaster relief on a national basis for weeks at a time is possible. The same principle applies to the use of resources for day to day operations, with a central control administering finances and property.

The Salvation Army is similarly autocratic at Corps level (hopefully benevolently autocratic) as distinct from churches having a structure controlled by the congregation. Officers are appointed to lead and are accountable equally to their congregation and to a Divisional Office. In these post-denomination days where a congregation can be made up of people from a wide range of denominational backgrounds, this administrative practice is not always understood.

The movement is blessed in having regular opportunity to interact on a Corps to Corps basis, to participate in large divisional and national events, to receive specialist training and a continuing supply of resources.

4. THE SPIRIT OF SALVATIONISM

The spirit of Salvationism is regularly spoken of. Salvationism is a style of being a Christian. It's not so much about what Salvationists do – we are part of the wider Church of Jesus Christ and play our part in building God's Kingdom with other Christians – but about the way in which we do it!

We are a pragmatic movement. We like to see results. We call people to decision, whether it be to commit themselves to the Jesus way at the 'Mercy Seat', or to go to extra lengths to ensure the needs of hurting people in our community are met. We are a 24/7 movement, always available in times of family and community crisis. In less sophisticated times our officers and local

officers were known to follow the fire engine on bikes, so as to be there in the time of need. We have been called ‘the Army with its sleeves rolled up!’

We are a happy people. We enjoy meeting together and find our deepest friendships within the movement. We smile and laugh a lot! We enjoy the best of social and recreational events. We appreciate being able to participate in music and song. The spirit of joy pervades our gatherings.

Perhaps above all the spirit of Salvationism is the desire we share that all people from all walks of life, all stages of development, and all races, might join with us, sharing our joy, our stability of life, our willingness to be there for others in their time of need. The vision of our founders, William and Catherine Booth was that the whole world would be won to the Christian way, in the interest of the world’s peoples and the peace of the world.

The spirit of Salvationism sees the whole world won for God.

Application

We have considered together the principles and practices of The Salvation Army and have considered briefly the intangible spirit of the movement.

‘I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of Salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution.’

Included in this clause is a call for loyalty to the movement’s leadership, its principles and practices and to a willingness to show the spirit of Salvationism in your world. The call is to joy and fellowship and belonging. It is also a call to self-denial, to compassion, to involvement.

Are you a soldier? Live up to your calling.

Should you be a soldier? Enlist today.

Should you begin to live the Jesus way? Start now.

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ A personal depth of understanding and an enthusiastic commitment to the movement is a pre-requisite to effective communication. Re-read a book written about the work and spirit of The Salvation Army.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- Songs might focus upon the idea of the world for God and upon personal commitment, such as:
 - On we march with the blood and the fire, to the ends of the earth
 - Shine Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father's glory
 - Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armour on
 - I want to see the Kingdom of God in my generation
 - We'll walk the land – let the flame burn brighter
- Have an older soldier speak of the spirit of Salvationism as it was in earliest memory, compared to the spirit of the movement today.

Renewal: I will be a true soldier of Jesus Christ, in The Salvation Army

2 Corinthians 5:11-15

'We are ruled by Christ's love for us. ... He died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died ... for us.' (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, CEV)

Overview

The purpose of this sermon is to introduce a ceremony whereby the soldiers of the Corps may commit to a form of the *Soldier's Covenant* prepared for this occasion. The sermon provides a summary of the 'I Wills', reminds the congregation of the need for committed Christians within The Salvation Army, and explains the procedure to be followed by those choosing to renew.

In calling soldiers to self-denial and commitment, the Officer needs to ensure the call is not simply to pew sitting or belonging. While both practices may have some relevance, the language of the *Soldier's Covenant* calls for involvement, contribution and engagement with the community. Corps leadership needs to constantly be creating service opportunities for its soldiers.

Topics: The *Soldier's Covenant* summarised. Renewal.

Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

At the heart of our worship this morning is an opportunity to consider again your commitment to soldiership within The Salvation Army. We have looked at the document that sets out the guidelines for soldiers and have considered their meaning for today. A summary of the document might read as follows:

Soldier's Covenant in Summary

1. I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life,
2. I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life,
3. I will make the values of the Kingdom of God the standard for my life.
4. I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others;
5. I will uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life.

6. I will be a faithful steward
7. I will abstain from all that could enslave the body or spirit.
8. I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army,
9. I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps,
10. I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army,
11. I now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this covenant and sign these articles of war of my own free will,

The *Soldier's Covenant* is for people who are serious about being Christian. It is much more than mere membership of a body where the reason for belonging is linked to what you can get out of it. Indeed one becomes a soldier for the purpose of taking advantage of the opportunity to put something into the fellowship of believers, the stability of the community and the spirit and well being of the nation. Along the way there are some wonderful blessings to be had through belonging and participating and helping to change lives as the teachings of Jesus are applied to people in need.

While the demands of the *Covenant* are serious, the need for proactive and intentional Christians fitting the profile of a soldier are the sort of Christians Jesus called for when he suggested those who were worthy of him would deny themselves to take up his cause and to follow him. (Luke 14:25-27)

In a few minutes, opportunity will be given you to participate in a brief ceremony during which a re-signing of your *Soldier's Covenant* will be featured. The concept of the ceremony is best summed up in the last clause of the *Soldier's Covenant*, which reads:

'I now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this covenant and sign these articles of war of my own free will, convinced that the love of Christ, who died and now lives to save me, requires from me this devotion of my life to His service for the salvation of the whole world; and therefore do here declare my full determination, by God's help, to be a true soldier of The Salvation Army.'

2. WHY BE A SOLDIER DISCIPLE OF JESUS IN THE SALVATION ARMY?

From a scriptural point of view, discipleship gives us the privilege of being co-workers with God in building a society on earth in which his will is being done as it is in heaven! Imagine it!

This is the vision Jesus cast during his ministry to his disciples and among the people. Imagine a whole community in which the well-being of others was

always placed before self-interest. No one in need, or lonely, or friendless. Everyone blessed with a spirit of joy and love and peace. No envy, no jealousy, no greed, no faithless-ness. Jesus called it the Kingdom of Heaven. We are called upon to work with God to make it happen. He provides the spirit and the power. We provide the communication and the delivery.

One might suggest a feeling of compulsion behind our commitment to being a soldier disciple. Commissioner Sir Dean Goffin wrote a classic brass band selection entitled 'By Love Compelled'. The lyrics associated with the music progress from an awareness of the cross of Christ, to a picture of Christ standing at the door, knocking, seeking entry, to the words 'All my days and all my hours shall be thine dear Lord.'

Our chosen text from scripture today reads:

'Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them.' (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Paradoxically it is in giving up rights to ourselves in favour of living for Christ that abundance of life is experienced. George Matheson wrote (SASB 508) 'Make me a captive Lord and then I shall be free.' Sydney Cox wrote (SASB 462) 'By the pathway of duty flows the river of God's grace'. These saints and many others had discovered a key to life as a willingness to turn from self to others.

While there are many denominations of the Church of Jesus Christ to choose from, there can be few more effective in the dual purposes associated with the building of the Kingdom of Heaven than The Salvation Army. The movement flies by keeping in balance its proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven and the expression of a compassionate and responsive concern for those who are 'lost'.

The Salvation Army is at work in over 120 countries.

Peter Drucker, considered a leader in the field of organisation and management, described The Salvation Army in the USA as 'The most effective organisation in the United States.'

Researchers from a Mount Eliza Business School (Victoria, Australia) published their findings into the most effective corporations in Australia under the title 'The First Eleven.' Included among Qantas and Harvey Norman was The Salvation Army – the only religious organisation making the team.

Closer to home, this Corps plays its part in building the Kingdom and needs your mind and heart, your experience and your talents as we seek to make a difference in our community.

Application

Placed before you are a quantity of specially prepared Soldier's Covenant Renewal Cards. May I invite those of you who are soldiers to prayerfully reconsider the importance of your commitment as Soldiers within The Salvation Army to the work of building the Kingdom of God? Would you be prepared to sign a renewal card as a memento of your resolve this day?

Should you be a soldier? Will you resolve to be a soldier today? Some *Soldier's Covenant* documents are also available before you today. Would you please take a copy to be the subject of earnest prayer to God for guidance over the way he would have you serve in his name?

Other Resources

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ❑ Commissioner Robert Watson's book on the nature and work on The Salvation Army in the USA is entitled 'The Most Effective Organisation in the U.S'.
- ❑ The Mt Eliza Business School book featuring the excellence of The Salvation Army in Australia is entitled 'The First 1X'

WORSHIP RESOURCES

- ❑ Songs might include:
 - I would be thy holy temple, sacred and indwelt
 - Songs from the 'Swearing in of Soldier's section of the song book
 - Lord I give you my heart – this is my desire to honour you
 - Refresh my heart Lord, renew my love
 - With all I am – into your hands Lord, I commit again
 - Eagles Wings – here I am waiting, abide in me I pray
- ❑ Your Local Officers might be prepared to give testimony as to why they will renew their *Soldier's Covenant*
- ❑ A summarised form of the *Soldier's Covenant* might be displayed for congregation viewing before during the meeting so as to set the scene for the renewal
- ❑ Opportunity might be taken during the meeting to announce a major step forward to be taken by the Corps in the next few months, requiring dedicated soldiers as leaders and workers.