

Faith & Life – Co-operation

Doreen walked through the door of the Family Services at Scarborough Citadel feeling desperate. She had received counselling at The Salvation Army's Homestead ministry but with temporary custody of her 2 year old granddaughter, Tiffany, she needed more support. Doreen was warmly welcomed and, along with the immediate practical aid of food from the Corps Food Bank, was given direction as to long term support. With the co-operation of government funding and the corps, Tiffany was able to attend Scarborough Citadel Childcare. Over the years Doreen and Tiffany attended Baby Song and worship services at the corps. One summer they attended Moms and Tots Camp where Doreen came to experience God's peace in her life.

Addictions counselling, community and family services, daycare, government, corps, music and camping ministries – numerous people - in co-operation with each other exemplified the love of Jesus, met the needs of this little family and resulted in the transformation of two lives.

Co-operation is critical to the success of any organization but in the case of The Salvation Army it is at the core of who we are because it is deeply rooted in Scripture.

At the dawn of creation God spoke the Word, the Spirit hovered over the deep and all things were created in and through the Son. The triune God in perfect harmony provided a flawless example of co-operation. God created man and woman to co-operatively share in the beauty and care of the garden. Noah co-operated with God for the redemption of humanity in the flood. Abraham willingly was used by God to father His chosen people. Mary co-operated with the Spirit of God when called to be the mother of the Messiah. And Jesus, our Messiah, in co-operation with the will of His father, endured the cross so that you and I can participate in this partnership with God.

Our most crucial co-operative relationship exists with God. We are given the privilege, and called upon, to co-operate with Him so that His will is accomplished in the world. Jesus gave the perfect example of how this works. The key to the success of this partnership was Christ's attitude. Paul reminds us that this is how we are all called to live.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature ^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature ^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,



he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Phil 2:5-8 (NIV)

Co-operation requires humility. Not a door-mat mindset but a true view of who we are in Christ and before God. We can't generate this type of attitude on our own; it is a result of God's work in us. As we co-operate with the Holy Spirit He enables us to act and react in a Christ-like manner fulfilling God's will. When our relationship with God is right, we are better equipped to work in co-operation with others.

Paul describes our co-operation within the church like a body. We have different abilities and God given gifts. Each person is needed for the overall health and functioning of the body. Embedded in this metaphor is the understanding that we cannot all be the same; we are not all an eye or an ear. We are all needed in our diversity. That reality can cause difficulty when trying to co-operate with others. At times we will have differing views or ways of doing things. For the body to function well we need to accept people as they are, and even more, to find ways in which our uniqueness and theirs can complement each other. In The Salvation Army we are blessed to co-operate with those of diverse cultural, economic and societal differences. Our ability to work, fellowship and worship beyond these often restrictive boundaries is a testament to God's love for all people.

As the early church expanded, a conflict amidst cultural differences threatened to disrupt the mission. The disciples recognized their need for help. They humbly asked for help. Seven men were chosen to carry out that part of the mission. These men humbly accepted the role that God had for them. Together, in co-operation, "... the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

May it be so where you serve in The Salvation Army! Humbly submitting to God in co-operation with His Spirit, let us keep God's will as our supreme goal so that in co-operation with others His mission will be accomplished.

"For we are co-workers in God's service" 1 Cor. 3:9a

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