

Faith & Life – Relevance

Jesus has relevance; he was relevant while he walked the earth, and he is relevant still today. As Christ encountered people, he understood where people were at, their story, but also their need. In his teaching, Jesus used every day events and experiences to describe spiritual truths. Therefore, the idea of water and its necessity is one he uses, and which appears repeatedly in Scripture.

Our corps is working through a sermon series on what it means to ‘thirst after God’. Water is necessary for survival, and so the struggle for the provision of clean and accessible water is evidenced through all history to today. We see the Lord evidence His faithfulness as He offers water from a rock to his people who are thirsty as they journey through the wilderness. The psalmists sing repeatedly of the life-giving nature of water. Jesus shares with the woman at the well the kind of ‘water’ he can offer. He is relevant, acknowledging the physical need of water but also identifying the spiritual need.

The founder of The Salvation Army, William Booth, said, *“You cannot warm the hearts of people with God’s love if they have an empty stomach and cold feet.”* The Salvation Army rose up with a desire to follow after Christ and to be relevant; to meet both physical and spiritual need. That desire remains today and is one of our Territorial core values and is consistent with what Jesus asks of us:

“For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me” (Matthew 25:35-36, NLT).

If people are thirsty, we build a well or provide a drink of water. If people are cold, we give shelter, clothing, or help to heat their homes. If people are hungry, we offer food. If people are lonely, we offer fellowship and a place to belong. If people are lost, we introduce them to Christ, who can show them the way. And if we aren’t doing these things, shame on us because we have no relevance in the world! To fulfill the mission Jesus called us to, we must be in touch with the needs of our community.



A man came to the door of our church one day looking for temporary shelter for him and his children; not a common occurrence in our context. After securing shelter and food for this family for a few days, the father gratefully told us this was the first time in a long time that he had hope for the days ahead as he settled into this new role as a single parent. Two months later, this man was on our doorstep again, not for himself or his own family, but in search of a location to host a weekly pre-school group he was connected with. Years later, the group continues to meet in an Army facility, each week attracting dozens of small kids and their families allowing families to participate in community and build friendships in a safe environment. This also meant the creation of a great partnership between the Army and another social organization.

Relevance. The provision of food and shelter resulted in hope for the future. The use of our facility meant opportunity for fostering friendship and building community. Jesus fed food to a crowd of five thousand, and in doing so, he could continue to feed their hungry souls. To follow Christ's example of relevance, let us consider the following questions:

1. What does your community need?
2. How can The Salvation Army in your context meet that need?
3. How can you, and your expression of the Army's mission where you are, be relevant?

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