

Rethinking Calling

YouthDownSouth interviews Captain Bobby Jackson, the Divisional Youth Secretary in the Texas Division.

YDS: Please tell us a little bit about yourself – in particular please tell us your testimony.

BJ: My testimony begins at a young age. I grew up in an abusive home and church became my escape from home. I first heard the story of the prodigal son at 12 years old and was excited to hear about a father that loved me and wanted the best for me. When the invitation was given, I went to the altar and asked Jesus into my heart. Shortly after my conversion experience, I began to teach Sunday school to the preschoolers in my church. I loved teaching little children about Jesus as I learned myself from Sunday School. People in the church told me that they knew God was going to use me in the church someday as a pastor. I laughed and said no way, because I wanted to be a professional football player.

Unfortunately, the abuse at home never went away. In fact, it increased with age and eventually I found myself doubting God's love for me and turned away from the Lord out of rebellion. I couldn't understand how a loving God would let me endure so much. That decision led to mistake after mistake and a few years wandering aimlessly, separated from God. Eventually, like the prodigal, my poor decisions led me to the lowest point in my life and that is how I met The Salvation Army. After a few weeks, I attended the Corpus Christi, Texas corps and once again heard the prodigal story. Once again the story pierced my heart and made me aware of my wandering and God's desire to welcome me home. I heard the invitation and responded by re-committing my life to the Lord and apologizing for my rebellion. I have been walking with the Lord ever since without regret.

YDS: Why are you a member of The Salvation Army?

BJ: I am a member of The Salvation Army because the Lord has called me to minister to men, women, boys and girls, in the same way soldiers and officers of The Salvation Army ministered to me in my time of need. I love what The Salvation Army believes and represents. I am proud to wear my uniform and feel honored to be a part of our rich heritage.

YDS: How did you first come into contact with the SA?

BJ: My time of rebellion led me to a low point in my life and I refused to ask for help from the step-father that abused me both physically and mentally for so many years.

Rather than go home when in trouble, I checked into a Salvation Army homeless shelter for a place to sleep. After the first night, I met with the corps officer and told him my story. He offered me a prayer and a job. A few months later I was back on my feet and had began going to the corps during the process.

YDS: What do you believe it means to “be called”?

BJ: I believe to “be called” means that the Lord desires full commitment of a persons entire life and being to the cause of building the Kingdom of God. This call requires personal sacrifice and dedication to serving others, even in the face of adversity.

YDS: Do you believe that you are called?

BJ: I believe without a shadow of a doubt that I am called. Since the Lord instilled in me the desire to preach and teach I have been unable to find peace and joy in other endeavors. I find comfort in serving and feel that my life is complete. I find that the Lord equips me to do things beyond my own natural abilities and has guided my life every step of the way to prepare me for service-even when I wasn’t serving Him in jobs I hated. I may not always believe that I am capable of answering God’s call, but I have never doubted that He has clearly called me.

YDS: What are your top five Salvationists of all time?

- (1) William & Catherine Booth as the founders of The Salvation Army
- (2) Eliza Shirley for her bravery and commitment to the Lord at such a young age
- (3) Elijah Cadman for modeling the transformational power of Jesus and His ability to equip those He has called
- (4) Kathryn Cox for her faithful service to death row inmates
- (5) Tim Gilliam for modeling humility and holiness and seeing people through the eyes of Christ

YDS: If you were to give words of advice to a young adult to figure out what God wants him/her to do in life, what would you say?

BJ: First, I would instruct them to make a list of what they want out of life for themselves; goals and dreams regarding family and work. Secondly, I would ask them to see how their dreams align with God’s will for believers and then pray specifically asking the Lord to reveal to them his pleasure or displeasure with their desires. Lastly, I would tell

them to study the word and invest themselves in the ministry of the local corps to see if that is where the Lord is leading them at this point in their walk.

YDS: What ultimately lead you to the profession you are in today?

BJ: The love of Salvationists for me while I was sorting through the mess I had made of my life while ignoring the voice of God pushing me toward service.

YDS: What is the most successful thing you have accomplished as a professional?

BJ: I cannot recall any significant accomplishments as a professional.

YDS: What is your take on ministry as it relates to your career?

BJ: Ministry is the purpose of God's call on my life. I am called to meet human needs in Jesus name without discrimination first and foremost. My calling as an officer in The Salvation Army requires that I do more than one on one ministry, but it all ties together as the goal is helping others. I could not imagine doing anything else; I love to see people changed by the Gospel message.

YDS: What is your favorite Scripture verse?

BJ: *Colossians 3:17*, And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

YDS: If you could give words of wisdom to our readers, what would you say?

BJ: Seek the Lord with all your heart. Spend time developing a deep relationship with Jesus and you will experience joy beyond your wildest imagination. You will fall so deeply in love with him that you will be overwhelmed by His goodness. Be obedient and always love others as Jesus loved you.

Captain Bobby Jackson is the Divisional Youth Secretary in the Texas Division.