

Rethinking Calling

YouthDownSouth interviews Captain Marion Platt, commanding officer of the Atlanta Kroc Center.

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

CP: I was born in Charleston, SC, and raised there by my grandparents, Marion and Mildred Platt. After high-school, I joined the US Army, and was stationed at Fort Drum, NY (10th Mountain Division) for over 5 years. There, I began to abuse alcohol and lost many relationships because of it. Near the end of my enlistment in the military, I began to attend a church near the army post, and gave my life to Christ. Having developed a close relationship with the pastor there, I became active in youth ministry and the worship team. In December of 2000, I went on a short-term mission trip to Port-au-Prince, Haiti with my pastor; it was there that I began to sense a call to full-time ministry. Soon after, I was honorably discharged from the US Army, and returned to my hometown to finish up my education. After looking for a "church home" for several weeks, I felt directed to attend The Salvation Army Charleston Corps with my grandmother.

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

CP: Honestly, I can't say that I found everything I was looking for in The Salvation Army, initially. It was after I began to carefully review the doctrines and history of The Salvation Army, that I sensed a call to soldiership; I fell in love with the mission. The opportunities for ministry were attractive to me; I had been to other churches where one had to have several years tenure to become active in ministry, but at the Army, the invitation came quickly. Before I even had a uniform, I was visiting nursing homes, testifying in mid-week meetings, singing on Sundays, street-witnessing in downtown Charleston, helping to organize small group meetings, occasionally leading Sunday School, and visiting maximum-security prisons with the corps officer (Wow!). I found a ministry among the young adults there, and spent time speaking with officers about their ministries. I was amazed, and started to detect another call in my heart.

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

CP: My very first visit was as a kindergarten student; I was invited to Vacation Bible School by a classmate. A few years later, I learned that my grandparents had attended there before, and had sent their children there, too (I've seen pictures of my mom at 6 years old, in Sunbeam uniform!) When I was about 12 years old, I started to attend regularly and developed a close relationship with my Corps Officer, then *Captain* James Worthy. He spent a lot of time with me, and I looked up to him. But by 14 years old, I was spending less time at the Corps, and more time in the streets.

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

CP: I believe it's easy to *narrow* what it means to “be called”, to mean only “an urge toward officership”. Universally, the Lord *calls* every human being to Salvation (1 Peter 2:9), and to follow Him (Luke 9:23). Moreover, He *calls* all of us to make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

As mature Christians, the Spirit teaches us to listen, and wisely interpret his *individual callings* on our lives. The Apostle Paul knew that he was personally “called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God”, and to write a letter to those in Rome “who are loved by God and called to be saints” (Romans 1:1 & 7). Therefore, everyone who has heard the gospel of Jesus proclaimed, has been called to *salvation*, called to *follow*, and called to *make disciples*.

More specifically, I believe that *soldiership* is a calling---in the days of “Come Join Our Army” we should be careful about sticking a uniform on just about anybody (and before I get any hate mail---I love the campaign; I’m just sayin’ J). Furthermore, as a leader and Corps Officer, I’d rather have a corps congregation of “Gideon’s 3” than a laissez-faire group of doctrine-quoting, Sunday-morning church-goers in sharp uniforms.

Moreover, I believe that “local leadership” is a calling. For example: Please do not try to teach a Teenage Sunday School Class, if you are not called, equipped, and committed.

Finally (and I’m sure this is what you really wanted to know), I believe that God is currently calling men and women to Salvation Army officership. I believe that He looks for men and women who, among other things:

- are saved and filled with the Spirit of God
- are willing to preach, teach, sweep, mop, or plunge a toilet
- are good soldiers (see Articles of War)
- care deeply for others, and are brave enough to place themselves very last
- are passionate about the mission of the Army and its doctrines
- are committed to the process of discipleship, personally and by commission
- are open to receiving “fresh callings” every day.

YDS: Do you believe that you are called?

CP: As a Salvation Army officer? Yes.

YDS: What are your top 5 favorite Salvationists of all time?

CP: Commissioner Israel Gaither – Our National Commander, for many reasons; but to hear him speak about the mission of the Army will make one’s heart burn. To hear him speak about the Holy Spirit will make one want to be filled again and again. I’ve had two opportunities to spend a private moment with him and Commissioner Eva, and can say that our National Commanders are the real deal.

Everyday Soldiers – you know the type. He or she who has a vibrant relationship with Christ, and puts their witness on display at school, home, or work. Those who faithfully serve, preach, perform, pray, and play. The ones who challenge others (verbally --- and by example) to be

authentic in their faith, and who make mission happen in their communities. I could name a hundred, but I'll just call them "everyday soldiers".

Majors Bill & Debra Mockabee – They are my Divisional leaders, yes, and if I were you, I would give me a very hard time for this one (really...it *does* seem very, very cheesy). Yet, these two lovingly pastor my wife and me. They love our kids, and our kids know it. As leaders they fiercely challenge us to grow in our own leadership of others and in the development of ourselves, while empowering us to make mission happen in our community. They are tough leaders, but fair.

Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle – a "preacher of holiness"; his writings about entire sanctification are timeless. His constant written reminders that 'things change' once a believer is wholly sanctified, should be carved into marble.

Nashan Garabed (Joe the Turk) – a "disturber of the peace"; I love reading about the way he protected his comrades from mobs in the early days. Admittedly he was very weird, and used his peculiarities to bring attention to the mission, and lead souls to repentance.

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

CP: Evaluate your own interests and desires, and ask "How can I serve the Lord with this?" Remember that He created you, and that your gifts, talents, and interests probably aren't there by mistake.

Investigate the lives of people you admire. Figure out exactly what you admire about them, and "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised". (Hebrews 6:12)

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

CP: An overwhelming hunger, an all-encompassing desire to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to meet human needs in His name, and to lead others to do the same.

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

CP: As an officer, I wear many "hats". I'm a servant, a soldier, a preacher, a pastor, a community leader, a public figure, a supervisor, a mentor, a teacher, a student, etc. At home, I'm a husband, father, friend, neighbor, etc. Yet before all of that, down to my bones, *I'm a disciple* of Jesus Christ; that fact alone guides the way I "*wear* my hats" publicly, professionally, and privately.

I believe that it is my duty to serve my community to the best of my ability, sharing the message of Christ and meeting human needs in His name... but I could have remained a soldier and done that at my home corps. It just so happens that I accepted a "call to officership".

And as an officer in this "Kingdom building" organization, I don't think I've been called to be *Rambo*; I can't accomplish much without other people. Moreover, in any military organization, the officer oversees the mission in his or her assigned sector. Officers evaluate the battlefield (or *community*), train and equip soldiers (or *congregation*), and strategically deploy those forces to engage the enemy (or Satan, injustice, poverty, etc.), and is ultimately responsible for the accomplishment or failure of the mission (*mission* meaning: the transformation of lives; men,

women, and children becoming *disciples*). When I stand before Jesus, I believe that a “well-done” will be in order only if *lives have been transformed* under my watch.

YDS: What is your favorite Scripture verse?

CP: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners... (Isaiah 61:1)