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online soldiership lessons

DOCTRINE 1: THE WORD

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

Ready:

[Read before Lesson 1: The Word.](#) and "The Call to Salvationists" (links online)

*OR Print out hardcopy: [Lesson 1-Reading handout](#)

Set:

- 1) After prayer and a welcome, have everyone introduce themselves, sharing how they came to know about The Salvation Army as well as why they are considering Soldiership, Adherency or taking a Doctrine Refresher Module.
- 2) Have each student write their names on a 3x5" card, along with one or two prayer concerns. After exchanging cards, students randomly choose one another's names- becoming prayer partners for the duration of the Soldiership course

For those in a Doctrine Refresher Module– accept your prayer partner for a specified amount of time.

Action:

Every member of The Salvation Army should know something about the beginnings, development and mission of the Army they have joined. Below is a video which allows us to see a glimpse of founder, William Booth's vision, and how God called him to reach out to those locked into generational poverty and despair. - Because William and Catherine stepped forward in obedience. The Salvation Army is a dynamic International Movement today; serving in over 120 countries. This Army portrays "Christianity with it's sleeves rolled up", meeting human need without discrimination.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey8n3n3MgF4>

As a part of our Soldiership Course we will take a look at The Salvation Army's beginnings, the very spirit of Salvationism and as well look into what it means to be a Soldier, taking on the mission of our Army.

The Salvation Army defines itself with an international mission statement:

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.

In your reading link / handout: **“The Call to Salvationists”**

Question: What stands out to you?

‘The Call to Salvationists’, page 7

Called to be God’s People.

The Founders of the Salvation Army declared their belief that God raised up our Movement to enter partnership with him in his ‘great business’ of saving the world. We call upon Salvationists worldwide to reaffirm our shared calling to this great purpose, signified in our name. Salvation begins with conversion to Christ, but it does not end there. The transformation of an individual leads to a transformation of relationships, of families, of communities, of nations. We long for and anticipate with joy the new creation of all things in Christ.

Our mission is God’s mission. God in love reaches out through his people to a suffering and needy world, a world that he loves. In mission we express in word and deed and through the totality of our lives the compassion of God for the lost. Our identification with God in this outward movement of love for the world requires a corresponding inward movement from ourselves towards God. Christ says ‘Come to me’ before he says ‘Go into the world’. These two movements are in relation to each other, like breathing in and breathing out.

To engage in one movement to the exclusion of the other is the way of death. To engage in both is the way of life. The vitality of our spiritual life as a Movement will be seen and tested in our turning to the world in evangelism and service, but the springs of our spiritual life are to be found in our turning to God in worship, in the disciplines of life in the Spirit, and in the study of God’s word.

FYI / CK IT OUT

[Symbols of TSA](#) [The Soldier’s Covenant Articles of War](#) | [armyofcompassion](#).

Go!

Lesson 1: The Word- -What you believe matters

Every day you are confronted with choices, questions, obstacles, that require that you go back to the very core of who you are to look at that baseline-acting upon life principles as best you can. We gain wisdom through trial and error, any formal or informal education, form opinions based on cultural influences, and learn how far we can trust others primarily based on our own experiences. We are modified and altered, trying to adapt as well as we can within this environment where outer influences infuse us the same way hot water is changed by simply adding a tea bag. And the varieties, styles and blends of tea are as limitless as the “likes” and “dislikes” of the person making the choice. If left to ourselves we are a mess, plain and simple.

Add to this dynamic that our worldview affect the ways in which we behave in our world and treat our neighbors based on this same tornado of inner and outer core beliefs.

What is reliable? What is true? Who gets to choose?

My physician is very skilled, and when I am not feeling well, I seek her advice. Her knowledge, training and wisdom are trustworthy. Still, when I am heartbroken as I talk to a friend whose spouse was just murdered I find myself going back to my core beliefs. No matter how skilled or wise or knowledgeable; no matter how influential, there is a deeper need for Truths that are immovable. We are surrounded by authorities and sources that would guide us- (some much more reliable than others).

Group Question:

Who or what are some of the authorities in your life....in your family? Your culture? Your own experience? Within all of history?

- Do not be deceived. **What you believe matters.**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNa8BNkqQfU>

Our study of The Salvation Army doctrines gives us a foundation upon which we can build with integrity and trust. When the waves of life wash over us, or when we are given a larger picture of our world and the condition of the truly lost; we must have answers that go beyond psychological theories and political correctness.

God's Word is where we begin.

Your reading assignment established a biblical basis.

The Bible is absolutely His Word to us...His Revelation. Truth with a capital T.

We live in a time in history where many take the "shopping cart" view of the Scriptures, choosing what they believe, the authority they give it, and how they're going to apply their "version of truth" to their lives. There are a lot of ways in which the world around us approaches the Bible. Let's look at a few summarized ways in which others view Scripture:

- **Rationalism** is a philosophy that varies from atheism and agnosticism to the moderate who still believes that divine revelation exists. Among these is shared a distinct belief that the Bible is open to the interpretation of the individual who can accept or reject parts of Scripture as they choose. "The Shopping Cart" Approach.
- **A Cultic view:** To see the Bible (alongside another inspired writing) as being "equally" authoritative should cause us to see a warning flag. When the Bible is not the *only* authority it becomes a lesser reference point to add credibility to the "new revelation". "The My book is divine, and I'll take a few biblical quotes to back it up" Approach.
- **Mysticism**, (both true and false mysticism) see a new truth existing beyond the Bible. Mysticism bases this developing new truth on human experience. If it fits within a person's worldview- then it is accepted as being true. The Bible is not seen as complete or final, and it can be seen by those who are receptive. "The 'Oh, I can see that!...It must be true for me" Approach.
- **Romanism** sees the Roman Catholic Church as the final authority for how the Bible is interpreted. The Bible is seen as unknowable, incomplete and falling under the current leadership and traditions of the Church. "The I'll decide for you" Approach.
- **Neoorthodoxy** claims that individuals must encounter a relationship with God as a starting point for God's Word to speak to them. They do not believe that the Bible is the word of God, but that God's words are contained within the Bible. This leaves each person to judge what is true or authoritative. Karl Barth (1886-1968) is considered the father of Neoorthodoxy. "The Cut & Paste" Approach.
- The Salvation Army's first doctrinal position is that the Bible alone is the final authority for faith and practice. It is inspired by God and without error. We stand among **Conservative Protestants** in our doctrine. "All true, all inspired" Approach.

Major Jim Garrington, in his book, "Equipped for Battle" (Highly Recommended READ) <http://www.amazon.com/Equipped-Battle-Jim-Garrington/dp/0964834715> asserts that the "Bible is different. We are convinced that it is a reliable authority simply because the author is reliable. He made us, and in this context we can think of the Bible as a sort of owner's manual. God has chosen the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as a primary means of revealing Himself to people. This means that we can get to know God through the Bible. But, if we do not know God, we cannot really understand the Bible (pg 35).

God wants us to know Him, so He reveals Himself through nature, history, even through our feel-

ings. But his greatest revelation is through his Son, Jesus, who is revealed through the Bible. We read the Bible and through it we begin to understand the Bible. (36)”

Doctrine 1: We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

FOR YOUR DISCUSSION: *But...the Bible is full of errors, right?

LOOK UP: Isaiah 55:12. Trees obviously have no hands to clap and couldn't clap them if they did!
Response: Poetic language has never been literal language. “The washing machine eats my socks!” Really? Does it have the ability to chew and swallow?

LOOK UP: Psalm 113:3. Scientifically we understand that the earth revolves around the sun and does not rise or set, so this is an error.

Response: The Bible is meant to bring us to God, not make astronomical statements. You and I talk about sun-rise and sun-set, don't we?

Miracles don't happen.

Response: How do you truly know, or how can you prove the absolute truth that they don't. Often Scripture is not contradicting itself, but rather our opinions.

The Bible clearly contradicts established scientific principles.

Response: Sometimes we have misunderstood science, and other times the language and interpretation of Scripture. Other times scientists have changed their minds as to what “established principles” are. Theories within science often contradict one another. According to the principles of aerodynamics, bumblebees cannot fly- and yet they do.

Sometimes the Bible contradicts itself.

Response: most of these “contradictions” harmonize nicely when examined closely. Others take more effort, and some are really tough. A “wait and see” attitude is appropriate, for we may find out the answer only in heaven. (*Questions adapted from Chapter 3 of “Equipped for Battle”).

Boots on the Ground:

Opportunities to put faith into action!

Pass out a piece of paper, a pen and an envelope to each person.

Have each person write their name on their envelope.

On the piece of paper have students write their biggest FAITH QUESTION (*they will need to determine what this means for them).

These are to be sealed, collected by the leader, then redistributed at the last lesson. At that time students will share how God has been working, revealing, or changing their questions and vision.

For those students of a refresher course or workshop. Collect responses and indicate that you will mail these questions back to them (in 6 months time They need to address their envelopes).

*Materials needed: pc. of paper for each person in the group, pens, envelopes.

Closing Prayer: Join hands and forming a circle (if possible) pray for each member, as well as for the future implications of the commitments to Soldiership being made.



FOR YOUR DISCUSSION: *But...the Bible is full of errors, right?

LOOK UP: Isaiah 55:12.

Trees obviously have no hands to clap and couldn't clap them if they did!
How do you explain this?

Response: Poetic language has never been literal language. "The washing machine eats my socks!" Really? Does it have the ability to chew and swallow?

LOOK UP: Psalm 113:3.

Scientifically we understand that the earth revolves around the sun and does not rise or set, so this is an error, right? How can we explain this?

Response: The Bible is meant to bring us to God, not make astronomical statements. You and I talk about sun-rise and sun-set, don't we?

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Do they?

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Isn't that what we learned?

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Response:

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(*Questions adapted from Chapter 3 of "Equipped for Battle" by Jim Garrington).