

## Invest in the young people of today

by Donald Bell, Lt. Colonel –



Easter is a time of great celebration and we often celebrate with the traditional proclamation Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! During the Easter celebration, there are many other traditions of the church and of society that focus on our young people: Young men and women

come to church wearing their new clothes; we give Easter baskets; and we celebrate with Easter egg hunts. Even the White House has an Easter egg roll on the White House lawn.

What better time, in this International Year for Children and Youth, to celebrate our young people and help develop them into the people God wants them to be. Several times in Scripture we are reminded that God selected young people as examples of leaders and placed mentors in their lives to develop them into Godly leaders.

In reporting David's selection as the future king, scripture records "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature...For the Lord does not see as man sees, for the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 15:31, NKJV) Scripture reminds us again and again that God disregards human standards, customs and traditions to accomplish his purposes. General John Gowans (Ret.) phrased it this way in the musical Glory:

You don't have to be clever, through it may well help.  
You don't have to be handsome, Praise God, Praise God.  
You don't have to be wealthy, or for that matter healthy,  
If your heart's all right, you'll do, you'll do.

David was a leader after God's own heart. The very selection of David as Israel's king illustrates how God is not concerned with our standards, customs or even traditions to accomplish his purpose. When Jesse, the Bethlehemite, was asked to present his sons before Samuel, he did not even think of bringing his youngest son. Only God and Samuel recognized his leadership at first. It was after his unexpected triumph over Goliath that others recognized his leadership qualities. David demonstrated to all that he depended on God. While others were unwilling to come forward, David showed a dependence on God, which made sure that God would get the glory for any success in his life.

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Timothy was another unlikely leader. Paul records in I Timothy 4:12, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (NKJV) Timothy may have felt that he was too young, too inexperienced, and perhaps his ministry too large. Perhaps he was fearful to follow in the footsteps of Paul. Once again, God is reminding us that he does not always choose based on age or experience. God chooses based on availability and obedience to him.

A third example of an unlikely leader was Joseph. Beginning in Genesis 37, the story is told of a favored young child who apparently lacked experience, wisdom and humility. As a result, his brothers sold him into slavery. He said, “you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.” (Genesis 50:20 NKJV) Although Joseph and his father suffered, he took advantage of the situation, and because of hard-won wisdom and discernment he was elevated to the position of second in command in Egypt. As Joseph looked back over his life he realized that God had directed the process of his development. Joseph learned to see things from God’s perspective.

These were three very different people that God used from a young age to bring about miracles and to fulfill his plan. As we celebrate Easter—the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ—I would first ask the young people of this territory: How are you fulfilling God’s plan in your life? Is your heart right with God? Are you dependent on him? Are you available and obedient to him? Are you allowing God to direct your steps and learning from the adversities that might come your way? I ask the officers and local officers, are you providing opportunities for leadership to young people? Are you looking for potential leaders, encouraging and mentoring them?

We need committed Salvationists to grow this Army; they will come from the young people. We need 52 new officers each year. Major Nancy Davis has reported that over 180 people have indicated an interest in full-time service. We need to pray for and encourage these individuals to move forward with processing their case papers.

We also need to encourage our young people to take leadership positions in every corps. The recent Boot Camp, led by territorial youth leaders Captains Kyle and Lisa Smith, set the pace for this year. Over 200 delegates came to learn new tools for effective youth leadership. Just think what these 200 young people can do to build the kingdom!

Finally, to our soldiers and friends, pray for the ministry of the Army and especially for the young people. May God richly bless you as you celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.