

## Joy in Service

When I was young, I always tried to find an answer to the questions, “What is life? What is the meaning of life?” When I turned middle-aged, young people would come and ask me the same questions.

Life is fair to all men. Whether you are rich or poor, happy or sad, and whether you like it or not, you can only live once. Also, your coming to this world is not your own choice. The only thing that you may choose is to ask yourself this question when you become more sensible and reasonable, “What kind of life do I want?”

In 1999, I made the biggest decision in my life, so to speak. It is because in my own plans, my career and family should be the top priority. I wanted to do something remarkable that would contribute to the society and make my life worthwhile. Just as I was expecting a wonderful path ahead, when everything seemed to be in control, God’s calling seemed to be kidding me. He wanted to send my family to full time service in The Salvation Army Sydney Chinatown Corps. Although I could have rejected with reasons I found justifiable, I thank God for we did not lose the opportunity to such a gracious and joyful service simply because of our weaknesses, our fear of paying the price, and our lack of faith in God.

I like the liberal translation of Ecclesiastes 11:4 in the New Living Translation, “Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.” If you insist on having all problems solved before making a decision, you will never experience the wonderful soul stirring life of faith. God always uses imperfect people to accomplish His wills in their imperfect condition. This verse makes me realize that “wherever God guides us, He will provide us.” These words become the source of comfort and strength during tough times.

At the beginning when we were away from home and serving in an overseas church, we really felt like battling it alone. After all, it was a brand new challenge for us. We may seem to be very experienced in church ministry, but at that moment we felt inadequate and insignificant. The Chinese ministries in Australia and Hong Kong are different in many ways. For instance, you will find different kinds of people coming for help, including new immigrants, overseas

students, problem families, drug addicts, gamblers and alcoholics... They will seek help and follow-up from The Salvation Army. For us, it is a hard and thankless job. But right now I really want to tell you this: When you are willing to learn from Jesus Christ and care about and serve these underprivileged people in His love, and when you see people who are regarded as hopeless become courageous people as a result of our care, encouragement and help, and more importantly, they know God and realize the truth of life, thus having their lives transformed, you will realize how amazing God is. At the same time you will realize no words can adequately describe the joy that comes from the truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive".

Philippians 4:4a says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." From our years of service in the church, we realize that lay believers or even pastors bear different burdens on their service, but the main issues are church growth, finance, recognition from other people, interpersonal relationship, etc. Of course, these are inevitable problems for churches as well as service members today. If we carry so many burdens when we serve, how can we rejoice?

The value of a church does not lie in its numbers, but the commitment of its believers and their spiritual quality. It should preach the gospel to the unconverted. Many believers who are willing to serve understand the meaning of "rejoice in the Lord always", but can we really put it into practice? To taste the real joy in service, we can only "rely on the Lord" completely. Learn from the love of Jesus Christ and make good use of the gifts God has given us to preach the gospel and get more people saved.

Envoy Alan Wu