



QUESTIONS

for your real life journey

Episode 22: Lt Col Dean Pallant

How do we face change?

1. KNOW YOU'RE NOT IN CONTROL (11:34)

Dean explains that growing up in Africa helped him understand that 'change is constant, and life is unpredictable. People die quickly in Africa – it could be malaria, a road accident, some other disease. But a tragedy seems pretty close by. And so the shock for me was coming into a Western environment where everybody thought they were in control.'

He suggests that this Western illusion that we are in ultimately in control of our lives has been shattered by the past 18 to 24 months of living through a pandemic we realise actually we're not in control, and we just have to accept that that's the case.

But Dean suggests once we accept we're not in control, we still have to ask ourselves a number of questions: 'How will you try to mould yourself through your circumstances into the person that God wants you to be? What are you going to change into? And how you're going to try and influence that process?'

Do you know anyone who grew up in a non-Western culture? Would you say have a different approach to life than you? Do you agree that pre-pandemic you viewed yourself as being in control of your life and decisions? How has that changed over the last two years? How might it be possible to not be in control of your life but still be able to influence who you are becoming?

2. KNOW WHO YOU ARE (13:40, 16:05)

Dean tells of a moment during his officer training that God distinctly said to him: 'You're a plougher, not a planter.' Looking back, he recognises that his varied officer appointments often involved ploughing 'fields' which had been used and produced good fruit, but needed to be refreshed and replanted. He has been able to embrace change because he understood his role in it.

'One of the joys of being in your mid-50s is that you can look back and see how the Lord's hand was on you in your 20s. Now I know why I learned so much running a mine hostel, because later on I had to run a hospital, and they're actually not that different. So I can see how the Lord helped give me the skills I needed to be the plougher that he wanted me to be.'

But in his 20s, he had to rely on the fact that he felt called and just needed to trust the Lord that everything would be okay:

Do you have a calling, or a general sense of what God might want you to do with your life? Would you agree that it's difficult in your teens or 20s to look forward and trust that the Lord knows what he's doing? What would make it easier to follow your calling?



QUESTIONS for your real life journey

How do we move through suffering?

3. WE LET IT MOVE US (21:28)

Dean tells of a time when some American doctors visited the hospital in Zambia and were standing around the bedside of a 19-year-old woman dying of AIDS. 'One of the doctors said, "I have in my office in San Francisco the drugs that could heal her – but we don't have them here." And I always remember that moment, because it was just the injustice of the world.'

But Dean adds that, years later, when he was at a World Bank meeting in New York, one doctor, prompted by Dean's Army uniform, said 'Do you know how influential The Salvation Army was in making antiretroviral drugs available worldwide?' And then told the story of his colleague visiting the Zambian hospital and seeing the 19-year-old woman die – and being so moved that he went to visit President Bush, who put through a policy to provide funding for the drugs to be made available.

'And you see how the community has benefited and people don't die like that anymore. They don't die like that across Africa, because there have been drugs due to the generosity from the international community... That dear woman changed the world.'

How many different people were affected by the suffering of that 19-year-old woman dying of AIDS? What do you think moved the American doctor to visit the president? What moved President Bush to change policy? What causes us, at times, to be unmoved by others' suffering?

4. WE SHALL FEAR NO EVIL (23:44, 27:09)

Dean tells the miraculous story of his wife Eirwen having a heart attack at the gym, actually being dead for 14 minutes until they managed to restart her heart, and being unresponsive for six days – but then making a full recovery.

'The first night she came home from hospital the four of us were sitting around and the kids said to her, "So what happened when you died?" And she said very simply, "I just had going through my mind Psalm 23: 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'"

'But the point is not the valley of the shadow of death. The point is: I will fear no evil *for thou art with me*. God is with us. And so I think in those moments of doubt, whatever they are, whatever suffering it is, it is God is with us. We are not alone, we know the bigger story, we know the bigger purpose, and sometimes we've just got to hang on in there.'

Reflect on how those words from Psalm 23 might have spoken to Eirwen as she experienced what she did. Have any words from the Bible given you a real sense of comfort and encouragement when you most needed it? Is the idea that God is always with you comforting?



QUESTIONS for your real life journey

How do we receive joy?

5. HELPING OTHERS THRIVE (32:03)

Dean explains that what brings him great joy is seeing people thrive, grow and develop as leaders. For example, when he was at the International Social Justice Commission they started a capacity-building programme for officers. One of those who came to it, Jemima, grew up as an orphan in Kenya West, and during her four months in Manhattan on the programme, she blossomed: 'I've visited her since in Kenya and saw that she'd set up an orphan programme. That's what she really wanted to do. And I love that – it gives me deep joy.'

'All ministry comes out of relationships. I remember just being blown away by the doctrine of the Trinity, and that God is a relationship: Father, Son, and Spirit. So when we say we want to be like Jesus, we are wanting to be like God, who is relationship: we want to be in relationship. So when I think back to, to flourishing, and officers and capacity building and all of that, it is about relationships.'

'Now, unfortunately, we haven't talked enough about that in the Army. So as long as you're upright, dutiful and truthful, that's okay. But actually, it's not. What's more important is how are you relational? And how is the fruit of the Spirit being shown?'

Do you agree that wanting to be like Jesus means you have to be relational? Think about what things bring you the most joy: are they things involving other people? How could you help others thrive?

6. HOLY COVENANTS (37:15)

'The 2010 Handbook of Doctrine is one of the best things that The Salvation Army has published in years – it's fantastic. And there's a line in there, which says, "I will treat all my relationships as holy covenants." And that is staggering ambition – not just to have a good holy covenant with my wife, but also with that person who really winds me up, or the next-door neighbour or the person on the bus.'

What do you understand by the words 'holy covenant'? Which kind of people would you find most difficult to treat your relationship with as a holy covenant? Would it look like to treat all your relationships as holy covenants? What practical changes would you need to make in your life to live this out? Would it impact do you think it would make on you and those you interacted with if you did?



QUESTIONS for your real life journey

How do we mature in service?

7. IT JUST HAPPENS – REMOVING BLOCKAGES (41:47)

When Dean states, 'If you're serving God, if you're genuinely a servant, and you've been filled with the Spirit – surely, we will mature we become more Christlike', Matt presses him to suggest things that might be a blockage or hurdle preventing someone to mature.

'Look, our personalities do get in the way. We are human, and we've got our own idiosyncrasies, ego and blind spots, and that's why you need good friends and family around you who can who can help you see them.

'One of the challenges for officers is sometimes we can become cocooned – and people can actually not be honest enough with you. So I think we do need more honesty.

'How do we address conflict? Frankly, sometimes I think we've just copied the world too much in the way that we deal with disagreements. And it worries me because I think if we are treating every person as holy covenant, it's not mature to throw our hands up and walk away. We've got to find ways to move together in this. And that is really hard work.'

How do you respond to conflict? Do you avoid it, face it, invite it? Is your approach to conflict about getting your point across no matter what, keeping the peace no matter what, or doing all you can to listen and restore relationships?

8. RE-THINKING RELATIONALLY (44:26)

Dean shares about when he wrote the book, *To be like Jesus: Christian ethics for a 21st Century Salvation Army*. 'As I thought through a lot of those issues, and read lots of people around them, it all came back to this relationship stuff. I mean, how do we view abortion, if it's not within the context of relationship? You can't just take this cold, legalistic, contractual analysis and say, "Bang! That's it." No, if I'm in a holy covenant relationship with the people involved in this, how am I going to respond to that?

'I want to listen to those people who've had that direct experience of racism, not some white privileged guy who thinks he knows what's going on about it and pontificating. Wherever we are dealing with the real stuff of life, we have to see it in the context of relationship.

'If we're doing that, surely we will be maturing in service. And when we are not maturing, we need to be pulled up on it, and asked, "why have you got a blind spot on this particular issue?"

How do you form your views about different contemporary issues? Do you listen to the traditions of the church? Do you study what the Bible says? Do you listen to the stories of those who have direct experience? Do you use reason? Why or why not?



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Act: MISSION FLOURISHING

The mission of The Salvation Army is to 'preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.'

In its early days, The Salvation Army took any opportunity to fulfil their mission. They adopted military-style uniforms and brass bands, and changed the lyrics of popular songs, to get people's attention so they could tell people the good news about Jesus. But they also provided soup for the hungry, spoke out persistently against injustice and built working farms where ex-convicts and people struggling with addictions like alcoholism could build new lives.

The Covid-19 pandemic has given The Salvation Army an opportunity to re-evaluate the way it is doing mission and to consider what will enable local mission to flourish. 'Local mission' simply means any of the ministry to others that takes place in corps, centres, Fresh Expressions, Pioneer Expressions, Lifehouses, safe houses, prisons, charity shops, and communities across the UK, Ireland, Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man.

Dean mentions the 'Mission Flourishing Survey', which is one part of an information-gathering process by The Salvation Army's Structural Coordination and Design Project, which he chairs. He is keen to include as many people in the discussions, particularly when many All Terrain podcast listeners may have had no voice in the last big conversation about mission that happened in 2014.

The focus of the Mission Flourishing Survey in Autumn 2021 is to ask as many Salvation Army members, employees, officers, volunteers, and friends what they think is needed for local mission to flourish. While the Listening Phase of the conversation has just ended, the survey is still active and so it's a good chance to get your ideas and suggestions heard.

Why not do the survey, as individuals or as a group. It will take about eight minutes to complete.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G88DPLV>

You could also reach out to your corps officer, DYS or divisional team for further information about how you can be involved more fully in the near future.