



QUESTIONS

for your real life journey

Episode 11: General Brian Peddle

How do we face change?

1. WITH OPEN ARMS (9:12)

Brian says, 'I'm okay with change. I think it can be most enriching... Change for me is not an enemy: it's something to be embraced.'

In addition, he says that in embracing change he can help bring about the best end-result, to 'advance the things that really matter.'

What is your natural response to change? Do you enjoy or resist it? If you're someone who embraces change, have you been able to influence the end-result? If you're someone who resists change, what impact do you think this has made on your life?

2. A HELPFUL ADMISSION (11:31)

Brian says, 'I rarely make life-changing decisions for the Army,' and explains that he is surrounded by people who more often than not end up influencing the 'very clear desired outcome' he originally has in his mind.

Matt replies that it's helpful to hear the General – the leader of a huge organisation based on a military metaphor – say, 'I don't always get my way. And I often change my mind.'

How would you describe the kinds of leaders we see and hear about in the news? Who would you say are good examples of leadership? What are the benefits of having a leader who listens to others and changes their mind? What are the challenges of this open-minded approach?



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How do we move through suffering?

3. SUFFERING FOR OTHERS (20:32)

Brian admits he struggles with this question because his life has not been difficult.

So he feels discomfort, even shame, when he meets with people who have felt the extreme hardship of loss, who have had far more difficult experiences of Covid, or who have experienced the indignity of domestic violence or human trafficking.

'But,' he says, 'it does put me on my guard, and make me more attentive to the suffering of others... In some ways, my suffering is related to the plight of others, as opposed to my own personal suffering. I've cried over things that I would not have known about or experienced if I wasn't serving as a Salvation Army officer. And maybe my suffering is in my service.'

Would you describe your life as having been easy or difficult so far? Do you relate to Brian's predicament? Are you aware of others' suffering, and – if so – do you choose to respond to it? How might your suffering be in your service?

4. CORRECTING IGNORANCE (24:48)

Brian says that he loves going to coffee shops and striking up conversations. But instead of chatting about the weather or the football, he hopes to have good-natured, day-to-day conversations that help to change others' perceptions about people they have never met, but he has:

'No, you can't look at that country that way. That's not who these people are: they are people like you and I trying to raise families.... They [might act that way] because they live in the shadow of the Taliban or they live in a non-Christian environment. Stop looking at them that way: they're living, breathing, God-created human beings.'

'I have opinions now. And these have been formed by the Army giving me a panoramic worldview. And it's not complete yet.'

Has your first impression about someone ever changed after you got to know them? How much suffering in the world do you think is simply the result of people fearing or judging others who they know very little about? Who or what has given you more of a panoramic worldview that helps you to stay open-minded about others? Have you ever tried to correct someone's perception of someone else when they weren't there to defend themselves?



QUESTIONS for your real life journey

How do we receive joy?

5. DAILY REMINDERS (34:01)

Brian has three lines written in his prayer journal, which he reads every day to remind him where the real source of joy comes from.

The first, 'I being this day with the full knowledge Christ has forgiven my sins,' reminds him that the cross is a reality.

The second, 'He has gifted me the Holy Spirit,' reminds him that God's presence is a reality. 'No matter what, I don't walk alone. In the toughest of moments, I can be bold and not afraid.'

And the third, 'When all of this is done, it's all sorted anyway,' reminds him our hope in God's promise to reconcile all things is a reality.

What truths or realities do you need reminding of today? Could you write these out (or design a graphic) somewhere you'd see it every day? Do the realities of Christ's forgiveness, the Holy Spirit's empowerment, and God's promise of eternity bring you real joy? – why or why not?

6. DANCING IN THE PUNJAB (35:41)

Matt tells us Brian's face lit up when asked, 'Is there still joy in the Salvation Army?'

'Oh, dear Lord, you haven't danced in the Punjab. You haven't turned up where an earthquake killed thousands and seen 18,000 Salvationists show up for a service of thanksgiving! And it wasn't just them – there were all our Muslim friends in the community too, because we work together, right? We weren't one or the other. And I heard them sing their song of joy.'

'And I've been to a safe house where people are being rescued from a modern slavery and I listened to Mary's words – Mary doesn't want to take part in any other way, but she wants to sing. And she sings a song that tells a terrible story. But her tagline is "the best is yet to come". And I can see in that 18-year-old Burundian's face that there's joy, because there's hope, right?'

'Oh, my goodness is there joy in the Salvation Army? I would say unequivocally – Yes! And if somebody wanted to argue with me, I'd take them on.'

Have you experienced joy in the Salvation Army? Where in the world would you like to visit to experience the Army's work? How do you think it would impact you?



QUESTIONS for your real life journey

How do we mature in service?

7. BIT BY BIT (41:44)

Brian reflects: 'I sometimes say when I sit with a young officer, "Man, I wish I could just, you know, give you a memory stick. Plug it into you somewhere let you learn all the lessons that we have learned over 40 years."

'I feel sorry for my first corps. I was so young. So infantile in my leadership. I won't get to go back there. But I just think I could do such a better role of leadership, spiritual direction and pastoring now than I did then.'

Do you think technology will ever get to the place where it could let people share everything they'd learned with someone else, instantaneously? If it were possible, what would be the benefits and the downsides?

8. YOUTHFUL MATURITY (43:21)

Brian also says that the journey of developing in maturity is very slow and wonders 'if the word mature is even an adequate word anymore. It's depth of character. It is integrity at all costs.'

He also suggests that maturity is not about age. He's met some young people who are very mature, and some people his age who are very immature.

Considering the last question, when we talk about maturing in service, do we mean something deeper than just a transfer of skills? Is there a quick way to develop depth of character and integrity? If age doesn't make you mature, what does?



QUESTIONS for your real life journey

Act: Get real

Game: Predictive text announcements

We've all seen those social statuses that tell you to respond by pressing the middle predictive text button on your phone, right? To start off this section, Whatsapp

Enter the text below then keep selecting one of the three predictive text options above the keyboard on your phone, until you have a full sentence. If you have a group WhatsApp you could post your funniest replies in it.

- My biggest passion is...
- It really annoys me when others...
- I'd be a better person if I...

Think: 3 ideas about leadership

There are three interesting ideas about leadership that are apparent in some of the things Brian says during the podcast, that you might not have thought about before.

If you're a large group and are using video calls, you could use the breakout room functionality and each group could discuss a different idea.

Idea 1: Leaders should keep their passions

Leaders might be expected to be passionate about one thing only – the thing they're leading. But it's important they keep their passions, so they bring something of themselves to the role.

'Perhaps my favourite activity of all things leisure would be kayaking. If I were back in Canada, I would access my kayak on a regular basis and find some calm and some rough water. Both are enjoyable.'

- What are your passions?
- If you were the General, what one passion would you be sure to carve out time for?
- Why is it important for leaders to keep their passions?

Try one of the following actions this week:

- Spend 20 minutes every day prioritising your passion. Reflect on how you feel after a week.
- If you find it difficult to identify your passions, chat to a few people who know you well and ask them to tell you what they think you enjoy most (not just what you're good at).



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Idea 2: Leaders should aim to be relevant

'The only constancy about change is change itself. It's like an operating system ... Because nothing stays as it is. And we need to be people that keep current and keep in a world where we're relevant. People talk about the relevance of the Salvation Army. I'm quite prepared to be challenged by that reality day by day.'

- What things aren't you passionate about that many others find really important?
- If you were the General, what important (but perhaps boring) thing would you choose to become an expert in, in order to keep the Army relevant?
- Why is it important for leaders to stay relevant?

Try one of the following actions this week:

- Watch the whole of a 30-minute (non-fiction) TV programme (or YouTube channel) on a subject that you've never been interested in. What did you learn?
- Phone someone (a friend or family member) and ask them to tell you about something that's important to them but that you've never really understood why. For example, ask a grandparent about their experiences of growing up as a child, find out why your sibling loves a certain kind of music, or ask a friend with a different religious or cultural family background to you to tell you their favourite things about that heritage.

Idea 3: Leaders should embrace diversity

'I listen to an incredible amount of worship music, but what I like doing is going to the international nation-by-nation flavours. You know what I did this past week? I'm missing Africa so much, I spent a whole Saturday listening to African singing. I couldn't understand a word - but I was where I needed to be.'

- What things aren't you passionate about that many others find really important?
- If you were the General, what important (but perhaps boring) thing would you choose to become an expert in, in order to keep the Army relevant?
- Why is it important for leaders to stay relevant?

Try one of the following actions this week:

- Listen to a genre of music you've never listened to before for at least 30 minutes. Skip over tracks if you really need to, but try and listen to the lyrics and feel the heart of the music.
- If you're a reader, find and start reading a short novel that's been translated from another language and set in another country.