

Sunday 19th November 2023

Fruitfulness on the Frontline

7 Messenger of the gospel

'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"' (Isaiah 52:7)

Welcome

- What is your favourite TV programme about 'cops', past or present?
- If you were a TV cop what car would you drive?

In the last session we looked at being a 'mouthpiece for truth and justice'.

1. Did the last session change the way you saw things on your frontline?
2. Did anyone in the group have an opportunity to speak up in a particular situation?

Today we move on to 'messenger of the gospel'.

3. How does the word 'evangelism' make you feel?

In the book 'Fruitfulness on the Frontline', while talking about being a messenger of the gospel it states this about evangelism:

- *God wants people saved.*
- *It is God who saves people, not us.*
- *We have some role in this, however small.*

4. How does this make you feel about evangelism?

Word

Read 1 Peter 3:13-16

This letter was written to a group of churches spread throughout the region that we now call Turkey. Although the churches may not have been suffering ‘official’ persecution from the state, they were facing all kinds of opposition as they sought to live for Christ on their frontlines. Peter knew that these men, women and children were really up against it and so he wrote to them. But the content of his letter is not just about ‘hanging on in there’; rather, he encourages them to courageously continue to do good, knowing that it would provoke people to ask questions. Not everyone would react well to their responses, but, importantly, some would.

5. Imagine you were a Christian back then, facing persecution and opposition. How might you be tempted to respond? Is it similar on our frontlines in 2023?
6. The broader sweep of 1 Peter makes it clear that verbal witness is intrinsically linked to the witness of our actions. People will be provoked to ask questions when they see our good deeds (see especially 1 Peter 2:11-12). What might you learn from this? Does this emphasise that all the 6Ms are linked?
7. In verse 15, what do you think Peter means by ‘always be prepared...’? How might you make sure that you too are ‘prepared’?

Notice that Peter doesn’t say – be prepared to answer any and every difficult question someone might lob at you – he says – “be prepared to ...give a reason for the hope that you have”. In other words, “Why do you follow Jesus”. Is this something you can do?

8. Look at verses 15 and 16. In what manner are we encouraged to share the gospel? Why do you think the way we share the gospel matters so much?

COP'S

Profile & Pray:

9. Do you think you are more likely to get opportunities to be a messenger of the gospel with a stranger or with someone you know?
10. Is it easier to share the gospel with someone you know or with a stranger? Why?
11. If you identify someone you know and start praying for them do you think this also helps you to prepare for opportunities? How?

Care & attention:

12. What can you do to help people feel more open and comfortable with you so that meaningful conversations are more likely to develop?
13. In what practical ways can you give care and attention to people on your frontline?

Stop & Share:

14. In the book 'Fruitfulness on the Frontline' it explores these different ways of sharing the truth:
 - Offering Biblical perspectives on everyday conversations
 - Telling your stories – talking about your own experience of God
 - Revealing your sources – giving God the credit when things go well
 - Explaining the good news – being ready to explain when required!On your frontline, which of these do you find easy, which do you find hard and why? Share examples if you have any.

Offering opportunities to faith:

15. What specific next steps can you offer to people? (for example having a small leaflet ready to give someone or inviting someone to a church event). Have a conversation in your group about different ideas for 'next steps' – are there ways you can help and support each other?

Praying forwards

We will sometimes get an opportunity to be a messenger of the gospel with a stranger, but God often gives us opportunities to share with those we spend time with regularly on our frontlines. Praying for our frontline friends to come to know Jesus is something we need to commit to doing over the long term. It will be easier to persevere in prayer if we get into the pattern of doing it as a group as well as in our own personal prayers.

- On your frontline, who in particular might God be prompting you to reach out to?
- Share with the group the name of this person and maybe a little about them. The leaders will write these names down.
- Take some time to pray for one another and those whose names are written down.
- As a group, make a commitment to take some time to revisit it in some of your future sessions together. Be prepared to ask each other how these friends are doing, whether you have seen God at work in their lives and what opportunities you have had to talk with them intentionally.

Takeaway Action

Think about the person or person you identified and try to answer these questions about them:

- How would you describe this person generally?
- What do you think is important to this person?
- What do you think they believe about God?
- What specific things could you do to bless this person practically?
- What specific things could you do to aid their spiritual development?
- What might you do in the next two weeks? How about in the coming months?