



THE
ENCOURAGER

MINISTERING TO ALL FIRST RESPONDERS

Let us never forget

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“Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

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In the 70's, I worked on a very busy hook and ladder company. One afternoon we were returning to quarters dirty and tired from a first alarm house fire. We'd just pulled up to a stop light when we were dispatched to a fire in a vacant building. From our location, we could see smoke coming from the building just a block away. My captained radioed for a first alarm.

In short order we were in front of the boarded up two-story flat. The fire appeared to be on the first floor. We had no water so the initial plan was to keep the building tight until an engine company arrived on the scene. A screaming lady quickly changed that plan. She seemed to come out of no where yelling she could hear someone trapped in the building. Sure enough we could hear someone, too.

My captain ordered a ladder to the second floor window. One of our crew climbed to the window and pried off the plywood. By this time, my partner and I had strapped on our air tanks. We climbed the ladder and made our way over the window sill. The room was hot and smoky. We could see fire reaching from the base board to the ceiling. Fortunately this room was totally empty of furniture and no one was trapped there. We made our way to a hall to check the rest of the second floor.

My partner was in the lead as we worked our way down the hot, black hallway. We could hear the trapped man yelling. My partner turned to check a room on the right. I moved further down the hall and the yelling got louder. “Oh, God help me,” the man yelled.

I felt along the wall crawling low through the hot smoke. I came to a door opening and heard the man inside the room. I was carrying a large hand light. Kneeling at the door I yelled through my mask. “Come to my light. Come to my light.”

From out of the darkness, the man leaped on me holding on for his very life. My helmet was knocked off my head and I lost the ax I was carrying. I held tightly to my light and pulled the man to the floor hoping a small amount of air would keep him alive. I drug the man down the hall yelling for my partner to help me. By this time our low air alarms were ringing loudly. We were able to find a rear stairs and proceeded down with the man. Other arriving crews had opened the rear door and were there as my partner and I brought the man out. The man had suffered some burns and smoke inhalation but we



had saved his life.

Hello. My name is Frank C. Schaper. I've been in the fire service since 1969 fortunate to have saved several people from burning buildings during my career with the St. Louis Fire Department. However, little did I know at the time, but I was the one who needed to be saved.

I grew up in a home where going to church on Sunday was pretty much mandatory. I attended schools where we studied our catechism and in high school religion was taught. I knew about God and Jesus, was baptized, confirmed, went to confession, and made my first communion. Life at home was not perfect, but it was good. I had a mom and dad who loved and cared for us and were always there to meet our needs. I was number seven out of eight

children. My older brothers and my sister were wonderful to my younger brother and me. I love them all. Looking back I pretty much lead a “Leave It Too Beaver” life style and I would do it all over again.

But something was missing from my life and I knew it. I thought it was the fire department. I wanted to be a fireman from the time I was four years old. It was all I ever dreamed of doing. But several things stood in my way; school, my age, and Viet Nam.

I've heard if you are bound and determined, eventually you get what you set your eyes on. And I was bound and determined to be a St. Louis fire fighter. My dream came true in May of 1969 when after completing my training I was assigned to Hook and Ladder #8.

That started a wonderful career but I soon found something was still missing in my life. In 1970 I got married. Maybe that was the answer, to be married like my older brothers. That was a big mistake. I got married for all the wrong reasons but I did it anyway. That all caught up to me when my wife left me in 1975. The next year we were divorced.

That was the worst time of my life. To handle the stress and manage my life I started drinking heavily, but only on my day off. I was happiest at the fire house. My brother firefighters shooed away my loneliness and two good meals a day hit the spot. I'd work out with weights and in spite of the drinking, I stayed in fairly good shape. When off duty and at home, the loneliness crept in and I was off to the tavern.

Then in December 1976 I met my Toodie. It was love at

Fellowship of Christian Firefighters
INTERNATIONAL

first sight. My life was about to change and for the better. Once we started dating I could see Toodie was different from other women I knew. A short time after we started dating, she asked me if I'd go to church with her. Church was something that was missing in my first marriage. I knew I needed to go to church. I thought church was the missing part in my life.

As we continued to date, it was apparent that we were getting serious about each other. Toodie prayed for our relationship. Since I was a firefighter, she didn't want to spend the rest of her life worrying about me. Toodie prayed again. This time as she prayed for me she turned me over to the Lord.

Toodie and I were married in October of 1978. Life was good but I was still drinking trying to lead my life my way. And this was not working, so my wife continued to quietly pray. She prayed for my safety at work and in other areas of my life. You see, Toodie was different. She knew Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior. While I was leading my own life, Toodie had Christ leading her life. I had Jesus in my head, but Toodie had Him in her heart. And that is a BIG difference. Slowly but surely her good example and praying started to pay off. Finally, in October 1980, I could take it no more. Everything I was doing and participating in was building up inside of me. I was about to explode. Like that man I rescued from that dark, smoky, burning building, I was in the darkness of life crying for help.

After an especially difficult tour at the fire house, I came home angry and frustrated. Toodie was in the kitchen, as we talked, suddenly I burst into tears. Everything just came flooding out and I cried. I went into our living room to pull myself together. A bit later I returned to the kitchen. I told Toodie, "I can't take this anymore." Toodie looked in my eyes and gently said, "Frank, you need Jesus Christ in your life." At that moment Jesus was at the door of my heart saying, "Come to my light! Come to my light!"

Toodie took my hand and we knelt and prayed together in our kitchen. I told Jesus I knew I was a sinner and truly sorry for my sins. While we prayed I asked Jesus Christ to come into my heart as Lord and Savior. Through the darkness of my life, I literally leaped towards Christ and held on to Him for dear life. Immediately I could feel "the peace that passes understanding".

Since then, my life hasn't been the same. I am not perfect. I still sin. But now I have Christ in my heart and I know my salvation is secured through Him. I know what my life was like before I asked Christ into my heart and I am not going back there. Perhaps you are there right now. In Revelation 3:20 Christ says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock...."

Is Christ at the door of your heart? Can you hear Him knocking? Maybe it is time for you to answer the door. Answer the door and come to His light.



MISSIONARY MUSINGS

By GAY REYNOLDS

*Greetings in the name
of our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ.*



Spring is just around the corner. OK, so maybe it is a big corner in our area! It is snowing here in Colorado as I write this article. And windy—did I say windy!?!?? But it IS spring time in the Rockies! And with spring comes renewal. A fresh look at the world we live in. As Christians, we can always have a fresh look, a look filled with hope and trust in the Lord we serve. One of the key and God-given privileges we have is communication with God. Our International Prayer Chain (fcfintprayer@yahoo.com) is expanded greatly throughout the world by chapter prayer chains. When your prayers are sent to Mike Gurr in Florida, they go to, not one but, several other prayer chains. It is important for chapters, members, Christians to pray continually for our first responders, our country, our families . . . It saddens me that The National Day of Prayer has been cancelled at the White House. In 1952 President Truman established one day as a "National Day of Prayer", in 1988 President Reagan set aside the first Thursday in May as the National Day of Prayer. And it has been that since. Yes, it was for 21 years, until President Obama cancelled it at the White House. He suggested that he did not "want to offend anyone." It is interesting to note, however, that on September 25, 2009 there was a national day of prayer for the muslim religion on Capitol Hill. And, you will remember that the candidate Obama stated that the USA "was no longer a Christian nation" on June, 2007. I guess we (Christians) are not "anyone". So it is acceptable to offend us.

The FCF International and chapter prayer chains are one of many vital and important ministries of FCFI. My Brothers and Sisters, I urge you to stand firm, share the truth, reach out to those you serve with the truth, and pray.

God has given FCF many continued and new opportunities to serve Him:

- Chapter meetings, chapter and group Bible studies and prayer meetings, community outreach, local conferences, international outreach, hospital visitations, helps ministries, and the list goes on. How blessed FCFI and the members are to hear of your continued spreading and reflecting of God's love and truth. Please continue to send your news to us so we can share with others at FCFIHQ@AOL.COM.

- Many countries have asked for assistance with training, with gear, with manuals, with . . .
- The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has requested our assistance in several of their functions. We will learn more as time allows.
- We've been in touch with a program called *Families of the Fallen* developed by Susan Ortega to inform departments of procedures needed to assist families involved with LODD.
- The Mexico outreach has taken off; and many contacts have been made that will continue to grow our presence there.
- Many of our members are involved with their departments in various ways—Bible studies, hospital visitations, helping injured firefighters' families, counseling, and "a whole lot more!"
- A new devotional book, *Battlefield Blessings: Stories of Faith and Courage from First Responders* is now completed and at AMG Publishers. What a blessing as you members shared your stories and encouragement. We hope to have it in completed form by the fall. What a blessing to work with AMG Publishers.
- As you read the chapter reports that follow, hopefully you will be as blessed, as we are, by the chapters that are participating or organizing National Day of Prayer meetings.

Thank you for being the Light unto your crew, shift, departments and communities.

As we travel and attend firefighter conferences, how exciting it is to hear what you are doing in your areas! You are truly doing the Lord's work. It seems to us, that our booth is the busiest at the conventions! Many need prayer, many need to talk, many need to share their burdens, their praises and their lives. We are blessed to be part of the ministry to the fire service! It is what it is because of who you are. We never take for granted what an awesome God we serve. What an awesome opportunity He gives us to share His Love with others. Without you, it would be most difficult. With you, it is doable. Please keep on keeping on!

We still have several conferences coming up, both on the national level and the state level. It is most beneficial if members from the area are in the booth. It brings FCF to the local level. Contacts are made where follow up becomes more meaningful to the requesting party. You speak their language, and are closer—a bond forms between you. Let us know if and how you want to become involved.

I went on a call a while back, one that required serious extrication: adults with severe injuries, requiring a chopper to get them to the medical facility quickly. And, yes, small children. Always a serious situation. The kids were not crying, were not moving at all. Not a good indicator. But, as we were proceeding, one of the crew remembered we had some child size quilts in the med unit. After giving them to the kids, you could see them relax, to become responsive to us. Isn't it great to have a security blanket that we can get comfort from? That we can feel safe and secure with? We have that security in Jesus Christ. He is there for us 24/7. We can take comfort in knowing that He is always there, always knowing our needs. Let's share that secure feeling with others. Only you can share it with your crew. Reach out! Below is devotional excerpt from *Battlefield Blessings: Stories of Faith and Courage from First Responders* based on this call.

COMFORTER

He is only a whisper away

It was a dark, snowy evening. You know, the kind where you like to stay home, watch the fire in the fireplace, appreciate its warmth, and have a good book in hand. The kind of evening you want to stay in, not go out. However, when the pager goes off—you go out! Yes, someone needs your help. As you leave your home to respond, your mind starts reviewing the potential scene. How many vehicles, how many patients, what will we find on arrival? Are they young, are they old, will they be viable or will it be a "code black" response?

This night, it was a single vehicle MVA: two adults and two infants in a car that rolled over and landed on its wheels; a much easier extrication than one on its top. The adults had multiple broken bones and lacerations, the infants' injuries were much more serious. When an infant is not crying, you know it's serious! And these two were quiet!

Both were breathing, but not crying, moving, or responsive to our voices. As we began the task of getting them out, concern for their survival was evident on all of the responders' faces. Carefully, oh so carefully still strapped in their car seats, we carried them out of the vehicle. As we placed them in our med unit, they began to whimper. A good sign! How can we comfort them? What can we do to help them relax?

The firehouse quilts we carry in our unit flashed across our minds. Reaching into our cabinet we pulled out one for each infant. Something must have "clicked" with them, because they hung on tightly! They were comforted, they allowed us to assess their injuries and they responded to our voices! As we transferred them to the hospital med unit, they were sure to hold on to their quilts. Hugging tightly, they allowed the transfer and new personnel to treat them and transport them to the hospital.

The adults were so thankful that their children were cared for, that their own injuries became a second thought. And as they contacted the department weeks later, they thanked us for the quilts and shared that the kids treasure and keep with them all the time!

While a quilt can comfort a child, we as first responders can call on our own personal Comforter. He is only a whisper away.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16 KJV).