



MCF Ministry Getting Started

One of the great privileges of being a Christian is being used by God to tell others about Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, it is a common experience to be unsure of exactly how to go about doing that! The military is no exception and with our frequent postings to new locations I'm sure many people have wondered: "What should I do here?".

We need to be imaginative in the way we approach ministry in the ADF. Lunchtime Bible studies have their place but there are other options that might equally suit a particular Defence Force environment.

WHY DO ANYTHING?

Believe it or not: God wants you to be involved in his work! After telling us about the salvation that we have through Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul writes:

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Eph 2:10

God has given us the privilege of participating in his work by choosing us to be the primary means of spreading his gospel. Indeed it is not merely working for God; he has chosen us to work with him!

For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. 1 Cor 3:9

As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. 2 Cor 6:1

So, God has chosen us to work with him and has even prepared in advance the work for us to do. But that isn't all: He has also provided us with the means to prepare ourselves, and that means is through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

GETTING "EQUIPPED"

In the Bible, God has revealed his plans, purposes and concerns for us, as well as his dealings with people throughout history. Through the Bible he has also provided the guidance we need to train for his work.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. Rom 15:4



GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The Bible confirms that God alone is in control of our world (Rom 8:28). God is in control and it is the Holy Spirit who convicts a person of the truth of the gospel. Yet this does not mean that we can sit back and relax. In fact the opposite is true! As his new people he has chosen us to be his fellow workers in spreading his gospel. We are "ambassadors for Christ" (see 2 Cor 5:11 – 6:2).

MOTIVATION

The Bible teaches us to be aware of our motivation for doing God's work. Our desire must be to glorify Christ, to focus attention on him. (1 Cor 1:10 – 3:15) Paul warns of

those who "... preach Christ out of envy and rivalry" (Phil 1:15) but also encourages us that:

But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Phil 1:18

We must ensure that, as God's fellow workers, we "...preach Christ ... out of good will".

FREEDOM

God has given us an enormous choice in the way we choose to preach his gospel. Indeed, the Bible encourages us to make our plans, always remembering that God is Lord of everything.

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Prov 16:9

James also encourages planning, though continuing to recognise God's sovereignty over it:

Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." (Jas 4:15)

Indeed, he has some harsh words for those who disregard God's plans (Jas 4:13-17).

We should make the most of the freedom we have in Christ to try different ways of both presenting the gospel and equipping and encouraging each other in our Christian walk. It would be a

tragedy if God's fellow workers missed an opportunity to tell others about Jesus simply because we failed to consider an alternative.



SO WHAT NOW?

1. PRAYER

Before you start to plan anything – Pray! There are

many passages in the Bible that tell us God wants to help us (see Luke 11:13, Rom 8:26, Jas 1:5). God wants us to ask him. God also deserves our worship and service. We can give thanks to him for his faithfulness and for the privilege and joy of being co-workers with him. You can also ask for wisdom as you consider your area of outreach and as you consider ideas and make decisions. Commit your planning to him – do it all to honour him that others may hear of Jesus and others might be strengthened in their love and knowledge of God.

2. FELLOW WORKERS

If there are any other Christians in the area who are similarly committed then get them on the team. It is always easier to press on with the task when you are able to "*spur one another on*" (Heb10:24); and in addition, different people bring different gifts to a task. It may also be useful to consult with other mature brothers and sisters about

ideas, either in the military or in your local church.

3. THINGS TO CONSIDER...

Before choosing a particular format for your ministry or specific activity, analyse the area to which you are posted. You should consider the needs and geography of the area and the resources at your disposal. Here are a few things to consider:

If another similar group already exists then consider joining that group and being active there. If you think a second group would still be helpful in your area then make sure that you talk to the other groups leaders and consider occasional combined events.

Talk to your local padre about what they think could be helpful in the area. They can be a good source of support and encouragement as you seek to reach out.

- If the barracks/base is in a metropolitan area then most of the Christians will attend a local church. In such a case a weekly MCF meeting might be inappropriate and you might consider organising less frequent events; say a fortnightly or monthly meeting. The actual format of the meeting could range from a Bible study to a topical discussion to a prayer meeting. Gathering over an occasional BBQ can be a way to get together which allows staying in touch with fellow

Christian workmates and even providing a relaxed environment to invite friends you wish to eventually invite to church.

- If the barracks/base is isolated then a more frequent meeting could be useful. Sharing around God's word is a great way to strengthen friendships with brothers and sisters. Consider what works best for your situation whether that is a lunchtime meeting or meeting on an evening or weekend. Also consider what would be the most suitable location whether a conference room, someone's quarters or a base chapel if there is one.
- Consider the size of your location. If it takes someone ten minutes to get to a meeting and ten minutes back then another option may need to be considered.
- If you are at sea, or in the field take any opportunity, anywhere, any-time! The erratic hours in these environments will probably mean that you will only ever make it to half the events you plan with other Christians, so plan as many as you can!
- Is there a local church that is prepared to include your barracks/base as a part of its ministry, making an effort to include service personnel in its church family? If so, it may be worth talking to the minister about the facilities that the church may be prepared to provide.

These are just a few observations and ideas to get you started. There is no single correct solution for all areas. You may try something and decide it was not the best solution. Each area will be different and will require careful thought with prayer.

CONCLUSION

The aim of MCF ministry is to tell our workmates about Jesus Christ and to encourage each other in our faith. God has enlisted us as his fellow workers in this task and has given us great freedom in how we go about it. Take this opportunity to test these possibilities in your own area.

This pamphlet is based off the work of a MCF council from the 90s which was aiming to encourage MCF ministry.

All Bible quotations taken from the New International Version

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