



## MCF-A Talk – Sowing the Seed

[www.mcf-a.org.au](http://www.mcf-a.org.au)

*A farmer went to sow his seed, As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Matthew 13:3-4*

Thus begins one of my favourite parables, Jesus told around 30 different parables in His teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven. Here we have a very ordinary and normal event being used to explain some serious life lessons.

When I was deployed to Afghanistan, I had the privilege of being able to go out on patrol with some of the soldiers. We walked across fields and



through streams. One of the things I noticed was how the paddocks for growing the crops were formed. These were generally in a square shape with a raised pathway around it. This meant that the fields could be irrigated and you would not have to walk through them damaging the crops.

The pathways were hard and firm and anything that fell onto them was fair game to the birds. The farmers would walk across the paddocks throwing out the seed by hand and some would fall on the path and be taken away by birds. Jesus in this is speaking here about people whose hearts are so hard that they cannot accept the truth of God's Word or receive His love.



We cannot change them however what we need to do is to pray for them that the gentle rain of the Holy Spirit will soften their hearts and allow them to receive God's Word.

The Military Christian Fellowship of Australia exists to promote Christian faith in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). It does this primarily through supporting Christians who work in and around the ADF, helping the vital ministry of ADF Chaplains and reaching out to those that want to know more about Christ and the meaning of Christianity. Our passion is to reach the Australian Defence Force for Christ.

We are unashamedly Christian and strongly hold to Christ's statement in John 14:8 where he states: *"I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* We operate these days in a secular and multi-faith environment however we stand firm to this statement and our purpose. Seeing this as an opportunity to sow Christ's seeds into the hearts of those who are lost and on the wrong pathway bringing them to the way of eternal life.

## History

The MCF-A had its origins in the Officers Christian Union which was begun by Captain Trotter of the British Army in India in 1851. Through the efforts of Chaplain General Alan Begbie, Chaplain Doug Abbott and LTCOL Des Duffy the OCU was formed in Australia at ANZAC House in Sydney on 27 February 1959. Alan Begbie was the Chairman until 1974. (picture)



The OCU had three main objects in its extension of the cause of Christ through the fighting forces of Australia

- a. To stimulate definite prayer
- b. To encourage Bible Study and research; and
- c. To emphasis to officers and their responsibility in the Services and their obligation to advance the cause of Christ at home and abroad.

IN 1973 the OCU changed its name to *Officers Christian Fellowship*, in the same year an all ranks fellowship was formed titled the *Australian Services Christian Fellowship*. In 1984 these two organisations merged

to form the Military Christian Fellowship. General Peter Gration was invited to be the first patron, this tradition of a senior officer being the patron has continued to this day. Last year I was delighted when MAJGEN Sue Graham accepted an invitation to become our first female patron.



*She stated - MCF has been a constant presence and encouragement to me throughout my military career. I joined the ADF in 1990 firstly, through Army Reserves before transferring to the full time Army in 1997. Particularly after joining the full time force, and moving away from the known security of my family home and circle of Christian friends, the fellowship and encouragement I received through lunchtime bible study groups and MCF monthly mail outs while serving overseas have been hugely important to me. The encouragement or promptings from MCF*

*fellowship and timely reminders of God's truth have always been the right nudge at the right time.*

Since 1985 the MCF has employed a National Staff Worker, the staff worker works tirelessly to support the committee and the membership. The current staff worker is Julie Jaensch and it is a privilege to work with her. All committee members are volunteers as are all the members. Julie is paid through generous donations by the members and people who wish to see the Gospel message promoted throughout the ADF. Funds raised are also used to support local MCF groups, chaplains and produce promotional materials. The Bible Society of Australia is also very generous in printing much of our material for free.

I have been involved in the MCF-A since the mid 1980s and since the late 90s became more involved, two years ago I was asked to take on the leadership of the MCF-A being the first chaplain to fulfil this role in the MCF-A. We have re-envisioned the way forward for MCF-A with the Towards 2025 vision. [MCF-towards-2025-Final-updated-March-2022.pdf \(mcf-a.org.au\)](#)



**Coming back to the Sower** – There are many soldiers, sailors and aviators who have been impacted by the seeds sown by those faithful members of the MCF-A. Darren Thomas now the Vice Chair, is a soldier who was impacted by the ministry of both chaplains and the MCF. The seed fell on fertile ground and has grown, sprouted been harvested and sown more seeds.

As we look towards Easter and God's love and Jesus' sacrifice, I hear Jesus words to the disciples after his encounter with the woman of Samaria. The fields are ripe for harvest, are we willing to get out into the fields and harvest souls for Christ so that they too can have eternal life.

Jesus meets people where they are however requires them to move to where He is. An encounter with Jesus does not leave people unchanged. When you encounter Jesus you are left with a choice to follow His Way or continue your own way, only one leads to Eternal Life, the fruit of your choice is shown in how you behave to others. (Galatians 5)