

# First Responders 5 – Last Responder

Greetings everyone! I am Chris Fluitt and this is Redemption Church of Plano Tx. Thank you for joining us today. Whether you are in the room or online we are glad to share the word of God with you.

## First Responder Title

We are in the final week of our series First Responders. It has been a powerful look into the calling of God... your calling in Jesus Christ is to be a first responder. If you missed any of the series you can find it at [RedemptionPlano.com](http://RedemptionPlano.com) or Youtube.

Throughout this series we have strongly challenged you to be a First Responder. We have challenged you to respond to the emergencies around you. We have challenged you to share your testimony, to pray to give, to make a difference... We have been trying to motivate people who may have never shared their faith before to start doing so...

Tonight in this last message I want to talk to people who have been witnessing, inviting, praying, and actively trying to serve the Kingdom of God... I want to encourage you tonight. You need to be encouraged... First Responders need to be encouraged.

## First Responder saves picture

We have all seen pictures like this: A firefighter climbing down a ladder holding a child. In the background you can see the smoke and flame from a fire. The child is holding on to the first responder with all their strength.

We love these pictures. They are powerful reminders of the frailty of life and how we strength and determination we can save those who could not otherwise save themselves.

But... What happens next? This picture is frozen in time, but happens after the firefighter climbs down the ladder?

The firefighter's moment with the child comes to an end. The Firefighter will hand this child to someone else and the firefighter will run back to a burning building to save someone else. Someone else, like a paramedic, will begin to tend to the injuries of the child.

There is no balloon drop and confetti to mark the moment. No one gives a standing ovation and says "you did it first responder." There is no banner or key to the city ceremony.

The moment passes. The child goes one way the firefighter goes the other direction. Often the first responder never realizes the full story of the person

they saved. They saved the person only to hand them off to someone else who will continue to try to save them.

## **Responders join a work that they will never finish**

I imagine this has to be frustrating. The firefighter cares about the person in need.... They enter into the struggle... they impact the struggle when it matters so greatly... but their part in the story comes to an end.

It's not that the firefighter lacks care to go any further... The firefighter is probably trained & willing to do the work of a paramedic. The firefighter is willing to clean & tend the wounds and to drive the child to the hospital. The firefighter is willing to place the child on a stretcher and roll them into the E.R. The firefighter is willing to hold their hand and ask medical questions and check their heart rate...

The firefighter is willing to help the child they rescued from a burning building, but they are called to hand that child off to someone else. The firefighter is called back into a burning building... the paramedic is called to take the child into their arms and continue the saving process.

Responders join a work they will never finish. This is true when it comes to working in God's kingdom.

We are often called to pull people from the fire and then hand them off to someone else to continue the work. The work often continues outside of our influence and outside of our field of vision.

## **What difference does it make?**

I want to talk to the one who has been praying, but is not sure that their prayers have done anything...

I want to talk to the one who has constantly shared their faith, but still has not felt like they have had any success...

I want to talk to the teacher who has patiently shown care to students, but wonders secret if it will truly matter...

I want to talk to the young person who has invited their family to church... has invited their friends to church... who has not been embarrassed and hidden their faith in Jesus, yet they are still sitting with empty chairs around them during Sunday service...

I want to talk to the worship team who has consecrated their life to ministry, and has given great effort to lead a congregation into the presence of the Lord, only to look out at a congregation that seems stagnant & lukewarm...

I want to talk to the spouse who has prayed and fasted, yet their husband or wife has still not professed a faith in Jesus...

I want to talk to preacher who has sought God on what to say and delivered it conviction, only to see the result seem to fall short of the anointed Word of God purpose...

I want to talk to the parents who are trying to lead Godly lives and see those results show up in their children, only to wonder if they have missed something since that transformation is not visible...

I want to talk to the person who has given faithfully, but is discouraged by their personal financial difficulty and by the financial difficulty in their church...

I want to talk to the person who feels the call of God on their life, but if we are to judge the call of God by results then we may not really be called...

I want to talk to you to today... Small group leader... Alzheimer care ministry... you who work your day job... you who are reaching for your neighborhood...

If you have ever wondered “what difference does it make?”, then I want to talk to you today.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians addressed an argument. There was an argument over the ministry of Paul & Apollos. Who was the more successful minister and who did you call your minister... They argued that one of these ministers of the Gospel was making less of a difference than the other. Here is how Paul addressed the argument.

1 Corinthians 3:5 (NIV2011) What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV2011) I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

1 Corinthians 3:7 (NIV2011) So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

1 Corinthians 3:8 (NIV2011) The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.

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## **Some plant & some water**

We all want to have success. We want to pray and see the results of the prayer. We want to give a bible study and have the results of the bible study. We want to share our testimony and see someone become a believer. ..but it does not always work this way.

Responders join a work they never finish. And we too sometimes work and never see the result of the work.

Sometimes we are the firefighter who pulls someone from the fire. Sometimes we are the paramedic who gets the person breathing again. This is what Paul is saying here...

Some plant & some water. Some take the seed (the word of God/the truth about Jesus) and they plant it... A seed can remain in the soil for years before you ever see life spring forth. There are seeds that remain viable for 5 years before they germinate and bring forth a plant.

It is possible to plant the seed and feel like you have not accomplished anything.

Watering can also be frustrating. There are times where you can water and see zero result. I was talking to our Care Pastor Marshal Blessing yesterday and he talked about the seasons where his plants seem to die off and there is nothing visibly alive. He will almost feel foolish as he takes a seemingly dead plant in doors when it is cold and back outdoors when it warms up and waters what looks like bare ground.

It is possible to water and feel like you have not accomplished anything.

I know that I am preaching to people who feel like that they have been staring at bare soil. You have planted... but nothing... you have watered but nothing... You have put effort into serving in God's Kingdom, you have helped people, you have prayed...

## **What if you don't see the results?**

If you don't see the results, does that mean there are no results?

Do you have to see the results for them to exist?

Do other people have to acknowledge your results for them to exist?

Do you have to receive some sort of award and public recognition in order for the results to exist?

The firefighter holds a life in his hands, but at the end of the day may have no results to point to...

The policeman may come to the scene to protect and serve, but at the end of the day may have no results that others can see...

The paramedic can do everything possible to save the life, but at the end of the day have no idea what happened to the life they rushed to the Hospital.

Will you keep serving even when you can't tell it is making a difference?

Will you keep rushing to help people even though you haven't had any good reports?

Will you keep praying even though you haven't seen a miracle recently?

Will you keep inviting your friends even after you have heard some of them say no?

Will you keep planting? Will you keep watering?

You don't have to see the results for there to be results.

You planted that seed but you have no clue of the life that is starting to take place within it. You watered what looked like barren soil, but under that soil roots are forming and dead things are coming to life.

Galatians 6:9 (NIV2011) Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

You that are hungry for results, the results are coming! They are happening right now! Just do not give up!

Galatians 6:10 (NIV2011) Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Keep doing good. In EVERY OPPORTUNITY let us do good! Do not quit... but you will have to learn how to release.

**Release**

You don't give up, but there will be times where you have to release people to God. There are times where you have done all that you can do to help someone and you have to release them... you have given all the energy you can... release them to God and go find someone who is ready.

Earlier this year I had a spiritual moment that I desperately needed. There was a family that we had helped from being homeless on the streets. We had many meetings with them and helped them many times. The last time I met with them we prayed for specific things in order to know God's will for their life... God answered every one their prayers... and this revealed God's will for them, which included being connected to this Church and working in God's kingdom.

It was wounding me as Sunday after Sunday would pass without them being in this altar, in this worship atmosphere, in this community of believers. I pulled out my phone and I carefully texted them reminding them that we loved them and that they still needed to do the will of God and that we are here when they are ready to Give their life to God's plan... As I often do I handed my phone to Sarah to make sure I wasn't writing a thoughtless or error filled message... Sarah handed me the phone and said, "Your text is perfect, but after you push send, you have to release these people to Jesus."

Ever since I released those people I have been at peace. I still love them. I have released them to the Lord and hope to one day pray for them in this altar.

Just like the firefighter releasing the child to the paramedic... Sometimes you plant but God asks you to release the person to another for them to water. Sometimes you must release people after watering them. This is biblical...

Sometimes you must release people to a season of bad decisions and to face destruction... so that they will learn they need Jesus and then be saved.

1 Corinthians 5:5 (NIV2011) hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh,, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

This is one of the hard things about ministry. Lord give us the strength in ministry to never quit, but the wisdom to know when you want us to release.

We that have been working hard in the Kingdom may have someone that we need to release. I would like you to pray about that today.

I knew a great pastor named J.T. Pugh who would talk about the river of God. There is a river of God and you are in the middle of that river. All of the good things of God are flowing down this river toward you. It is good to be in the river of God, BUT what the river gives it also takes.

There are times the river will take relationships and other blessings from you and take them down the river. If you aren't careful you will try to fight the river... you will try to hang on to everything you have and refuse the wisdom of the river to bring and take. There are times that we lose grip of some of these relationships and we turn around and watch them in sadness be carried down the river. It is a sad moment... but don't stay there.

J.T. Pugh would say "Release it to the river and turn around! God is bringing something new to you and you need to get ready for it. Look upriver."

You need to learn to release. You need to learn to shake the dust of your sandals and move on. You need to look upstream to the new things flowing into your life.

## **Some plant & some water**

We don't always see the results of our labor...

Stop being judging yourself by what you perceive to be results! Stop letting others judge you...

You want results... how about this... I haven't quit and I'm not slowing down. I am going to keep praying, and helping others, and serving, and testifying... The fact that you have not given up is one of the best results ever!

Keep planting! Keep watering! And guess what happens!

1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV2011) I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

God brings the increase. God makes it grow. God brings the results.

We told you in this series that God is the first responder. Now as we bring this series to a close I want to tell you that God is the Last Responder

## **God is the last responder**

God is the one who does the finishing work in people's lives. We plant but God makes it grow. We water but God is the one who brings life.

It is not about your ability or intelligence... it is about God. This is why you need to trust God and release your situations to Him.

Hebrews 12:2 (KJV) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...

Let Jesus be the finisher. You aren't the finisher. God is going to do the finishing work in you and in everyone you have been caring for. THIS IS THE BEST NEWS!

God started this work and He will finish this work.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV2011) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

There is coming a day when Jesus Christ is going to complete His work in you. Do we need to remind ourselves that we aren't finished products yet? God has not finished working in us...

1 John 3:2 (NIV2011) ... But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

One look in the face of Jesus and the last responder will finish the work. All the work that you have struggled to finish in yourself, one look at Jesus and it is finished. All the work you have been trying to accomplish in others, one look at Jesus and it will be finished in them.

### **musician**

Knowing this ought to make you want to plant & water. This truth ought to give you courage to respond to the emergencies around you. Knowing that He is the finisher ought to make you willing to release others into His hand. Knowing the finisher is coming, why would you punish yourself for not seeing more results. Let's pray to the finisher today.

Psalms 68:19-20 (NIV2011) Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.