

# SESSION 6:

## MOUTHPIECE FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE

*'Seek justice, encourage the oppressed.  
Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.'*  
Isaiah 1:17

<b>Key Question:</b>	How might I be a mouthpiece for truth and justice on my frontline?
<b>Aims of the Session:</b>	To see where justice and truth are not being upheld on our frontlines and to grow in wisdom and courage to speak up where necessary.
<b>Core Text:</b>	2 Samuel 12:1-13
<b>Materials Required:</b>	Bibles

### Thinking Back (5 mins)

In the last session we looked at Moulding Culture – influencing the way things are done on our frontlines so that they become places where people can better flourish.

- Does anyone have any observations to share about the culture of their frontline this week perhaps something positive or something negative that you noticed for the first time?
- Did anyone have the opportunity to begin to make a small change to their frontline culture?

### Pre-Film Discussion (10 mins)

Today, we're looking at being a Mouthpiece for Truth and Justice – speaking up for right living and fair dealings in order that things are more in line with God's ways.

- What instances, if any, of injustice or untruth have you seen on your frontline recently?





**PLAY FILM to end - approx. 11 mins**

### **Questions to Discuss after the Film (10 mins)**

- The decision that Jeremy took to work for a company where he knew that he would have to negotiate some very tricky ethical dilemmas took courage. Speaking up against the boss took courage. What are some of the issues that might prevent you from speaking out on your frontline?
- Jeremy's Christian friends thought that taking the job was a bad idea. What do you think Jeremy could see that his friends couldn't?
- In this example, we see that the words and actions of one person can have an effect beyond what seems possible. Does this change your perspective on the impact that your words may have on your frontline?

### **Group Activity (5 mins)**

On our frontlines, all of us will have found ourselves in conversations where the person we are talking to is saying something unkind (whether true or not) about someone else.

Are there any tactics that you have found useful in these situations that have enabled you to stand up for truth and justice?

### **Bible Reflection - 2 Samuel 12:1-13 (20 mins)**

In 2 Samuel 11, David, the King of Israel, had done something terrible, breaking three of the Ten Commandments in dramatic fashion. First, he covets another man's wife, as he watches Bathsheba bathe from the vantage point of his palace roof. Second, he commits adultery with her, having had her brought to him, and she falls pregnant. Then thirdly, having failed to cover up his part in Bathsheba's pregnancy, he has her husband Uriah killed, in order that he may take Bathsheba to be his own wife. David's ruthless plan succeeded because many people around him had simply obeyed orders and did not question his actions. It appeared he had got away with what he had done. However, after the birth of the child, the Lord sends the prophet Nathan to bring David face-to-face with his wrongdoing.



- Nathan could have found many excuses not to follow the Lord's instruction. If you were Nathan, what are some of the reasons you might have given for not wanting to confront King David?
- How does the injustice in the story that Nathan tells about the rich and the poor man relate to King David's actions?
- What do you think would have happened in King David's life if Nathan had not taken this step of courageous obedience?
- Nathan speaks with great wisdom and is able to bring King David to the point of realising his own wrongdoing. How might we learn from Nathan's example? What factors might be relevant for us when we are weighing up whether or not to speak out in our own circumstances?

### **Praying Forwards - as a group (10 mins)**

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection. Think about the injustices and untruths that you see on your frontline – is God bringing one particular thing to your attention? Like Nathan, might there be things that God is prompting you to do about this and is there any particular wisdom you may need?

Share your reflections in pairs or as a group and pray together.

### **Takeaway Action**

Take some time to meditate on Philippians 4:8 this week and ask God what this might mean for your particular frontline:

'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.'

*'All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.'*

Edmund Burke





# FRUITFULNESS ON THE FRONTLINE.

## SESSION TRANSCRIPTS



# SESSION 6: MOUTHPIECE FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE

Previously in this series we've looked at four ways in which we might be fruitful on our frontlines. There's modelling godly character, making good work, ministering grace and love and moulding the culture around us. And perhaps you have already become more aware of the ways in which God is already working through you and more alert to the opportunities that you have right where you are. I hope too you've got to know the particular challenges and opportunities of the people in your group and that you are finding ways to support one another out there.

And we do need each other's support.

After all, where there is a frontline, there are people, and where there are people... stuff happens – good things, bad things, things that put a spring in your step and a beam on your face... and things that sadden you, anger you, puzzle you ... things that you really need other people's wisdom and prayers to help you with.

This session is about being a mouthpiece for truth and for justice, about being the kind of people who will know when to speak up and how to speak up when something needs to be said...

Let me tell you a true story.

Jeremy had just been made redundant after ten years of excellent work for a leading property company with a magnificent reputation for high ethical standards. His boss, not a Christian, had also been made redundant but he had identified for Jeremy a job in another company that he thought would be just right for Jeremy. Jeremy, however didn't think that that job was right for him. His boss, a mite miffed, asked him "Why not?" Jeremy replied, "Well" he said, "I just don't think it's the job that God has for me right now." Well there's no arguing with that is there?

Curiously, the job that Jeremy did think was right for him was with a company with a distinctly dubious reputation. His Christian friends questioned the wisdom of that – it seemed like a recipe for disaster. Jeremy pursued the opportunity but he did want to make sure that the company knew the kind of person they were getting, so that if ethical issues did arise in the future, they wouldn't be surprised by his response. So yes, he wrote on his C.V the fact that he was a Christian, but also at the interview, he made a point of saying to the owner: "I want you to know that I'm a Christian and so I try to have high ethical, moral and legal standards." Interestingly, the owner made no comment at all, perhaps because he felt that he himself had similar standards or perhaps because he was serenely unaware that either he or his company had anything but saintly reputations.

Of course, Jeremy knew that people and organisations do not change overnight, that good intentions do not always lead to good actions but he was convinced that this was the place that God had for him, even if he knew that it might mean that one day he would have to resign on a point of principle. The first time that he was challenged on a point of principle was on his very first day. People around him told him that he wouldn't be able to budge the boss on this one. But as far as Jeremy was concerned the action that the company wanted to take was not only immoral, was not only unethical, it was actually plain illegal. Well, he stuck to his guns and over time though it definitely didn't change overnight, with courage and determination the boss did budge. Eighteen months later, the challenges keep on rolling on. A couple of weeks ago, he was walking his nine and a half year old daughter to school. She said to him "Dad, you don't seem so happy these days, why is that?". He said to her, "Well, there's a lot of issues at work at the moment and they seem to want me to do some things which I just don't think are



right as a follower of Jesus. And I might have to resign." "Well", she said, "that would be the right thing to do. It's a bit like me at school with my friend Ella. Everybody wants me to ignore her but I won't do it, it's just not fair. And they're giving a really hard time about it..."

I wonder where that nine and a half year old girl learned such fantastic integrity.

It's obvious isn't it that God clearly called Jeremy to that company to bless it, to help it to become a place of truth and justice, a place of truth telling and right dealing. But there's been a cost, a cost to him and to his family. There's been suffering and perhaps more to come. It is often the way isn't it? . Evil is not easily dethroned. And our opposition is not always merely flesh and blood.

Still, if Jeremy's challenge was systemic, daily and over the medium-term, for most of us probably the opportunities to become a champion for truth and justice just pop up as we are going about our daily lives.

What do we do when there's a succulent morsel of gossip whisking its way round our sports club, or when someone in the family is being blamed for something they didn't do? "It wasn't like that Dad... she didn't mean it that way." Or what do we do when the wrong person is getting the blame at work, or when the wrong person is getting the credit?

God hates lies. And God loves truth.

But that doesn't mean it's always easy to stick up for truth, does it?

A parent is whinging on at the school gate about a teacher that she thinks is incompetent and lazy but actually you've never heard anything negative from your daughter, only how everyone likes her, and appreciates the way the homework gets marked really swiftly. Now in a group situation like that it can still be quite hard to say anything.

So I wonder, what might you say? You might say, "Wow, that doesn't sound like her at all... I've found her really approachable... I'm sure she'd be mortified if she thought that you had those concerns. Why don't you go and ask her about it?"

You'll have your own ways, of course, that suit your personality. Personally, I find a swift right hook particularly effective.

But speaking up for truth and justice can, as we saw with Jeremy, be about BIG challenges. It might involve sticking up for your neighbour in a dispute with the local council or sticking up for an elderly parent. It might involve blowing the whistle on a builder who's dangerously flouted safety standards. Or it might involve challenging a work colleague about the hours being charged to a particular client.

Such situations require courage and tact to resolve well.

Of course, even when you know something is wrong, you don't necessarily go in all guns blazing. You'll recall in the Book of Samuel that King David commits adultery with Bathsheba and when his attempts at a cover-up fail, he arranges for the murder of her loyal officer husband Uriah. So, when God sends the prophet Nathan to confront David, wisdom is required. David after all has already had one officer murdered... what's to stop him killing Nathan too?

Now, there might have been a lot of ways for Nathan to try to liberate David from his unconfessed sin. He could have gone straight in and addressed him as a husband, "How would you feel if a man treated one of your wives that way?" Or he might have perhaps been a little bit more subtle: "You know David,



I was having my quiet time today and I found myself reading the Ten Commandments and was once again struck by how liberating they are, particularly the sixth and seventh commandments... Thou shalt not murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery... Anyway, I just thought I'd share that with you... not sure why."

Still, when God does send Nathan to confront David, God isn't doing it to condemn him, He's doing it to liberate him from his guilt, to communicate the consequences of what he has done and to restore their relationship. Indeed, when Nathan speaks up, it opens up a better future for David. The truth sets David free. Of course, Nathan finds a rather clever way to tell David.

Still, we don't always find the right words, do we? We become tongue-tied... and the other person may just be so much sharper than us. There's one person I was never, ever able to win an argument against... I always ended up feeling stupid and embarrassed and misunderstood, just pathetic really. Afterwards I'd think about all the brilliantly incisive things I should have said that would have carried the day. But sometimes our job isn't to win, our job is just to run the flag of truth up the flagpole.

So we stick up for truth and we stick up for justice. In the Bible, the word justice has a broader meaning than just legal rights and wrongs. It embraces right living and fair dealings, so you can be a mouthpiece for right living by speaking biblical wisdom into a situation like Jeremy did, or you can be a mouthpiece for right living and fair dealings by suggesting to your boss that Sachin really deserves a bonus cos he really does. You can be a mouthpiece for right living and fair dealings by suggesting to your bowls club, golf club, football club that they buy Fairtrade coffee or by writing to your MP about the supermarket that they are proposing to build right in the centre of your town.

People might not pay any attention the first time or the second time... or even the third time, but many of us can remember when, for example, pretty much no one recycled anything. And then it was clear glass bottles and then it was clear glass bottles and brown and green glass bottles, and then cans and now we've got plastic bins outside our houses for pretty much everything from aerosols to toenails. Change can take time. But good change is worth persevering for.

I wonder: where is there untruth and injustice on your frontline?

There is a time to speak the truth with grace.

May the Lord give you wisdom to know that time and the courage to speak.

