

Fran and Jesus on the Job – Witnessing

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

Knowing how to witness to others is often a perplexing question for many of us. Our friend Fran is facing that issue. This on-going story of Fran and Jesus is told as though Jesus was with her all day, and she talks to him and he to her. Of course, Jesus is with us all the time, but sometimes we forget. Hopefully, these stories of Fran and Jesus will help us remember to practice the presence of Jesus everyday everywhere.

Fran is hurrying home from work. "It seems like I always have to stop at the store for something," Fran thinks. "You know, Lord, if I didn't have to buy groceries, I'd be rich," she muses. "But with a growing nine-year-old boy, he just seems to never get enough. I'm thankful you told us not to worry about what we eat or wear, because you know we have need of these things," Fran says to Jesus. She is reassured by the promise Jesus will never leave her or forsake and has indeed promised to supply all her needs according to his riches in glory.

She pulls into the grocery parking lot and dashes into the store, practically running through the aisles to find the things she needs. In the midst of her hurry, she hears a voice, "Hey, Fran!" She turns and sees her neighbor.

"Sue, hi. How are you? Goodness, I haven't seen you in several weeks. Good to see you," Fran says in a friendly way.

"Yeah, I've been thinking about calling and stopping in to talk, but—well, I know how busy you are with the kids and everything," Sue says.

"How about your job, Sue? Did you get that new job you were hoping for?" Fran asks.

"No, I decided not to even apply for it, Fran," Sue answers. "I'm sure I didn't have a chance, and besides. . ." her voice trails off, and Fran can tell something is wrong.

"What's wrong, Sue? You look a little upset," Fran encourages her to talk.

Sue looks around, uncomfortable talking in the middle of the store. "Well, Ed moved out a couple of weeks ago, and I've just been upset, I guess."

"Oh, I see," Fran replies. "I'm, well I'm..." What can I say, Lord? Fran asks Jesus. I'm not sorry Ed moved out; they shouldn't have been living together anyway.

"Just show her some love, Fran," Jesus responds. "You can show love for people even if you don't approve of what they're doing."

Fran continues with Sue: "I'm sure this has been very hurtful for you, Sue. Sorry. I didn't know."

"Well, maybe I could talk with you sometime when you have time. I know how busy you are..." Sue looks at Fran with hopeful eyes.

"Of course, we'll get together soon, I promise," Fran replies, and with that they each head for the check-out stand.

Day Two

Have you ever wondered how you can befriend a non-believer whose lifestyle is sinful, without appearing to approve of the sin? Fran is facing that dilemma. On the way home from work, she runs into a neighbor, Sue, who tells Fran that her live-in boyfriend has just moved out. Sue is obviously upset and wants to talk, and Fran promises to call her soon.

In the check-out line, Jesus says to Fran, "You know, Sue is really needing a friend right now, Fran. Why didn't you invite her to come over tonight and talk?"

"Tonight? Well, Lord, you know this is the first night in two weeks I've had to myself. I just want to be alone and read after the kids go to bed," Fran replies, sounding a bit defensive.

"Yeah, I understand, Fran, but can you afford to pass up an opportunity like this to reach out to someone who was obviously asking you to help her?" Jesus asks.

"Well, I'll call her and set up a date next week for pizza or something," Fran answers, hoping that will satisfy Jesus.

"Next week?" he replies. "Next week is a long time off when you're hurting like Sue is."

As she heads for the car, Jesus doesn't say anything else, but Fran is very uncomfortable. She pulls into her driveway, and says, "Lord, you really think I should give up my one free night and ask Sue over tonight? I mean, don't I have a right to one night to myself?"

"A right? Well, think about that, Fran," Jesus says. "I gave up my rights to all that was coming to me when I left heaven to come to earth. The essence of the Christian life is that we give our rights over to God and allow him to run things for us. You remember I said, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'"

Fran remembers in a flash all she has been learning about giving up her rights and being a servant. But when the rubber hits the road, as it has this evening, she finds it a bit difficult. "Guess I really don't like being a servant sometimes, Lord," Fran replies, as she sits in the car a few more minutes. "It's not always convenient, is it," Fran says with a smile.

"No, sometimes it's terribly inconvenient and requires sacrifice. But the rewards are good, Fran," Jesus reminds her.

As she makes dinner for the kids, her mind again goes to Sue. She thinks Sue must be devastated. Ed was her whole life, and now he's gone. Fran knew he would never marry her, but Sue thought for sure if they just lived together for a few months, then he'd want to get married.

Jesus reminds her Sue is desperate for love. She doesn't know his love, so she's looking for it in a man. That happens a lot, doesn't it? She and Jesus talk a bit about Sue's dilemma, and before she knows it, Fran has reached for the phone and dialed Sue's number.

Day Three

Fran has run into a neighbor who needs a friend, and although Fran had planned a quiet evening for herself, at Jesus' prodding, she gives Sue a call.

"Hi, Sue, this is Fran. Listen, I don't have anything I have to do tonight. Why don't you come on over in a little while. The kids go to bed around 8:30 or 9:00. We'll have some time then to talk. I've got good ears, Sue, and I'm willing to listen," Fran invites Sue over.

"Yeah, I'm sure; see you later," Sue responds.

As she hangs up the phone, Fran smiles. "You know, Lord, I didn't really plan to do that, but when I started thinking about Sue and how I'd feel if I were in her shoes, well..." Fran's voice trails off.

"Yes, Fran, you just put on compassion. You have prayed that I would help you to be a compassionate person, so I just answered that prayer," Jesus tells her. "When you care about someone, when you feel compassion toward them, it's not so difficult to be a servant to them, is it?"

"Oh, I didn't think of it as being a servant; I just wanted to help her. I hope I can," Fran replies.

"True servanthood," he says, "is when you are a servant and don't even realize it. And that happened, Fran, as soon as you stopped thinking about how inconvenient it was and how you had a right to have a night all your own. Instead, you thought about Sue."

"I get the picture, Lord," Fran replies. "Keep praying for compassion, keep putting myself in other's shoes, and day by day, you will answer my prayer and make me more like you—compassionate. It really is amazing to see how you can change me," Fran says.

She helps the kids with their homework, and as they're getting ready for bed, Sue knocks on the door. It turns out to be a late night for Fran, as Sue talks for several hours and pours out her hurt and pain from her broken relationship.

Fran falls in bed about midnight, exhausted, praying for Sue as she goes to sleep.

Day Four

If you've been reading all week, you've read the continuing story of Fran, who gave up a free night to listen to a neighbor talk about her broken relationship. The next morning as she talks with Jesus early in her day, she says, "You know, Lord, I had hoped I could tell Sue about you last night. She really needs you, Lord, but I don't know—she didn't seem to want to listen. She just wanted to talk about Ed."

"Fran, you're sowing seeds. You did the right thing to listen to Sue. You showed her love, and that's what she needed last night," Jesus assures Fran.

"Yes, but I don't want her to think I approve of her relationship with Ed. She was living in sin, and it's a good thing he left, you know?" Fran responds.

"Yes, I know, but listening to someone's hurts doesn't mean you approve of their lifestyle. Don't worry, Sue knows how you feel about her relationship. Last night she needed to know that you cared and loved her unconditionally," Jesus replies.

"Okay, but I hope someday to be able to lead her to know you, Jesus."

"Yes, well, you certainly earned your right last night, Fran, so keep praying for her," Jesus says. And after a few more minutes in prayer, Fran gets her day going, a little weary, but feeling good about her evening with Sue.

As she arrives at the office, Fran remembers there's a department meeting this morning. "Oops, better get into that meeting before I'm late," she says, and hurries to the conference room.

It seems the only chair available is right next to Bud, head of operations. Fran is not terribly fond of Bud. He's crude, to put it mildly, and uses profanity a lot, not to mention dirty jokes when he has a chance.

"Oh, Fran, don't tell me you're going to sit next to me," Bud says as she sits down. "Be careful, you might catch something." Bud always tries to get to Fran, and it seems as soon as she gets near, his language gets worse.

She tries to ignore his comment, but he immediately uses the Lord's name in a blasphemous way. Fran winches at his words. "Oh, 'scuse me, Fran, I forgot you're a Jesus freak, didn't mean to hurt your feelings," Bud says, with obvious sarcasm.

Lord, Fran whispers to Jesus, am I supposed to just sit here and let Bud get by with this profane use of your name?

"Stay calm," Jesus replies. "I'll tell you what to say."

Day Five

Fran has to deal with a coworker who often is profane and obscene. In a meeting he makes a point of using the Lord's name in vain and then sarcastically apologizes to Fran for hurting her feelings. Jesus helps Fran to respond.

"Actually, Bud, you didn't hurt my feelings; you hurt my heart," Fran answers.

Suddenly the whole room gets quiet, and everyone is watching Bud and Fran. Nobody is really fond of Bud's vile language, but he's been in the company for years. So, no one confronts him, not even upper management.

Bud gives a nervous laugh. "Hurt your heart? What do you mean, Fran?"

"Well, I just mean when you use the name of Jesus like that, it really hurts me because he's the most important person in my life. He's my best friend. How would you like it if I used the name of your best friend—or someone close to you—in a derogatory way? I think it would hurt your heart, Bud, just like you hurt mine," Fran says. She thinks, Lord, were those words from you? I never planned to say that!

"Oh, Fran, you take things too personally. That's just the way people talk," Bud replies, obviously unnerved by Fran's response. The air is full of electricity.

Jesus nudges Fran, "It's time to get this conversation out of this public arena. Invite him to lunch."

"Invite him to lunch, Lord? Bud? I don't want to have lunch with him—and besides he would never accept," Fran replies, but Jesus is insistent. Invite him to lunch, Fran.

When Jesus tugs at her like that, she knows she has to obey, so Fran turns to Bud, "You know, Bud, this would make for an interesting conversation over lunch today. How about it—my treat?"

"You're inviting me to lunch? You think you can endure me that long, Fran?" Bud asks with a big laugh.

"I'm sure of it—if you think you can put up with me that long," Fran answers with a laugh.

"Okay, you got a deal. I never turn down a free lunch," Bud replies.

All through the meeting Fran communicates to Jesus about this upcoming lunch with Bud. "Lord, what am I'm going to say to Bud?"

"You're going to become friends with Bud, Fran, and let him see what I'm like, living in you. How can you ever do that if you never get to know him?" Jesus explains to Fran.

"Well, okay, but it's probably wasted effort. Bud's a hopeless case," Fran thinks.

"Oh, Fran, many times the people who look the least likely to want to know me are the ones most hungry. You may be surprised," Jesus informs her.

Fran is learning that witnessing begins with loving people, spending time with them, getting to know them—even the people who seem to be the least likely candidates.