

Lessons from First Responders
2018 First Responder Sunday
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Today is First Responder Sunday. We have set this day aside to honor and say thank you to our first responders who serve us and help keep our communities safe.

Once they come to your aid you appreciate them all the more and are grateful they are constantly on standby for our community. We all owe a debt of gratitude to these men and women.

- They don't do what they do for recognition.
- They don't see themselves as heroes.
- They do this because they feel it is their calling and we honor that calling today.

Today we honor Fire and Rescue personnel , Fire Police, Dispatchers, EMT's, Paramedics, Emergency Medical Personnel, Police, Marshals, Sheriffs, Constables, Detectives, National Guard, Disaster, Crises, Civil, and all other first responders.

We honor the spouses and families of these personnel who sacrifice and support their first responder.

Thank you for coming this morning. We continue to pray for you and support you.

I also want to say thank you to businesses that allow their workers to respond to fire and other emergencies. They also help pay the price in keeping our communities safe.

Thank you to those who brought equipment today. It is a great way to connect with the community and for people to relate to you outside of a crisis situation. I think it also fosters an appreciation for you and maybe stirs "the call" in people to serve as a first responder someday. We have a large group of first responders here at Petra for which I am thankful.

For my message this morning I want to draw some spiritual insights from the lives of First Responders that reflect on biblical truths. The way in which they serve reflects on the example Jesus set for us.

Jesus came to earth on a divine rescue mission. He exemplifies the heart of first responders. He is a first responder to humanity. Let's reflect a few minutes on this correlation and the Lessons we learn from First Responders and Jesus.

1. They teach us about protecting and serving.

This is the motto of first responders – to protect and serve. To be there when we need them.

When we think of first responders we see them as our protectors in many ways. Protecting our lives and property from fire, storms, thieves. Protecting our lives with life saving measures and swift transport for help.

They do what they do because they care for people. They enjoy helping people.

Jesus is the supreme example for us. **Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

We are instructed to do the same. As First Responders or whatever we are called to do – we are to do our job with a serving attitude.

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Thank you for being an example of those who serve.

2. They teach us about respecting and caring for all people.

When a call comes in for help they respond no matter who the person is. It doesn't matter what religion they are, what race they are, or even if they are a drug addict.

Sometimes they are called back to the same overdose victim numerous times even on the same day. Can be very discouraging at times.

The call to serve a fellow human being in need, supersedes their personal beliefs.

We again see this demonstrated in the life of Jesus as he reaches out to the broken people around him. Never turning anyone away. Even the outcast of society.

Romans 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

We are to follow this example in our relationships.

James 2:1,8 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism... If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

We are called to rise above the human tendency of prejudice and bias. We are called to love and have compassion like Jesus does. Love like he loves us.

3. They teach us about sacrifice.

First responders teach us a lot about sacrifice. They willingly put their lives on the line and sacrifice time away from families, so our families can be safe.

Many serve as volunteers and have to respond quickly at all times of night and day. It costs them sleep, family time, work time, and major inconveniences at times.

I think of the commitment and sacrifices of their families as their loved ones are on call with interruptions to their families, sometimes at the most inconvenient times, and the worry they feel at times for their safety. Most of us have no idea the impact this has on the spouse and family. So, to you we also say a big thank you this morning.

Whether it is entering a burning building, apprehending armed criminals, entering into dangerous situation for medical assistance these folks are laying down their lives – most times for strangers. We are indebted to them.

Reminds me of Jesus.

Jesus paid the supreme sacrifice. He willingly gave his life to save us from our sins.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We were all undeserving, we were all loving our sin and yet Jesus laid down his life because he knew we couldn't save ourselves.

I'm sure the police and EMS people have had the experience where you respond to call and people refuse your help. You know their situation is life threatening but they refuse what you offer them.

Jesus experiences that same rejection all the time. He has the cure, he has the answer, he has the help they need for forgiveness and to turn their lives around, but people still say no to such love. It's hard to understand.

Each Sunday we extend this same offer of Jesus. Each Sunday people have the opportunity to say yes or no to the one who has come to save.

Again, thank you to all the First Responders who are here and to those watching on line. We do sincerely honor you today and every day. You are a blessing to our community.

Blessing Prayer: All Stand

Lord bless our first responders with your loving care. You know their needs their joys and their struggles. Let them know you are near and that you care.

Protect them physically from the dangers they encounter as they put their lives on the line. Grant them much wisdom.

Protect them and heal them spiritually, mentally and emotionally from things they wish they could un-see and the trauma and danger they encounter.

Protect them and their families relationally from the added pressures and stresses they might feel.

In the midst of their serving give them times of laughter, times they can totally disconnect and have fun, times to be refreshed and renewed.

May you O Lord be their refuge and strength.

In Jesus Name, Amen!