

Frontline Sundays

Small Group Discussion Guide

Find the corresponding service plans and sermon notes at licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays

Each session guides a group through the theme of that Sunday's sermon and film, studying the Bible passage, exploring it in-depth, and praying for one another. A reminder summary of the sermon is included so everyone can join the discussion, even if they missed it on Sunday. You'll want to tailor your discussions to your own group dynamic and encourage each participant to take notes and capture prayer needs. We trust the discussion will lead to a deeper shared understanding of one another's frontlines and their potential for the Kingdom of God.

Frontline Sunday 1: All the difference in the world

Frontline Sunday 2: Wherever we are

Frontline Sunday 3: Whatever we do

Frontline Sunday 4: Whoever we are

Frontline Sunday 5: Together we grow

ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

Aim

To explore our identity as the gathered and scattered church and then discover one another's frontlines so that you can pray for one another more meaningfully.

Recall your Sunday theme

Pray to start, then read 1 Peter 1:1–2, and recall the sermon together, asking what stuck with each person.

Sermon reminder

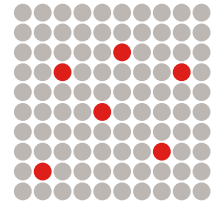
The sermon highlighted the two words that the apostle Peter used in his opening greeting to describe the church: 'elect' and 'exiles'. From Genesis 12 onwards, it's clear that God's purpose was that Abraham and all his descendants would be blessed and be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:2–3). Writing to these early Christians, most of whom would not have been Jews by birth, Peter includes them in the ongoing story of God's intention by using the language of calling – 'chosen', 'elect'. Secondly, they're exiles. This term recalls the great disaster of the Old Testament – when Israel lost their land. At first, they hoped for a quick return, but the prophets told that first generation of exiles that they themselves would not return, though they could remain distinct and be a blessing where they were (Jeremiah 29). Elect and exiles. In using these words, Peter connected these Christians scattered around modern-day Turkey with the Old Testament people of God. We live in that same story. We may be a long way from these early Christians in culture and time, but we share the same legacy and mission.

Watch the film

Watch *Film 1 – All the difference in the world* (licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays) and discuss what struck each person.



The six red dots, out of 100 altogether, represent the approximate percentage of people in the UK who worship in a church once a month or more (6%). To the left, the red dots in the corner reflect us in the times we gather as a church community. To the right, the scattered dots reflect the times when we are apart, scattered in our Monday–Saturday lives.



Explore and discuss further

Take about 15 minutes on each section below, dwelling on the questions which are most helpful and insightful for your group.

Explore the gathered dots

- 1 What strikes you about the gathered red dots?
- 2 How does it feel to be a Christian minority in our nation?
- 3 Peter uses the word 'elect' to describe the Christians to whom he wrote, reflecting all that began in Genesis 12:2–3. Take a moment to read Genesis 12:2–3. (Note: the threat of cursing in verse 3 might sound harsh, but it shows God will protect Abraham and his people.) What do you think it meant for Abraham, and by extension Israel, to be a blessing?
- 4 How does this help us understand what God would want of us today?
- 5 Jot some of your blessing ideas down together.
- 6 How are you distinct as a gathered people of God? What do you believe that is different from the general population? What do you do that is different? (Note: Think about core beliefs and practices – prayer, giving generously, hospitality to strangers, Bible reading etc.) How do these help you 'stay red' together?

Explore the scattered dots

- 7 What strikes you about the scattered red dots?
- 8 What are the specific places where each person in the group is scattered in the week? What are our experiences of being a Christian there?
- 9 How distinctively Christian are we in those places?
- 10 Peter describes early Christians as 'exiles', referencing when God allowed Israel's enemies to defeat them, and force them into exile. In exile they had to learn to live as a distinct people. Jeremiah 29 was written to them, including the famous verse: 'I know the plans I have for you...' (29:11). But that verse follows God's command to 'Build houses and settle down, plant gardens... marry... seek the peace of the city... pray for it.' (29:5–7). How would that command have felt for devout Jews in exile?
- 11 How are Jeremiah's words relevant for us today?

Explore frontlines

Frontlines (n): Frontlines are the everyday places where we live, work, study, or play and where we're likely to connect with people who aren't Christians.

- 12 How helpful do you find it as a term? Why? Why not?
- 13 Read Ephesians 6:10–18. If 'frontlines' suggests battles to you, is it helpful to think of ourselves in a confrontation? If so, who is the enemy?
- 14 Read Philippians 2:14–16. If 'frontlines' refers to the everyday places where we do life and interact with non-Christians, what do the verses say about it?
- 15 Where do you think your frontlines are?
- 16 What might God's purpose be for you in each of these places?

Close in prayer

Peter begins his letter with the reassurances that:

- Our situations are known by God – his foreknowledge
- We have been set apart by the Spirit – his sanctifying work
- We can be confident of our relationship with God – the sprinkling of blood is a sign of being included in his covenant

As you pray for one another's situations, ask each person what you can give thanks for and what they want to ask God to do. Have each member of the group jot down a prayer request for themselves and one for someone else in the group and commit to praying for these through the next seven days.

WHEREVER WE ARE

Aim

To explore one another's frontlines and how you might become more aware of God's presence there.

Recall your Sunday theme

Pray to start, then read Genesis 28:10–22, and briefly recall the sermon together, asking what stuck with each person.

Sermon reminder

The sermon explored the story of 'Jacob's Ladder', his encounter with God at Bethel. It's easy to rush over the central point of the story: God meets Jacob! We sometimes think we're most likely to meet God in 'holy' places: churches, chapels, prayer rooms, etc. but the Bible is clear: most of the time God meets people in the least likely places – ordinary, everyday places – and sometimes unexpectedly. God transforms the ordinary place into a holy place. When we go to our ordinary places 'in the name of Jesus', they become the touching points between heaven and earth. Jacob 'owns' the place and knows that it is significant, marking this ordinary place with a stone. God has not finished with him yet. Can we see how God is present in our ordinary places and become attentive to how he meets us there? Let's discover how these places are transformed because God is with us.

Explore and discuss further

This session offers the opportunity to understand one another's frontlines more deeply, so it's important that everyone has a chance to be heard. Plan to spend about a third of your time discussing the sermon and passage, and the remainder exploring your frontlines. Adjust your timing depending on the number of people.

Discuss the passage

- 1 When God met Jacob, God promised to build a new community that would be a means of blessing to the whole world, through Jacob (v.13–15). It's like God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 (discussed in Frontline Sunday 1). God's promise is still with us. If we see ourselves as people who inherit this blessing, how might it change our perspective on our everyday lives?
- 2 Look at all the assurances that God gives Jacob in these verses (v.13–15). How would they have changed Jacob's understanding of his own life? Take a look at Matthew 28:20 (which sounds very similar). What difference can that make for our lives?
- 3 Have you ever experienced God's presence in an ordinary and everyday place? What happened?
- 4 Jacob marked the spot by setting up a stone pillar and pouring oil on it. How could you mark a place in your everyday life to remind you that 'God-encounters' can happen there too?

Watch the film

Watch *Film 2 – Wherever* (licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays) and discuss what struck each person.

Explore your frontlines

In the last session, you identified your frontlines. Take time now – either as a group or in pairs – to allow each person to explain their frontline situation more fully, using the This Time Tomorrow questions below. Take notes of each person's answers. Make sure to leave time to pray together!

Think about your frontlines. What do you think God might be doing there, or what might he want to do there?

Frontline questions

- Tell us where you are on a typical week day.
- What do you like about it there?
- What's a pressure point there for you?
- What might be God's purpose for you there?
- How do you experience God's presence in that place?
- How can we pray for you?

Close in prayer

The film shows people going through the doors into their day, discovering God with them there. As you go through various doors this week know that God is in each place already. Try to sense where he is at work and join in with what he's doing.

You might close with this prayer:

Lord, would you open doors of opportunity for us this week as we learn to live for you.

May we have the courage to walk into opportunities to speak words of encouragement, do acts of kindness, be a listening ear, be a witness to you.

Make a difference through us wherever we are this week.

Most of all, may we be aware of your presence in the places we find ourselves.

Amen.

WHATEVER WE DO

Whatever we do – the ‘work’ of our hands, however small and insignificant it may seem – matters to God. It’s part of our worship and how we serve others and bear witness to God. There can be Kingdom significance in our daily tasks and activities, however great or small.

Aim

To explore how you can grow as Jesus’ representative through what you do day by day.

Recall your Sunday theme

Pray to start, then read Colossians 3:15–24, and briefly recall the sermon together, asking what stuck with each person.

Sermon reminder

The sermon focused on the idea that ‘whatever you do, do it ALL in the name of Jesus. Do it with ALL your heart.’ Many Christians live unconsciously with a sacred-secular divided way of thinking about their daily lives. Some things are accepted as being important to God, and the rest is ‘just life’. Paul will have none of that thinking – he uses the phrase ‘whatever you do’ in a worship context (15–17) and in an everyday work context (22–24). The idea of doing something in someone else’s name is that you are acting as that person’s representative. If that person is Jesus, that changes everything! It’s this attitude to the ordinary joys and challenges of our everyday tasks and activities that can mark us out as Christians.

Explore and discuss further

In this session, allow a generous amount of time to pray together. Take about 15 minutes each for the passage and the film. Then use question seven as a springboard into praying for one another.

Explore Colossians 3:15–24

- 1 What difference does it make to do things 'in the name of Jesus' in our everyday lives?
- 2 In verse 17, this seems to be in the context of our gathered worship. How can our worship be offered in the 'name of Jesus'?
- 3 In verse 23, Paul encourages the slaves to work 'with all your heart, as working for the Lord.' What does that mean for us today?

Watch the film

Watch *Film 3 – Whatever* (licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays) and discuss what struck each person.

- 4 Reflect on the things you've done today. How do you imagine yourself doing these things 'for the Lord'?
- 5 Paul says that people will be rewarded by the Lord as they work 'for the Lord'. What do you imagine this reward might involve?

Explore discipleship

Disciple (n): someone who is learning the ways of Jesus in their context at this moment.

- 6 There are lots of different ways of describing what it means to be a disciple, and this one does not include everything. However, what advantages do you see in this definition?
- 7 We learn the ways of Jesus as we are involved in our daily tasks. What are you learning about the ways of Jesus at the moment? Encourage your group to share how Jesus and his ways inspire them to see what to do on their frontlines, and how they can do these things in a Christ-like way.

Close in prayer

As you pray for one another, help each other offer your everyday tasks and activities to God as you work and live 'in the name of the Lord'.

WHOEVER WE ARE

Aim

To take joy in your identity as sons and daughters of our heavenly Father and explore how who you are connects to where you are and what you do, day by day.

Recall your Sunday theme

Pray to start, then read Matthew 6:5–14, and briefly recall the sermon together, asking what stuck with each person.

Sermon reminder

The sermon reflected on the Lord's prayer – much the same as you will do below. The Lord's Prayer can be so familiar that we skate through it without stopping to think about what we are praying, and even less about what it means for us as God's people caught up in what he's doing in the world. The wonder of the prayer is that it starts with an assurance of our identity. And that makes all the difference in the world.

Explore and discuss further

Go through each part of the Lord's Prayer together. Take 10 minutes on each section, then watch the film and pray together. Don't feel the need to answer every question. Be guided by what you know about your group.

Explore the Lord's Prayer

1 Our Father in heaven

- What does it mean for you that you are a son or daughter of your heavenly Father?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to trust God as your heavenly Father? Why is that?
- Are there times in your life when it's made a great difference to know God as your heavenly Father?

2 Hallowed be your name

- When we become Christians, we can act as though we've enlisted God for our lives, for our concerns and causes. However, when we begin to pray the Lord's Prayer, we're reminded that what's actually happened is that God, through Jesus, has drawn us into his family business. Do you agree with this statement? To what extent? Why?
- In what ways do you think that your life on your frontline matters in God's purposes?
- Can you think of something that happened this week in your life on the frontline that you think delighted God?
- Look at your frontline 'job description' again. What changes would you make if it started 'son of my heavenly Father' or 'daughter of the king of the universe'? How does that change how you reflect on your day? How does that change how you pray?

3 Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

- Discuss either in pairs or as a group: What could be some of God's kingdom purposes on your frontline? How would you turn this into a prayer?

4 Give us today our daily bread

- What needs do you have on your frontline that keep you dependent on God?
- How easy or difficult is it to depend on God in this way? Why is that?

5 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

- Think about your relationships on your frontline. Is there someone to forgive?
- Is there someone to ask forgiveness of?
- Think about your relationship with God. Take a moment in silence to talk to God about anything you regret and repent of. Ask for his forgiveness.

6 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

- Think about one pressure point and one kingdom purpose on your frontline.
- How are you tempted not to trust your heavenly Father for these things?
- What protection do you need from God in these situations?

Watch the film

Watch *Film 4 – Whoever* (licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays) and discuss what struck each person.

7 Read the whole of the Lord's Prayer with your frontline in mind.

- What is top of mind for you in light of this discussion?

Close in prayer

Finish by praying the Lord's Prayer together. Commit to praying it daily for the next week.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

TOGETHER WE GROW

Aim

To remind us that we need one another if we are going to be fruitful when we are apart and consider ways in which the ongoing life of your small group can stay attentive to one another's frontlines.

Recall your Sunday theme

Pray to start, then read Hebrews 10:19–25, and briefly recall the sermon together, asking what stuck with each person.

Sermon reminder

The sermon reminded us that we, as churches, help each other hold on to hope together by focusing on God, spurring one another to good works, and meeting together consistently. By drawing near to God, focusing on Jesus, we are renewed as we remind one another of our baptism vows – 'our bodies being washed with pure water.' We also spur one another to good works. The word that translates as 'spur' or 'incite' or 'provoke' is a strange word to link with 'love and good works' but its strength suggests the importance of helping one another live our faith on our frontlines. The writer to the Hebrews recognised that we can help one another by not allowing each other to give up – to keep the challenge before us and keep going. Our scattered and gathered lives are irrevocably connected. Together we remind one another of the core of our faith and its implications for the whole of life. Gathered church is where we are taught, guided, changed, challenged, equipped, encouraged, loved, and commissioned. Then our discipleship is lived out in our scattered frontline contexts.

Explore and discuss further

Take about 15 minutes on each section: question one and the film, reflection on the series, and exploring the future. Then use the remaining time for prayer and/or commissioning.

- 1 The early church to whom Hebrews was written seem to have been tempted to stop meeting. Maybe their previous way of life seemed attractive again, maybe being out of step with society was getting difficult, or maybe they were just busy. When have you been tempted to give up on meeting together? What has kept you going? What is the best thing about gathering as Christians?

Watch the film

Watch *Film 5 – Together* (licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays) and discuss what struck each person.

Reflect on your Frontline Sundays

- 2 Take time to reflect on the Frontline Sundays series as a whole. What have you learnt about yourself? What have you learnt about one another? What have you been reminded of about God?
- 3 What has become clearer about the relationship between the gathered and scattered life of your church? What is more challenging now?
- 4 What stories have you shared with one another that have most encouraged you?

Explore how you can continue encouraging one another

- 5 Hebrews 10:24 encourages us to 'to spur one another toward love and good deeds'. How could your Sunday gatherings keep linking with your Monday to Saturday lives?
- 6 What can you do as a group to ensure that you keep encouraging one another to be fruitful in your everyday lives?
- 7 What's the one thing you don't want to lose from this series?

Close in prayer

Allow each person in the group to share something they are praying for on their frontline. Take time to pray together about these. You may wish to commission, or re-commission, one another for your life on your frontline. If so, you might use this commissioning prayer.

A simple commissioning prayer

We commit ourselves to the Lord's service, in response to his call on our lives.

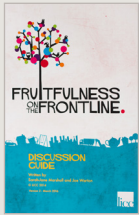
As a group, we pledge ourselves to sustained prayer and encouragement for (name).

We will join together in supporting you as you obey the commission of God.

May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you; that in this and in all things you will know Christ and seek to make him known, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Love Frontline Sundays? Looking for your next study?

Fruitfulness on the Frontline

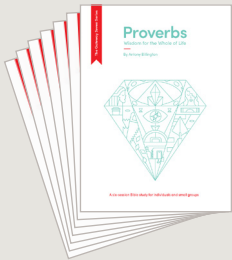


Explore practical steps to take on your frontlines – a great follow-on from *Frontline Sundays*. *Fruitfulness on the Frontline* is a film-based small group course exploring six facets of being fruitful for Christ in everyday life.

It is available either digitally or in print and DVD. You can also learn about the 6Ms by reading the book *Fruitfulness on the Frontline*.

| See licc.org.uk/fruitfulness

The Gateway Seven



Study a book of the Bible with a frontline perspective. The *Gateway Seven* series covers seven books of the Bible that we can use as a gateway to understanding seven different kinds of biblical writing – wisdom, law, letters, prophecy, narrative, gospel, and apocalyptic. *Proverbs* is available now. *1 Peter* (a good follow-on from session one) and *Exodus* are coming later in 2019. *Ezekiel*, *Ruth*, *Mark*, and *Revelation* arrive in 2020–21.

| See licc.org.uk/gatewayseven

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Through research, teaching, writing, and consulting, The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity works to equip churches and empower individuals to serve God in their Monday to Saturday lives.

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