

# Fruitfulness on the Front Line

## Making a difference where you are

Mark Greene

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Mark Greene's book is not a book to be captured in a few soundbites, although some of the endorsements try to do just that...

"It will expand your vision of life" says Graham Cray.

"Mark's book offers us a beautiful revolution" says Rachel Gardner.

"This is as refreshing as a mango smoothie.." says Revd Dianne Tidball.

So what does Greene mean by 'fruitfulness on the frontline'? The definition he gives of 'frontline' is 'a place or a time where we meet fairly regularly with people who don't know Jesus' (p.26). The reason we fail to spot our own frontline is that we haven't learnt to recognise it as the place where Jesus is undoubtedly at work even though he may not be known. We haven't joined the dots to see, let alone understand, what it means that every follower of Jesus is engaged in his great plan to rescue, redeem and restore.

What this book does so well is to invite and help the reader to put on a biblical pair of spectacles. As he does this, Greene shows me how this lens brings into sharp focus the ways God himself is at work through the Spirit on my frontline, whatever and wherever that is and with whomever he has placed me.

Greene is a master wordsmith. The book is predicated on a theological understanding of the great biblical narrative but skilfully avoids abstract theological vocabulary. Rather, Greene enables the follower of Jesus to see for themselves and in concrete ways how Jesus, King and Lord, is at work in every moment, every encounter, every deed, every word, every attitude of the heart and mind.

In his own words, 'it is an encouragement, I hope, to grow more alert to the ways that the God and Father of our

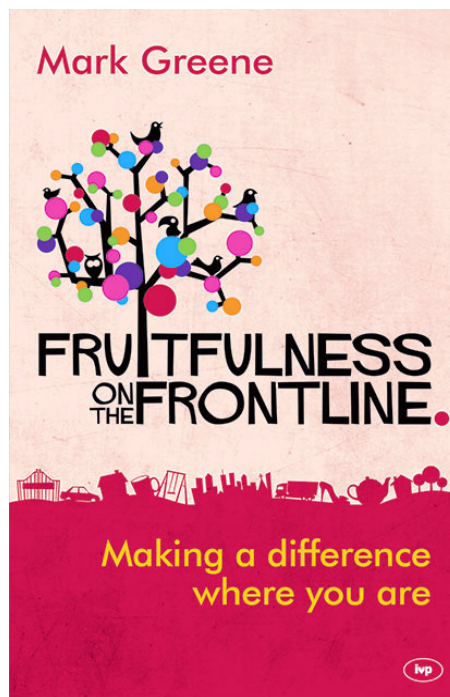
Lord Jesus Christ has been working, is working, might work in and through you right where you are, whatever your frontline' (p.21).

How do we know if Jesus is at work? We see it in 'fruitfulness', that is disciples of Jesus 'quietly doing extraordinary ordinary things in ordinary places' (p 30). Greene effectively explores how all this is predicated on the understanding that God's words to us in the Bible are indeed living and active. We won't see the kingdom of God fully until Jesus comes again, but he is already at work now transforming all things, including us, in anticipation of the shalom he intends to restore to the whole of his creation.

The book is accompanied by a DVD and a downloadable pdf discussion document written by Sarah-Jane Marshall and Joe Warton. Designed for small groups and adaptable to a church context or otherwise, eight sessions cover The Big Picture, then what Greene calls the 6Ms: Modelling Godly Character, Making Good Work, Ministering Grace and Love, Moulding Culture, Mouthpiece for Truth and Justice, and Messenger of the Gospel, concluding with the Journey On. Telling the story of individual believers in the DVD, the discussion document invites and enables the group to look at their own life and circumstances in order to ground this in the Big Picture and to see what these things mean for

them where they are.

The focus on Jesus is relentless. He is the vine in whom we are the branches. Fruit is grown in us and through us as we seek his will, understand his purposes and do what is in front of us in gratitude for what he has done, is doing and will do – in restoring all things partially in time now and fully in eternity to come. As Abraham Kuyper put it "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is





The front line:  
fellow tube  
travellers

Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" Greene shows how the Spirit is at work in every follower of Jesus in this great story of rescue and transformation in and through the concrete detail of their life and because their life is in him.

In the first DVD session, the Big Picture, Greene shows us what this means for him personally. To give us a flavour of how we might begin to see where he is taking us with the book...


"For 10 years advertising was my front line, my daily mission field. and over those years I saw God do wondrous things... answering prayer, healing, drawing people to himself, impacting the work itself, [at work to.. ] protect me and guide me, teach me about service and humility, mature me through spectacular character failure, through career disappointment, and through romantic catastrophe.

The point is not that I used to work in advertising so you can trust every word I say.. the point is God worked in advertising and you can trust every word he says, whatever your front line.." (from the DVD)

These aren't a set of holy 'to dos'. Rather, as we look through this biblical lens and join the dots of what God has said and is saying to us with life lived today, our

imagination is sparked, our gratitude overflows, we run to God, we ask for his help, our prayers are invigorated and the Spirit is free to do his ongoing work of rescue and transformation now.

Greene gives a wealth of illustrations and stories. For example, getting to know the fellow tube traveller who becomes a friend through discussing his particular area of interest, Roman history, then inviting him to a men's conference. Or Peter who ministered grace and love through passing on articles to Greene about work, business or culture because he thought he might find them interesting. As Greene says, 'he didn't have to do it' (p.99).

One of the most helpful things about this book and accompanying resources is that it doesn't claim to be the final word. It doesn't claim to replace personal or corporate Bible study, preaching, teaching, 'evangelism' or discipleship 'efforts' as we know them within the local church. Rather it helps us to draw meaning as to how these efforts are actually worked out by real-life disciples on their front line beyond the gathered church, beyond the Bible study, overflowing beyond the discipleship course and coming to fruition in the concrete details of life to his glory. I recommend it highly. 



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