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real life

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Sunday School That Clicks

Lesson 9 / August 1, 2010

# On the Front Lines

for use as

STEP 1 

Lesson 9  
**Focus:**

By your life and death,  
exalt Christ.

Lesson 9  
**Bible Basis:**

Philippians 1:18-29

As we begin a study of Philippians, students will come to understand that being a Christian not only means faithfully living for the Lord now, but leaving a lasting legacy.

OPENING STORY [read it aloud, or make copies and pass it around]:

## SOLDIER FROM 'THE GREAT WAR' BURIED WITH FULL HONORS

**F**ROMELLES, France: The remains of a World War I soldier were recently moved in a four-horse cart to a new cemetery for reburial. The young man was found in a mass grave more than 90 years after a famous battle in the small town of Fromelles [Fraw-mel], in northern France. The man was buried with full military honors in a ceremony attended by Britain's Prince Charles.

The unidentified soldier's headstone reads: "A soldier of the Great War. Known unto God." His nationality is uncertain, but he was either Australian or British.

The 1916 Battle of Fromelles, which lasted less than 24 hours, left more than 5,500 Australians and 1,500 British killed, wounded, or missing. The unsuccessful attack on the German front line was considered the first Australian combat operation of the war and was one of the greatest losses of life in a 24-hour period in Australian history. Originally intended to be a diversion to a bigger battle to the south, the engagement at Fromelles gained no ground and produced only casualties.

One of the few survivors, W. H. "Jimmy" Downing, later recalled: "The air was thick with bullets, swishing in a flat, crisscrossed lattice of death. Hundreds were mown down in the flicker of an eyelid, like great rows of teeth knocked from a comb."

After the battle, the Germans buried the dead in mass graves, and over time, one of those graves was covered by vegetation and became lost. However, an amateur Australian historian discovered the grave in 2008. After two years of exhumation and attempted identification, 249 bodies were reburied this year under marble gravestones laid out in a V shape (for Victory) in a new cemetery in Fromelles.

## Lesson 9

# Memory Verse

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

—Philippians 1:27

Some of the relatives of the other identified soldiers attended the ceremony, which marked the 94th anniversary of the battle. They read from letters and diary entries and well as letters from the commanding officers commending the soldiers' bravery.

Wearing a gray suit adorned with military decorations, Prince Charles said in his eulogy, "In laying this last hero to rest we honor them all. Somehow, he and his friends mustered the incredible courage to climb over the parapets" and into the horrific battle. "We will never know the impact that apocalyptic scene had upon him. I am profoundly humbled by the outstanding bravery of these men, who fought so valiantly."

Photos of the honored soldiers and of objects found in the mass grave were shown on a large screen at the ceremony. One item was a torn and crumpled return ticket to Perth, Australia, which a soldier had stashed in an air-tight section of his gas mask. Archaeologists found over 6,000 objects from the mass grave, including a Bible, coins, and a metal cross.

Only 96 of the bodies found in the common grave have been identified by name, and all are Australians. Another 109 bodies were confirmed to have belonged to the Australian army, but not personally identified. Three were confirmed to be British. The other 42 are classified as unknown.

The Australian and British soldiers of the 1916 Battle of Fromelles were honored for their bravery and courage, for defending their allies on soil that was not their own, and for giving their lives in a battle to defeat the enemy.

While we may not always realize it, there is also a spiritual battle going on around us being waged for hearts and souls, where the stakes are infinitely higher than any human wartime engagement. Not only is it a battle for people's allegiance to Jesus, but it is a battle of choices, as Christians daily choose how they will live their lives and what kind of witness they will show the world. This life-long battle for hearts and minds is every bit as intense as the one fought on the fields of France in World War I.

[Now form small groups and have your class discuss the following questions.]

- ▶ When have you been most aware of the spiritual battle that is going on around you?
- ▶ How would you describe your service for the Lord over the years—steadfast, wavering, lukewarm, something else?
- ▶ Have you ever felt like "retiring" from the battle? Tell something

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about that experience.

- How could a Christian's understanding of the intensity of the battle give him or her courage to stay in the fight over the course of a lifetime?

[When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your *Adult Teacher's Guide*, where you read the Scripture and begin to discuss it.]

News Sources:

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/eu\\_france\\_wwi\\_graves;\\_ylt=AugQKQiTrOV0CyV7cVTeLjes0NUE;\\_ylu=X3oDMTNvNm9qcDFkBGfzc2V0A2FwLzIwMTAwNzE5L2V1X2ZyYW5jZV93d2lfZ3JhdmVzBGNjb2RlA21vc3Rwb3B1bGFyBGNwb3MDNwRwb3MDNARwdANob21lX2Nva2UEc2VjA3luX2hlYWRSaW5lX2xpc3QEc2xrA3d3aXNvbGRpZXJmbw--](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/eu_france_wwi_graves;_ylt=AugQKQiTrOV0CyV7cVTeLjes0NUE;_ylu=X3oDMTNvNm9qcDFkBGfzc2V0A2FwLzIwMTAwNzE5L2V1X2ZyYW5jZV93d2lfZ3JhdmVzBGNjb2RlA21vc3Rwb3B1bGFyBGNwb3MDNwRwb3MDNARwdANob21lX2Nva2UEc2VjA3luX2hlYWRSaW5lX2xpc3QEc2xrA3d3aXNvbGRpZXJmbw--)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Fromelles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fromelles)

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# On the Front Lines

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STEP 4 

Lesson 9  
**Focus:**

By your life and death,  
exalt Christ.

Lesson 9  
**Bible Basis:**

Philippians 1:18-29

Lesson 9  
**Memory Verse**

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—Philippians 1:27

## WELL DONE!

**F**or the Australians and British, the 1916 Battle of Fromelles was a total failure. Thankfully, we know that in our spiritual battle the Lord is already the winner, and we can live confidently for Him every day. We measure success by our obedience to the call to battle, not the results of the engagement. The results belong to the Lord—we must simply do our duty, for as long as we are able, and let the Lord do whatever work He’s going to do in the hearts of those we influence.

The steadfastness of the Philippian believers encouraged the apostle Paul, and he urged them to continue to follow his example of living for the Lord in whatever way he could for as long as the Lord gave him breath. Our age, circumstances, and locations may change, but our life-long commitment to Him does not. The best memorial we can have in this life and the next is His saying to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matt. 25:21).

Ask your students to return to the small groups they had in Step 1 to discuss their answers to the following:

-  Paul told the Philippians he would like to be with the Lord, but there were still things he needed to do here. What would some of those things be for you?
-  What do you think the Lord would say to you in heaven today: “Well done, good and faithful servant”? “There is so much more I wanted you to do”? “I wish I could have counted on you more often”? Something else?
-  What spiritual gifts have you been able to use over the years to do His ministry?
-  What is one legacy of your service to the Lord that exalts Him and could continue to bear fruit even after you are gone?

Close the class in prayer, asking God for the daily courage to enter into whatever battle He calls us to and to be the good and faithful servants He wants us to be throughout our lives.

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