



HELPING OTHERS TO FREEDOM

Experiencing Christ's fullness, and helping others do the same

Part 6: A Case Study

FRANK'S STORY

Frank was born in Belfast at the height of 'the Troubles', he was the youngest of five siblings. His father was in the RUC, working very long hours and finding himself constantly under threat. Many times, the family would hear on the news of an attack on a police patrol and would wonder if dad was involved. Frank remembers his dad, mum and even older siblings having to check under their car for booby trap devices before driving to school in the mornings. Due to the stress and pressure of the job, Frank's father hit the drink. He became a pretty heavy drinker, which meant that whenever he was off duty (which wasn't often) he was very distant and preoccupied. He would often exhibit explosive anger on occasions when the pressure built up.

Things took a turn for the worse in Frank's relationship with his father when Frank turned 16. He started dating a Catholic girl from North Belfast. His dad always said he objected to the relationship because it was a security threat, but Frank felt that there was a bitterness underlying this because she was a Catholic. This, added to his father's drinking, made Frank determine: *'I'll make sure I **never** turn out like my dad!'* The family relationship deteriorated and eventually at 19 Frank and his girlfriend Siobhán ran away to Scotland and secretly got married. There remained a distance between Frank and his parents for some time after that.

A couple of years later, Frank got the tragic news that there had been a bomb in Belfast and his father had been killed. At the time, Frank and Siobhán were expecting their first child. Frank returned home for the funeral and received a good welcome, but after he returned to Scotland he descended into a spiral of depression. Initially he found that alcohol helped him get through his days a bit better, however, he got to the stage where he couldn't operate at all without having a drink. Though he found it hard to admit, the drinking was starting to affect his relationship with Siobhán and Shane, their young son.

As Frank looks into the future he doesn't have much hope at all - in fact, in his worst moments, he has contemplated getting really drunk, going down to his local lough and ending it all. He did try it once, but there were too many people around.

Frank attended a local church with a mate from work and felt as though the preacher was only talking to him. He responded to the invitation to trust Christ as his Saviour. Initially he felt elated and so hopeful for his future, but as time passed things got difficult. The drinking hasn't stopped and he has even found that some of his other problems have increased.

Frank has come to you for prayer:

1. Why do you think Frank has debilitating fear issues and nervous anxiety?
2. Other than love, can you offer more of an explanation as to why Frank turned to Siobhán and committed to marriage so young, leaving for Scotland? Was it all because of the family's objections to Siobhán being Catholic?
3. Apart from obvious grief, can you suggest reasons why Frank descended into a spiral of depression after his father was killed?
4. Why do you think, having determined '**never**' to turn out like his father, Frank started drinking and became distant in his role as a husband and father?
5. From what you know and have learned already on the course can you suggest an outline of a plan for ministry for Frank?