



First Responders

Brad Ortenzi

June 7, 2026

WORSHIP

Begin your group with a time of worship. If someone in your group can lead worship, invite them to lead two or three songs. Alternatively, consider using one or more of these songs from our Sunday morning worship time:

- **Again And Again** (*Red Rocks Worship*)
- **Endless Praise** (*Charity Gayle*)
- **Who Else** (*Gateway Worship*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1. Matthew 5:16
2. Matthew 9:35-36
3. Matthew 11:28
4. Matthew 26:36-39
5. 1 Peter 3:15

OPENING PRAYER

Begin by thanking God for the first responders in your community and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.

Ice Breaker (5-10 min)

Share a time when you witnessed or experienced the help of a first responder (police, fire, EMS). How did that experience impact you?

SERMON OVERVIEW

This message honored first responders while drawing parallels between their sacrificial service and our calling as Christians. Just as first responders run toward crisis while others run away, believers are called to move toward spiritual and human need with courage and compassion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- We are called to be responders, not spectators in the spiritual crises around us
- Spiritual awareness requires intentionality—we must train ourselves to truly see people's needs
- Courage is not the absence of fear but obedience to God despite the cost
- Jesus is our ultimate first responder—He ran toward humanity's crisis when we couldn't save ourselves
- Processing pain and seeking help is strength, not weakness
- Our actions preach the gospel before we ever speak a word

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (35-40 min)

Part 1: Understanding the Call

1. The Central Question: Brad asked, "Am I living as a spectator of God's work, or as a responder to the needs God places in front of me?" How would you honestly answer this question about your current spiritual life?
2. Presence Over Information: In the opening story, the accident victim needed presence more than information. When have you experienced or provided this kind of ministry of presence? Why is simply "being with" someone so powerful?

Part 2: The Four Attributes

Attribute 1: ALERT (Spiritually Aware)

3. Read Matthew 9:35-36. Jesus didn't just look—He saw people's true condition. What prevents us from truly seeing the spiritual needs around us? How can we develop greater spiritual awareness?
4. The OODA Loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) was mentioned as a first responder framework. How might this apply to our spiritual lives? What would it look like to observe the people, places, and spiritual needs around you more intentionally?

Attribute 2: TRAINING (Prepared Through God's Word)

5. Read 1 Peter 3:15. How prepared do you feel to "give an answer for the hope that you have"? What specific steps could you take to grow in your understanding of Scripture and your faith?
6. Brad mentioned that Sunday church is "just the beginning" of our training. What other spiritual disciplines or practices help you grow in your faith? What's one new practice you could commit to?

Attribute 3: COURAGE (Acting Despite Fear)

7. Read Matthew 26:36-39. Jesus experienced deep sorrow and fear, yet chose obedience. What does this teach us about biblical courage? How is it different from worldly courage?
8. Where is God currently calling you to act courageously—to move toward a need rather than away from it? What fears are holding you back?

Attribute 4: SELF-SACRIFICIAL (Serving at Personal Cost)

9. Read Matthew 16:24. What does "taking up your cross" look like in practical, everyday terms? What are you currently sacrificing (or could sacrifice) to follow Jesus more fully?
10. Brad emphasized that "love costs." What has following Jesus cost you personally? How have you experienced blessing through that sacrifice?

Part 3: Processing Trauma & Seeking Help

11. The sermon included a powerful section on processing trauma—not just for first responders, but for all of us. Why do you think people (especially in Christian circles) sometimes view seeking help as weakness rather than wisdom?
12. Read Matthew 11:28. How does Jesus's invitation to the weary change how we view our own burdens? Who in your life might need to hear this invitation right now?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION (10 Mins)

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

ALERT:

- Pray each morning for God to open your eyes to see one person who needs encouragement, help, or the gospel
- Keep a "spiritual awareness journal" noting needs you observe

TRAINING:

- Commit to reading Scripture for 15 minutes daily
- Memorize 1 Peter 3:15 or another verse that strengthens your faith
- Join a Bible study or find a Christian mentor

COURAGE:

- Identify one relationship or situation where God is calling you to act, and take one step toward it
- Share your faith story with someone who doesn't know Jesus
- Stand up for truth in a conversation where it would be easier to stay silent

SELF-SACRIFICIAL:

- Volunteer in a ministry that serves others (homeless shelter, prison ministry, children's program)
- Sacrifice something comfortable (time, money, preference) to meet someone else's need
- Fast from something and use that time to pray for others

Reflection & Prayer Requests

Silent Reflection (2-3 minutes):

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you:

- One area where you've been a spectator instead of a responder
- One person He's calling you to move toward this week
- One fear you need His courage to overcome

Closing Prayer

Share & Pray:

- Have each person share one thing God highlighted during your discussion
- Pray for each other by name, specifically for courage to answer God's call
- Pray for local first responders and their families