

TOUGH TALK!

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2011/12

We have been sending out Tough Talk newsletters for 10 years now to all the people we have had contact with over the years. We do this because we feel strongly that it is important for the Lord's people to know what He is doing up and down our very needy country through a group of ordinary guys who are committed to sharing the good news and who rely on His strength to do this.

Comments from Ian McDowall, founder of Tough Talk:

And Abraham said, My Son, God will provide himself a Lamb for a burnt offering (Genesis 22:8)

Trusting the Lord is such a hard lesson, how often we want to control of our circumstances and keep a hand of all our plans and directions!

Tough Talk for us has always been so different: several years ago, with very little planning or thought, a group of men came together and starting praying and from there we were asked to give testimony and lift weights. At the beginning, the Lord used us predominantly in schools and youth organisations. Then we started taking large meetings in churches and conferences. Over the last few years, the bulk of our work has been in reaching the unreachable men, men who are locked up in prisons. The Lord does truly provide for Himself a Lamb. We need to trust Him!

We would like to thank those who have used Tough Talk during the year and for being a part of seeing people come to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We look forward to working with you again.

Comments on 2011 from Arthur White, founder member of Tough Talk:

We are at the end of another busy, yet great year of sharing the Gospel of Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Tough Talk teams have again visited many churches and this year we have been invited to even more prisons than before. We have heard so many wonderful stories of how people have asked Jesus to be their Lord and Saviour. Here is one:

On a visit to HMP Highpoint an inmate told us how he had been baptised in both water and the Holy Spirit. Whilst sharing his new-found faith and love in Jesus he said that Tough Talk had "saved his life". I of course replied that only Jesus can save and he then gave us the greatest of compliments by saying...." but you told me about Jesus".

For us all in Tough Talk it is as simple as that... we just want to tell others about Jesus Christ and looking at our diary for 2012, it seems that next year is going to be as busy as ever, so we still need your prayers and support.

Highlights of 2011:

Over the years, we have been invited to present the gospel to members of the Army and the Royal Air Force but not the Royal Navy. However this year, we have had the privilege to be invited to present the gospel message to members of all three armed forces:

1: THE ARMY:



At the Headquarters of the 26th Regiment Royal Artillery near Dusseldorf, Germany.

A Tough Talk team consisting of Ian, Arthur, Simon and Mike left Stansted early for a visit to the British Army barracks in Gutersloh, Germany. This is a very large establishment with thousands of soldiers (and also families) and is the headquarters of the 26th Regiment Royal Artillery. We were invited there

by the Soldiers and Airmen's Bible Reading Association (SABRA) and the Padre of the Regiment.



Simon speaking to the soldiers



Bench press competition

Tough Talk teams have also visited the Military Correctional Training Centre in Colchester on several occasions.

2. THE ROYAL AIR FORCE:



At the Marham RAF base, Norfolk.

Marham is one of the largest and busiest in the RAF, operating 3 Squadrons of Tornado GR4 aircraft in the attack and reconnaissance roles. In addition, the Station is home to a number of other key RAF units. The team was invited to present their stories, demonstrate powerlifting and to share the gospel with airmen and staff at the base.

3: THE ROYAL NAVY:



At HMS Nelson, Portsmouth.

.A Tough Talk team recently visited HMS the heart of the city of Portsmouth and has home to almost two-thirds of the Royal 42 destroyers, Type 23 frigates and a mine countermeasure squadron, as well as fishery protection and training units. The initial invitation to the base was received from the Fleet Chaplaincy at HMS Nelson and was hosted by the Naval Christian Fellowship.

Nelson at the Royal Navy Base in Portsmouth which is at been an integral part of the city since 1194. The base is Navy's surface ships, including the aircraft carriers, Type 42 destroyers, Type 23 frigates and a mine countermeasure squadron, as well as fishery protection and training units. The initial invitation to the base was received from the Fleet Chaplaincy at HMS Nelson and was hosted by the Naval Christian Fellowship.



The venue: The "Victory Club



Sailors in the audience

The audience consisted of naval recruits at the final stage of their training before becoming full members of the Navy and also present were members of the training staff and the Naval Christian Fellowship. The presentation from the team was very well received.

The New “Tough Talk” book:



It is now more than 10 years since the publication of the first edition of the Tough Talk book. Since then, thousands of copies have been handed out at meetings in churches, schools, colleges and prisons. As a result, the book has had to be reprinted several times. Over these years, the guy's lives have changed as they have faced the challenge of living the Christian life in today's culture. Both Arthur and Ian's stories now include a section on how their lives have changed as they have continued to live with Jesus as the centre. Also during this time, the make-up of the Tough Talk team has changed and Steve Johnson is not now part of the group so his story is not included in this edition.

Copies of the new book have been sent to most prisons:

Over the past two years, we have placed thousands of copies of the first Tough Talk book into prisons and have received, and continue to receive amazing letters from prisoners who have been greatly affected by reading it and many have given their lives to Jesus Christ. Accordingly, immediately following its publication, we placed 25-50 copies of the follow-up book into nearly every prison in the UK.

A copy of the “Tough Talk in Prisons” DVD has been sent to every prison Chaplain:

This year, we have sent a copy of this short promotional DVD to every prison chaplain in the UK. In the DVD we highlight the approach we use to present the gospel..... powerlifting demonstrations, advice about weight training, warnings of the danger of anabolic steroid use and of course, personal testimonies and a gospel challenge. We were most privileged to be able to film in HMP Glenochil and HMP Guernsey and to use comments from prisoners. The Governor of Glenochil was very supportive of our work and his comments play an important part in the DVD.

We have made more prison visits than ever before:

Perhaps as a result of the book and the DVD, we received very many more invitations to prisons during 2011 than ever before. As well as visiting English prisons, we have regularly visited prisons in Scotland and have also been to a prison in Northern Ireland. And looking at our diary for 2012, we already have visits arranged for every month.

Testimonies from prisoners resulting from visits or from the Tough Talk book:

One of the most significant developments during the year is that we receive many letters resulting from our prison visits.

This is an extract from a letter from a prison chaplain:

“Just a brief note to say what a great time we had with Tough Talk.....This visit took place in the middle of a visit from both Her Majesty's Inspectors of prisons and Ofsted Inspectors. The Inspector stayed in for the whole of one presentation and in the end-of-week feedback described the afternoon as "inspirational" mentioning that one could have heard a pin drop. He also asked if we had any objection to his mentioning Tough Talk by name in the final HMI report. I said that I could see no objection”.

The following quotes are from letters received from prison inmates:

“I read both your stories from the Tough Talk book....they both touched me in different ways, but down to the same principle they related to me in the same way. They made me think of Christianity differently and now I want to give myself to God. I want to become a better person and really follow the word of Christ. I feel I am ready to accept Jesus as my Saviour.....you showed me the light and now I know there is hope for me to touch the light.....”

"I have just finished saying the prayer in the back of your book, the stories of the three bouncers. As I finished saying this prayer, I had a tingling sensation come over myself and I could feel tears welling up in me. I have realised that I was living my life by the wrong set of morals and standards. I have never felt so compelled to do something as I do now writing this letter. In my life I have committed and participated in some dreadful things that I feel a deep shame for.....I don't know how Jesus can help me with this but I feel that I need to have him in my life....."

"I am on remand for stabbing and robbery...I have done a lot of things I regret and have been involved in things I wish I hadn't. Until reading your book, I was convinced this was the only lifestyle for me....I know there is more to life now. I have been going to church every week now, and have realised I can be forgiven. It feels so good, like a load has been taken off my shoulders. So just a quick note to say thank you all so much."

"I attended the church service in chapel last week where you came and gave a talk. I have read the book you gave me and I've got to say its the most powerful set of stories I've ever heard.....I loved the way you came across and I so want to change my life but I'm struggling. I wondered if you could perhaps write to me with some more information and some words to help me out!"

"I met with Arthur and Ian in prison and they told me about this love and forgiveness from a special person called Jesus and the story they told me touched me deeply....I decided to go the Chapel and after a while I got baptized.....I got confirmed and my life has changed so much. I feel wanted, loved and like someone cares for me"

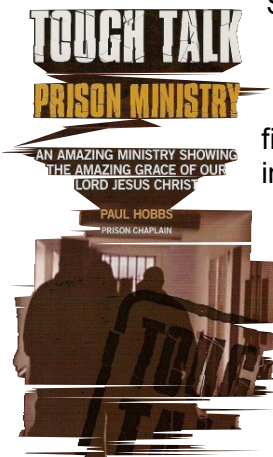
Here are extracts from a letter we received from a woman in a Scottish prison who has been affected by reading the Tough Talk books:

".....I cried my eyes out after reading your books. I've started praying and reading the bible. It has given me comfort in doing seven and a half years(in prison).....I really want to turn my life around. I hope that God can help me the way he has you.....your life stories have given me faith. Thank you for the Why Jesus you sent.... I don't know how to pray I just talk to God and I want him to be part of my life...I'm sick of the life I have been leading...I hope to find peace happiness and forgiveness through Jesus....Please pray for me."

Comments from Mike Steward, Chairman of Trustees

Once again, we have had a busy year. The most significant change is that we have visited at least one prison each week throughout the year and sometimes more. Furthermore, the team is often asked to do two meetings during their visit and this enables even more inmates to be contacted with the gospel.

We now receive several letters each week from prisoners asking for help in coming to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour, for help in living the Christian life and suggestions for churches to attend on their release.



We have produced a promotional flyer to highlight our prison work. In it, we point out our need of financial help to continue it as prison chaplains generally do not have the necessary budgets to finance such visits. The flyer has been sent to everyone on our mailing list. Early responses to this initiative have been encouraging.

Early in the year, our van became unreliable and expensive and finally "died" on us in April. We are pleased to say that we have received commitments from friends of the charity that have enabled us to finance the purchase of a new van and we have had this since April.

As usual, I conclude with a request for prayer for the team. We are so aware that without the anointing of the Lord the ministry would be powerless.

Tough Talk flyer

TOUGH TALK!

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