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Ever since the launching of Frontline Fellowship over 12 years ago we have received relentless criticism. When Marxist Mozambique was closed to missionaries, had banned the Bible and forbade evangelism, Frontline Fellowship missionaries slipped into war-torn Mozambique. We smuggled in tons of Bibles and conducted widespread literature and film evangelism in the towns, villages and even military bases. For this we were accused by friends, family and fellow church members of being **“irresponsible”, “reckless”, “foolhardy”, “stupid”,** and of **“breaking the law”!**

I believe that we were obeying the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to *‘go and make disciples of all nations...’*

Others were concerned that what we were doing was in disobedience to the Marxist laws forbidding evangelism. We sincerely wanted to serve the persecuted Christians of Mozambique by delivering the desperately needed Bibles, Gospel records, tracts, and parcels of food, clothing and medicines. But our critics said that:

“It can’t be done”, “It’s too dangerous”, “This isn’t the right time”, “This isn’t the right way”, “You’re going to get yourselves killed”,
etc.

In time, however, the Lord vindicated our mission. Over the last 12 years Frontline missionaries have conducted over 12000 meetings and travelled millions of kilometres - often in war zones over landmine and ambush endangered roads. Yet we have never lost a worker. We have swum across crocodile infested rivers, come under fire, driven through ambushes, been bombarded with mortars, been imprisoned and come down with various tropical diseases. (All these things have actually happened. No exaggeration!). Yet the Lord has consistently protected our workers through all these dangers. All our workers are alive, free and healthy. That is a monumental testimony to the grace of our all powerful God.

However, that hasn’t stopped the criticisms. Nor, I suppose, should it. We need to remain open to rebuke and correction. **“Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”** Prov. 27:5. There are many occasions when the Lord has used the criticisms of even strangers to challenge and

guide us. I certainly appreciate critical feedback - although it's nicer when the rebuke is based on facts, balanced with the broader picture and constructive.

Since the changes in SA, I have had speaking engagements cancelled by churches fearing that I would be *"too controversial"*, warnings from church leaders not to be *"so outspoken"* and *"confrontational"*

. And the church where our Fellowship has met every month for 6 years has asked us not to meet there any more.

Nevertheless, because it is our desire to remain accountable to the Body of Christ and because some of the issues raised in these letters may echo your concerns: here are some examples of recent correspondence.

"Our country is still bleeding from wounds inflicted by various groups on each other. These wounds need to have the oil of healing applied, not to have them constantly hurt. All around us we see signs of a new spirit of tolerance, forgiveness and understanding. That is, excluding the Frontline Fellowship. You seem determined to resurrect the past and to discourage people from living together in mutual love and understanding. That, of course, is your prerogative in a free and democratic country."

"Thank you for your letter. I do fear, however, that some misunderstandings are involved in your letter because Frontline Fellowship is also deeply involved in "reconciliation, reconstruction and healing" - to use the words of your letter. For over 12 years of Frontline Fellowship's ministry, evangelism in the war zones has been our primary focus.

"I am deeply committed to the Biblical ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20); reconstruction (Nehemiah 2:17, Isaiah 58:121; and healing (Isaiah 53:5). If in my writing or preaching, I refer to injustices and atrocities, it is not to cause further affliction. Not at all. I believe ignoring these festering sores will cause more permanent damage. Like gangrene, such evils need to be cut out for the health of the whole body.

"A fireman is not being negative if he fights fires. A doctor is not helping his patient if he tolerates infection. A policeman's job is not to ignore crime. And a minister's job is to expose and preach against sin (Ephesians 5:11; Psalm 94:16).

“A missionary’s job has been described in this way: To comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. This is what we are called to do (2 Tim 4:2-5).

“I can understand that some of the articles of Frontline Fellowship News would make you uncomfortable, even angry perhaps. However, I would appreciate knowing if there is anything we have written or published which you have found to be un-Biblical or untrue. Whether it is popular or not should not be our concern. That it is always factually correct and Biblically sound is our overwhelming concern. I would value your constructive criticism.

“We do not want to be naive and gullible, engaging in wishful thinking and self delusion. A government which includes many hardline Marxists should be cause for concern. Any government which comes to power through an election which involved such a vast amount of fraud should not be automatically trusted. The proliferation of ever worse pornography, gambling and degenerate entertainment, should be cause for alarm. The multi-faith prayers at the inauguration of the president and the abolition of prayer at the opening of Parliament should lead us to humble repentance and urgent intercession (2 Chronicles 7:14).

“Am I being unreasonable if I maintain a healthy scepticism for the public promises and pronouncements of politicians? Perhaps you believe I am. Nevertheless, what we both wholeheartedly agree on is the authority of the Bible as God’s holy and infallible Word, the Deity of Christ, the Atonement as the only basis for salvation and our priority to obey the Great Commission.”

“Please remove us from your mailing list. I find myself increasingly uneasy with your militaristic spirit. Your recent ‘Lamentations for South Africa’ was most distressing. It is a very sad commentary that as a Christian you cannot find any reason to rejoice over a peaceful transition of power in your home country. I trust that in time you will come to see that Communism is not the enemy, but Satan himself.”

“Thank you for your letter and for your feedback on our newsletter. I really do appreciate criticism, whether constructive or otherwise. However, I am surprised that you describe us as having a “militaristic spirit”. Although our Frontline Fellowship is a fellowship of Christians from a military background, we are first and foremost a missionary fellowship and I wouldn’t have thought that there was a “militaristic spirit” about us. The only spirit in Frontline Fellowship, I

trust, is the Holy Spirit.

“Our mission exists to assist the persecuted churches. We have for the last 12 years been involved in taking food, clothing, medical supplies, Bibles, Gospel literature and other relief aid to the people who are suffering in the wars of Mozambique and Angola and helping those who are in prison for their faith. I do not perceive anything that we have done as being militaristic, but essentially missionary and Christian.

“You say that my article “Lamentations for South Africa” was most distressing. Certainly, I found it most distressing too, that is why I wrote it. The book of Lamentations itself, in the Bible, is extremely distressing. I am sure that Jeremiah found it very distressing to see his home city of Jerusalem siezed by the Babylonians.

“I am somewhat surprised that you find it offensive that I, as a Christian, seek in the Scriptures a Biblical way to respond to the tremendously traumatic events of recent years in our part of the world. I do not know if you have ever lived in South Africa or Mozambique or Angola. I am not aware if you have ever lived in or visited a Communist country. I am surprised that you say that “Communism is not the enemy, but Satan himself”. Well, of course satan himself is the enemy, but he has used many human tools through the centuries: the Roman Empire, the Spanish Inquisition, Islam and Communism to murder millions upon millions of Christians. Surely all Christians should recognise that Communism is an enemy, even though satan is the enemy.

“I am afraid that you are very mistaken to describe the transition of power in my home country as a “peaceful” one. Over 70 000 people were brutally murdered over the last 4,5 years in this transition of power to the ANC. Tens of thousands of people were shot, burnt alive or hacked to death by Marxist mobs to bring about this transition of power. Over 3 500 schools were burned down by the ANC and the PAC and their comrades. Over 8 000 000 people lost their jobs in the sanctions, disinvestments, strikes, boycotts and economic sabotage that was foisted upon our country by the ANC and their supporters overseas in the United Nations and the West.

“In the light of this, I fail to see how you can describe the transition of power in my country as “peaceful”. I have some friends who have lost loved ones and have some friends who themselves have been murdered in this transitional time. No foreign armchair observer would be able to convince South Africans who have suffered through all these atrocities, that the transition in our country was either “Christian” or “peaceful”.

“You have asked us to remove you from our mailing list. This we will do. However, I do hope that you will not remove us from your prayer list.”

Of course we have received many other accusations, but time has rendered most of them embarrassingly redundant. For example: **“There’s no persecution in Mozambique.”** From 1982 to 1986 senior officials of the Baptist Union of SA rebuked me for publishing testimonies of persecuted Christians in Mozambique! However, after the death of the dictator Samora Machel, even the secular press reported on the end of religious persecution, and the return of confiscated churches in Mozambique.

Incredible as it may seem now, we were initially accused of exaggeration and even lying when we reported on the widespread starvation in Mozambique! Many church and media people in the early ‘80’s denied that Mozambique was exporting food in exchange for weapons while hundreds of thousands died of a man-made famine. Yet, all of our reports of starving tribesmen reduced to eating the bark of trees, insects and boiled grass was confirmed by later news reports and international aid agencies.

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.” Luke 6:26

Our goal is not to be popular with man but faithful to God. Please pray with us that we will be sensitive to the guidance, correction and rebuke of God.

Peter Hammond