

RUAVRP

Ready:

"May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains."

-2 Timothy 1:16 (HCSB)

Set

They are rare and very hard to come by, but every once in a while, you can spot one. There aren't too many in locker rooms or on ball fields, but, once they are identified, they stick out BIG TIME! When a "VRP" is around, you feel like a million bucks. They just have a way of making you feel special. What is a VRP? It is a Very Refreshing Person. These people breathe life into the ordinary and transform it. As lifters, they have an ability to bless others and bring words of encouragement.

I have three specific friends—Jimmy, John and Scott—who are model VRPs. Every time I talk with them I feel like I have a red cape on my back and big "S" on my chest. They make me feel like Superman because they speak words of life into me—words drenched in hope, not words of death. They aren't just "make you feel good" words, but "we believe in you" words. What a difference! They see God's greatness in me. They inspire me. Their encouragement isn't fake (which can be sniffed out miles away), but is powerful, purpose-filled edification.

The opposite of a VRP is a "VDP." And, unfortunately VDPs are everywhere—a dime a dozen. VDP stands for Very Draining Person. They take chunks of flesh out of you every time you encounter them and drain the life out of you. They criticize, complain, whine, make excuses and find faults. That is their natural style of communication. Negative, negative, negative is their approach. And there is no relief for them (or you). Their words are laced with destruction and they spew their poison on anyone who dares to listen. Their goal is pull you down to their level of misery. They don't have a "glass is half empty" mentality; they have a "glass is completely empty" mentality. They lurk in neighborhoods, teams, churches and families—basically everywhere you find people. When they walk in the room, you run because they are backing up the truck, getting ready to dump on you.

In the Bible, Onesiphorus was a Very Refreshing Person. He brought hope and healing. He's only mentioned twice in the Bible, both times in 2 Timothy. Obviously, he's not a popular Bible character, but he was well-known to the apostle Paul because of the encouragement he delivered. In fact, his name actually means "to bring help or profit-bearing." He did exactly that!

Everybody needs VRPs, and Onesiphorus was one of Paul's main VRPs. Paul got hammered by others, both Christians and non-Christians. He received the 360-degree pounding often because when he made a stand for the Truth, an attack would always come—as it still does

for us today.

During one of Paul's darkest hours in a Roman prison, Onesiphorus risked his life to find Paul and bring refreshment to him. In the passage, the word "refreshed" means "to cool again." Onesiphorus was like a breath of fresh air who breathed life into Paul and brought encouragement, hope and transformation. I love that the verse says "often refreshed." Onesiphorus made a habit out of refreshing. When Onesiphorus arrived at the jail, Paul probably pumped his hands into the air and screamed, "Yes!" Even the great Apostle Paul needed some good refreshing.

I don't think you can refresh others too much. I doubt anyone has ever said to a VRP like Onesiphorus, "I am already full of encouragement today. You can take your refreshing elsewhere and find someone else to bless because I'm good! Just move along."

Refreshers are essential on sports teams. Unfortunately, in sports, there is often a spirit of conquering others and tearing them down. It's hard for athletes and coaches to refresh others. It doesn't come naturally. Christian coaches and athletes need to hijack the sports world and start motivating, encouraging and inspiring through building up, not tearing down. We should set the standard. Everywhere you turn, there should be examples of FCA'ers refreshing, building and bringing life into the locker rooms, onto the fields and into the team huddles. It sounds weird, but competitors should see sports as a platform to pour out love to others. Maybe it could start a new movement of doing sports God's way!

The question is RUAVRP (Are you a very refreshing person?). The challenge is not whether you have VRPs in your life, but are you one? Do you bring life to people? When you walk into the room, do people run or do they pump their hands into the air? Your words can unlock God's greatness in others. You need to be committed to infusing life into others through your intentional words of nourishment. Let people feast off your encouragement.

Go

1. Who do you know that is a Very Refreshing Person? How about Very Draining Person?
2. If we interviewed your friends, which would your friends say you are? Why?
3. What are some specific ways that you can develop a ministry of refreshment?
4. Why are VRPs so needed in the world of sports? Give examples of how VRPs can transform teams.
5. Do you see God's greatness in others? How can that perspective change your relationships?

Workout

1. Ephesians 4:29
2. 1 Timothy 1:13-18

Overtime

"Father, there is fresh power at the foot of the cross. I want to be refreshed by You and used to pour out Your goodness to others. I want to be a lifter—a refresher. Help me to be a Very Refreshing Person every day. Too often I get focused on myself and do not see the opportunities to bless others with words and actions. Show me how I need to minister to those with whom I interact. You are so good to me. Thank You for loving me and refreshing me all the time. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."



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