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Dear Friends,

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I spent a week at Camp Roberts counseling soldiers who are deploying to Iraq and the peace keeping mission to Kosovo. Some of my friends have asked me, "I thought you retired from the Army Reserve?" The answer to that is "yes and no." I did retire from the reserve system but joined the State Military Reserve which most people have never heard of. It is a state organization that supports the reserves and Guard which is made up of mainly retired military personnel. It is organized by the state to back-fill for the Guard in case they were ever federalized and sent off to war. At that point, the State Military Reserve (SMR) would back-fill and cover California for any natural disaster or civil disturbance. By joining the SMR, it allows me to stay involved in supporting our troops. Since we are still at war, I feel an obligation to do whatever I can to help support our soldiers. My friends tell me I am having a hard time hanging up my uniform and that may be true. At the same time, I see so many young soldiers going off to war and coming home with so many issues I want to do whatever I can to help them.

One case in point was Sergeant Smith (not his real name). He came to my station, and I asked him if he had any concerns about being deployed, which he did and he began to tell me his story. His son, who was shot while on duty in Iraq, is now paralyzed and is a paraplegic and had just come home from Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio to be told by his nineteen year-old wife that she wasn't going to spend the rest of her life married to a paraplegic as she walked out on him. The father brought his son home to live with him and his wife and his other two children (ages ten and eight). The soldier told me he can't leave at this time and expect his wife to care for their three children one of whom is their paraplegic son. I agreed with him that this is a real family hardship and that he has not only served his country well but so has his son. I asked the soldier if he had talked to his commander and chain of command and he shared he had and they were not supportive and told him he would be battle-rostered and would deploy with the unit. I took the soldier to the OIC (officer in charge) of the SRP (soldier readiness program) and argued his case. To make a long story short, after arguing with some higher ranking officers, I finally convinced them to make the man non-deployable. As you could expect, the soldier thanked me profusely. I must admit, when I lay my head on my pillow that night and prayed for this soldier and his combat-wounded son, I felt really good about what I had done!

It is the most dreadful call I respond to: "Officer Down!" That was the call that came in a few weeks ago. I was extremely frustrated because I was at Camp Roberts when the call came out. One of our officers was off-duty and riding his motorcycle down a major street when a car didn't see him and came over on him in his lane. He struck the officer sending him to the pavement. When I talked to the officer, he said, "I tried to get up but my leg wouldn't work and I was worried that cars behind would focus on the car that hit me and wouldn't see me, so I rolled over as fast as I could to the gutter

and curb.” Fortunately, this fast-thinking officer reacted quickly enough he may have saved his life. It is sad, but when he arrived at the hospital, the doctors told him he would never walk again. So far, this officer has undergone two surgeries; both have gone well and he is up and walking with the help of a walker. He needs to go through more surgeries repairing the seven fractures in his leg and the other fractures in his knee. The doctors are still pessimistic, but the officer is optimistic and driven to prove them all wrong. To add to the issues, his wife is 8 ½ months pregnant expecting their first child. Please pray for this officer that the surgeries and physical therapy would go well, that he will walk again, and that his baby is delivered without any complications.

I rode with an officer this past week and as I entered his car he said, “I just came from a dead body call. He then shared that the call came out at 6:20 a.m. of a thirty-seven year-old female found dead in her parent’s home. He talked about the call and how it affected him. Then he went on to say that his grandfather died and it raised questions about death. He asked me if I believed there was life after death. If so, where do dead people go? Do we all go to the same place? It was a great opportunity to share with him how God created the first human being and breathed into him and he became a “living soul.” Not just a body but “a living soul” and that a soul lasts forever. This of course raised more questions in him, and I was able to talk about life after death and heaven and hell. “Do all people go on living?” “Do we all go to the same place?” I explained how faith, belief, and trust in our Savior secure a place in heaven and that people who don’t do that and are evil don’t have eternal life but eternal death. It was a great ride and a great discussion. Pray for me as I will be riding with this officer again and following up with him.

It was somewhat ironic when I received a call the next day from a friend who goes to a church where I used to be on staff, and she asked me if I would follow up with a family. She shared that this family had just lost their thirty-seven year-old daughter. I was very familiar with the incident and made contact with the mother who is overwhelmed with her daughter’s death. She wanted certain information surrounding the cause of death. The mom does not have any faith background and is at a complete loss. I began building a bridge to her by following up with a friend of mine who is a Deputy Coroner and was able to give this mother some information about the cause of death and pending investigation. As I followed up with this heart-broken and grief-stricken mother, I was able to help her with funeral arrangements, get information from our coroner, and provide her with grief counseling and bereavement materials. As I sat with her, I learned that she had attended a church in her youth. We talked about the Lord and His comfort for her at this time and she is very open. Please pray for me as I follow up with her and will be inviting her and her husband to attend church with me. Also pray that she and her husband will open their hearts and allow the Lord’s loving arms to come around them and that they might come to know Him personally.

In His Service,

Tim Thompson, D. Min., CTR
Chief Chaplain



PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR

- ◆ For the mother and father whose thirty-seven old daughter died suddenly in her sleep
- ◆ For the officer who is spiritually seeking the meaning of life and death
- ◆ For our soldiers and families who keep deploying into harm's way
- ◆ For my father who just returned from the hospital from pneumonia -- he had an arterial aortic aneurysm repair two months ago and is having a hard time bouncing back, also pray for my mother who is bed-bound
- ◆ Also pray for my parent's grief as my sister accidentally killed herself
- ◆ For all of our soldiers, sailors, Air Force members, Coast Guard members, and Marines serving in harm's way