



Sierra Law Enforcement Chaplaincy

November 2010 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

It was early on a Thursday evening when the chaplain who was on-call for me was paged by the dispatcher and asked to respond to a suicide. A husband had arrived home from work and found a suicide note from his wife. He went searching for her and found that she had hanged herself in the garage. He immediately called 911 and the operator walked him through the steps of performing CPR, but the resuscitation was unsuccessful. When the chaplain arrived, as you can imagine, the husband was hysterical lying on the living room floor screaming intermittently. The chaplain knelt down beside him on the floor and identified himself, but there was no response. He could hear the husband muttering a prayer. After some time, they made eye contact with each other and were able to get him up off the floor. Naturally, the chaplain stayed giving the other family members comfort and doing the best he could to console them. Fortunately, the family members are believers and could draw comfort knowing that the wife is with the Lord. Their faith and beliefs were certainly giving them the strength to endure such a horrific event.

I think I have mentioned before that my brother, who died twenty years ago, had been a dialysis patient for twenty years and in the course of his treatments ended up marrying his dialysis nurse. Growing up, our family would go to the hospital often as my brother would be near death's door. Since he was handicapped, I often provided the power for his wheelchair and went with him to school or his handicapped Boy Scout troop meetings. I have a very tender spot in my heart for dialysis patients since I understand a little bit of what they are going through.

At Marshall Hospital, where I am also providing chaplain coverage, I met a young lady working in the medical records office who was a gifted writer and a dialysis patient herself. I read some of her poetry and it was excellent! She has also battled with diabetes her whole life, and the disease has caused her to have to stop working. Her husband of two years told her he hadn't signed on for this and left her and filed for divorce. Over the past year, this young lady has been in and out of the hospital many times. Every time I know she is in the hospital, I visit her and share my faith with her. She was very depressed and discouraged and I tried to do the best I could to encourage her and have her embrace a faith in the Lord who would be a tremendous support in her time of need.

The past six months, she had been in the hospital every month. She would be hospitalized for two weeks and then discharged and then hospitalized another two weeks, etc. Everyone could see she was going downhill. I told her that when she got out of the hospital I would take her to her dialysis treatment and then to lunch some day, but I never had the chance because she died a few weeks ago. One morning her mother got up to find her daughter on the front porch in full cardiac arrest. Her mother who is an RN attempted to do CPR on her daughter but it failed. I went to their home and met with mom, dad, and her brother who were in shock,



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disbelief and depressed. I find it very hard to minister to people who do not share the same faith and are not interested. I respect their right to their autonomy to make their own decisions, and I know I can't force them to embrace the Lord. At the same time, I often walk away feeling despondent and depressed like I failed because I know that to have a faith in the Lord would give them a resource and coping abilities that are supernatural. I officiated at the young lady's memorial service and shared God's love for her. My heart ached because I knew some of the people there would not share the same beliefs. I was asked to have a celebration of life at the hospital for the employees who had worked with this young lady and they emphasized "It is not to be religious!" Again, I felt disheartened. I certainly wanted to celebrate this young lady's life for she was a great person, but at the same time, to ignore God's hand of hope for the next life seemed empty to me.

A few days later, I received a phone call from a Christian deputy for whom I had performed his wedding twelve years earlier and he asked me to come out and ride with him. So a few days after that, I dragged myself out of bed at 4:30 a.m. to make it to day shift to ride with this deputy. I was worried about him because his marriage has been very rocky. My fears were confirmed as he told me that he and his wife have filed for divorce and it looks like there is no turning back. I rode with him for eight hours, and we talked about everything imaginable, faith, betrayal, divorce, God, salvation, forgiveness, sin, confession and a host of other topics. I am glad the Lord put me in this ministry because many Christian officers have no one they can talk to. They aren't going to share their problems with their supervisor or fellow officers who are not believers, and often, they won't even share it with their pastor because many pastors don't understand the dynamics of law enforcement. Please pray for my friend as he goes through this divorce because he really wants to live his life for the Lord.

In His Service,

/s/ Tim Thompson

Tim Thompson, D. Min., C.T.R.
Chief Chaplain

PLEASE PRAY WITH ME FOR...

- the man whose wife committed suicide
- the family who lost their 26 year-old daughter
- my mother, Ruth, as she tries to adjust to life without my father
- a Christian deputy going through a divorce
- a retired sergeant who is battling cancer
- an officer out on a back injury
- an officer who states he is being discriminated against
- the family who lost their mother and father in a traffic accident