



Dr. Timothy W. Thompson, CHAPLAIN

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Dear Friends,

The changes that have recently taken place in our country have put many people under a tremendous amount of stress. I have talked to people who have lost their jobs, been laid off, lost their homes to foreclosure, had a reduction of pay or furlough, and many who have watched their retirement accounts wither from this struggling economy. For some, the stress is too great and they just can't cope, and as a result, I have seen a dramatic increase in suicides recently. Sunday afternoon, I was called out to comfort a ninety year-old woman after her husband had gone out to their woodshed and had taken his own life. Not only was his wife in pain, but their seventy year-old daughter was hysterical. As in most cases, the survivors are the ones who suffer! Suicide leaves family members not only in a state of shock and bewilderment, but it leaves so many unanswered questions. The "Why?" question is always there, and after the sadness and despair subside, there is often anger. Their anger is focused on how selfish their loved one had been by doing this leaving them with all the fallout of hurt, pain, and the details that must be dealt with. People often experience guilt as well, since we believe one should not be angry with a deceased person. They feel guilty thinking somehow they were responsible, or they should have seen it coming, they should have been able to stop them or that it is their fault, that somehow they "drove them to it." For those reasons, we as chaplains will devote many hours ministering to the survivors knowing that this line of thinking is not something that goes away in one or two sessions.

Three days later, I was called out late at night to a mobile home park where the manger and his wife had gotten into a domestic dispute. The man told his wife that he was going to kill himself. She actually tried to wrestle the shotgun away from her husband, and she said when she saw the look in his eye, she knew he was going to kill her and would probably kill himself. For her own safety, she ran to the next door neighbor to call 911. While running to their home she heard a gunshot and she was praying that her husband had not taken his own life. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case for the man had shot himself. I went to the scene and my other chaplain, Steve Shortes, went to the home where the wife was to minister to her. One difficulty of being a minister in a small town is you come in contact with people you know well at the worse tragedies in their lives, and this was one of those situations. I realized that this man and woman are members of the church I attend. A few minutes later, my pastor arrived at the neighbor's home to minister to her. I continued to stay at the scene for one of the officers who had been involved in the shooting a few weeks earlier who was there to assist with the investigation. I stayed with my officers, and after the scene was secure, I spent more time with the officer I mentioned. It is not uncommon for one traumatic incident to trigger stress and memories of a former traumatic incident. I spent some time with the officer making sure he was doing okay. A few days later, I went to the woman's home to follow up with her. My heart hurt as she shared her pain with me. Again, that familiar question;

“Why?” comes up. I explained no one will ever be able to answer that question. She then poured out her confusion, pain, sorrow, anger and heartache. The Bible tells us that we are to “...weep with those who weep...,” and this was one of those times when all I could do was weep. I then shared with her a support group that meets here locally for people who have lost a loved one suddenly or traumatically. It did make me feel better knowing that my pastor will be following up with her in the days ahead and the woman who is in charge of women’s ministries will also be reaching out to her.

That afternoon I talked to my pastor and he informed me that funeral services for this man were to be held in four days. He asked me if I would be willing to participate to which I assured him I would be happy to assist and minister to this family any way I could.

Last night was another one of those occasions to “...weep with those who weep...” I received a call from the Sheriff’s dispatcher and she sounded quite emotional -- which I knew was unusual since they hear every conceivable story. She told me that one of our deputy’s brothers had been found out in the National Forest and he had taken his own life. The dispatcher told me that the deputy was at his father’s home. I responded immediately, and when I arrived at the home it was filled with family. There were the father, mother, brothers, sisters-in-law, children, grandchildren, and the widow. I spent a long time ministering to each one individually. It turned out that I knew the father and I had fished with him in some bass tournaments about fifteen years ago, so it was good that I had that connection with him.

There were certain spiritual issues about suicide that we discussed, and I was able to share with them from the Scriptures that God still loves people even when they aren’t in a good place or thinking clearly. The father told me, “Tim, even though this has ripped my heart out, you have brought me some comfort.” Later that evening when I left, I thanked the Lord that I could bring some comfort in the midst of such a tragic event. As I left, I went around to each person in the family and gave them some literature on grief, sudden death, suicide and explaining death to children. I have learned over the years to keep a file of assorted topics in my car for the scenes that I am called out to so I can provide comfort and written literature to hurting people to help them after I am gone.

As I close this letter, I would like you to know that the economy has also had an adverse effect on our ministry. Donations are down, and unfortunately, calls for service are increasing. We have less support to provide for increased ministry needs. If you can help us financially at this time, we would greatly appreciate it. I am sure I don’t have to tell you the strain that financial stress puts on us and the challenges we face. Please pray for our situation and pray about a part you could have in helping us. Thank you for your continued financial and prayer support.

In His Service,  
Tim Thompson, D. Min., CTR  
Chief Chaplain



### **PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR**

- ◆ The mother and father who lost their 31 year-old son
- ◆ The 31 year-old's fiancé.
- ◆ The family and children whose husband/father died
- ◆ Those brave officers who keep the peace and protect us
- ◆ Family members who are recovering from the homicide committed on their street
- ◆ The family whose son was killed by the neighbor
- ◆ The neighbor who killed the neighbors relative