

GOD’S WORD for Peace Officers

7.0 Tactical Edition Bible

INTRODUCTION

By

Chaplain Stephen C. Lee, M.Div.

This introduction is not intended for legal, law enforcement, or psychological advice, but for religious information. Always seek appropriate legal, psychological, or other assistance — exercise your due diligence. Most importantly please know this introduction to God’s Word is simply that, an honest but imperfect human effort to point you to the perfect Word of God we all need in our lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

p. 6

SECTION ONE — THE PATH TO PEACE FOR A PEACE OFFICER

A Cop's Road of Conflict: <i>"Can God's true truth help me with my truth?"</i>	p. 8
God's Word Spotlights Our <i>"Good Shepherd" Champion: "Can I win?"</i>	p. 9
God's Word Provides Spiritual Situational Awareness: <i>"Why listen?"</i>	p. 10
God's Word Is for Peace Officers: <i>"How do I find peace?"</i>	p. 12
God's Word Certifies Officers: <i>"Can a cop be a Christian?"</i>	p. 15
God's Two Jurisdictions: <i>"An eye for an eye" or "turn the other cheek?"</i>	p. 16
God's Word Lays Down God's Law: <i>"What is God's law?"</i>	p. 23
God's Law Guides Society's Laws: <i>"Why should I honor God's law?"</i>	p. 23
God's Precepts Define Our Principles: <i>"Does law need The Lawgiver?"</i>	p. 24
God's Law Convicts Us: <i>"Can I justify myself before God?"</i>	p. 25
God's Point Man Conducts Our Hostage Rescue: <i>"Will I survive?"</i>	p. 26
God's Backup Responds to <i>"Officer Down!"</i> : <i>"How does God save me?"</i>	p. 26
God's Word Describes Our Peace Officer: <i>"Who protects and serves me?"</i>	p. 27
God's Word Says <i>"Now!"</i> : <i>"What is my spiritual reaction time?"</i>	p. 28
God's Word Says <i>"Come!"</i> : <i>"What is my spiritual response time?"</i>	p. 29
God's Word Empowers Us: <i>"How does God train and equip me?"</i>	p. 30
Rediscovering Our Lost Innocence: <i>"Why does God allow what I've seen?"</i>	p. 32
Reaching Our Final Destination: <i>"What legacy will I leave at end of watch?"</i>	p. 34

SECTION TWO — THE BIBLE, OUR BACKUP

How to Find a Bible Verse	p. 36
What is the Bible?	p. 36
Law Enforcement in the Bible	p. 38
Selected Scripture Readings	p. 41
Sample Bible Studies	p. 47-48

SECTION THREE — PRAYERS

p. 49

SECTION FOUR — TOPICS

On Integrity	p. 51
On Questions About the Bible	p. 52
On Marriage and Family	p. 53
On Dealing with Disaster	p. 56
On Suicide	p. 58

SECTION FIVE — OUR DUTY TO PROTECT GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

Our Heritage of God-Given Duties, Rights and Freedoms: <i>Our duty to defend</i>	p. 60
The Declaration of Independence: <i>Our duty to uphold the laws of nature's God</i>	p. 65
The Constitution: <i>Our duty to keep our divine oath</i>	p. 66
The Bill of Rights: <i>Our duty to protect our God-given freedom</i>	p. 69
The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics: <i>Our duty to serve our God-given mission</i>	p. 70

SECTION SIX — QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

2 Jurisdictions of God's Justice and Mercy	p. 72
10 Commandments	p. 73
3 Ecumenical Creeds	p. 74
10 Deadly Sins Against Officer Survival	p. 75
10 Gospel Truths to Trust for Peace Officers to Have Peace	p. 77
10 Characteristics of a Christian Peace Officer	p. 79
10 Stress Reducers for Officers	p. 83

SECTION SEVEN — FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT CHAPLAINS

10 " <i>Spirit of the Law</i> " Action Steps	p. 86
10 Law Enforcement Chaplain Qualities: An Administrator's Guide	p. 90
10 Duties of an American Law Enforcement Chaplain	p. 94
10 Characteristics of a Competent Christian Chaplain	p. 95

FOREWORD

Why produce this special Bible edition for officers? To begin with, peace officers typically — tragically — hold two beliefs about what the community outside law enforcement thinks of them. Sadly, they sometimes include the church, and even God, in this assessment:

“No one understands.”

“No one cares.”

Unfortunately, they are sometimes right (obviously not about God, but because of their experiences this fact is hard for some to accept). To illustrate, I often must explain to those outside police work what I do and why it is necessary. When I tell folks I am a law enforcement chaplain, their comment is frequently, *“Oh, you work with prisoners in jails and prisons.”* My half-kidding response is, *“No, I work with the people who put them there.”*

Folks generally understand the *“why”* of prison ministry but struggle to answer why officers need specialized pastoral care. That question provides an opportunity to tell them about what I call the four imperatives of ministry to peace officers. Once they understand these imperatives, they often do care, and do respond:

The Biblical Imperative

Many people are familiar with Jesus’ instruction about visiting those who are in prison but are unaware of the command in God’s Word to honor and respect and pray for those in authority (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-2). The New Testament often mentions soldiers and centurions — the law enforcement officers of their day. Here we may know the negative example of the soldiers at Jesus’ crucifixion, but did you also know about the many positive examples of law enforcement given in the Bible? For instance, were you aware that the first Gentile convert to Christianity listed in the Book of Acts was the God-fearing man of integrity, Cornelius the cop (Acts 10)? This is no coincidence. God sent the Apostle Peter to Cornelius:

- 1) To show His authority over all human authority
- 2) To show His love for all — including all officers!

Did you know that the New Testament speaks favorably of the Roman army centurions who also served as first line supervisors of local law enforcement in first century Israel? Did you realize that Jesus was amazed only twice in his ministry, once at the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, and once at the belief of the law enforcement officer — the centurion — from Capernaum, whom he commends (Luke 7:1-10)? Were you aware the Apostle Paul made it a point to share the good news about Jesus the Christ with officers, and then, by direction of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word tells us about it (Acts 16:20-34, Philippians 1:12-13)?

God’s Word clearly commands us to support those who protect and serve us!

The Cultural Imperative

Officers inhabit a world most people never know and can't comprehend. They see things most people never see. Many of these things are bad. Some are horrific. Also, they live in a world of ambushes. People routinely attempt to hurt them physically, emotionally, and legally. Officers are trained paranoids, but that doesn't mean no one is out to get them. They live in a high-visibility, merciless world. Often the only place an officer feels safe is with fellow officers, but even they too can turn on him or her in a heartbeat if circumstances go south. Because of this constant assault on them, and because day in and day out they see human nature at its worst, idealistic young rookie officers, without God's guidance and strength, can turn into bitter and disillusioned veterans.

Officers have all the identifiers of a culture. They have their own language, norms, mores, customs, rituals (such as "*choir practice*," or worse, "*eating your gun*"), and even race (distinguishable badge, gun, and uniform instead of skin color). This culture tends to be isolated and alienated. The easy identification and high profile of officers, coupled with their sometimes-disturbing command presence (e.g. traffic enforcement) compound these issues. Non-officers often feel uncomfortable around officers. Officers often feel uncomfortable around non-officers.

Too many people view officers through the colored lens of prejudice, stereotype, or media hype. On one end of the spectrum, they may view an officer as some larger-than-life John Wayne movie hero image impervious to the weaknesses and needs of mere mortals, or on the other hand, as pigs. It follows that neither John Wayne nor a pig need our support. But this ignores the fact that peace officers, although usually dedicated and well qualified, are simply ordinary and good human beings trying to survive and get helpful work done in an extraordinarily difficult and dangerous profession.

What does Jesus have to say about this? He tells us in the Great Commission that we are to reach out to all "*nations*" (our word "*ethnic*" derives from the Greek word "*ethnoi*" used here) — all cultures (Matthew 28:18-20). Because of the unique, stressed-out, isolated, and alienated nature of law enforcement culture, and because of the imperative of the Great Commission to reach out to all nations (here defined by a badge, not by a border), we should minister to peace officers.

The Statistical Imperative

We all have some understanding about the risks and stresses officers face, but take a moment to translate just a few of the statistics into the pain felt by officers and their families:

- Higher than average divorce rate,
- Higher than average substance abuse problem,
- More officers commit suicide than are killed in the line of duty,
- Reduced life expectancy because of stress-induced disease.

Officers are not worse than other people. They are usually the cream of the crop, but the job can chew them up and spit them out. They need all the support we can give them to beat the odds.

The Personal Imperative

When I speak to a group outside law enforcement about officers, I often ask how many people know an officer. Usually, several raise their hands. Then I point out that, right now, there is at least one officer on patrol assigned to protect them. And if, for instance, some terrorists chose that same moment to crash our little party, the officer assigned to protect us would willingly respond as quickly as possible to come between us and those bad guys, even to the point of laying down his or her life to protect us strangers who too often are even unaware we have a watchful shepherd. Officers, however, must be aware of these possible scenarios all the time to be properly prepared. I'm aware because I did the work and attended the funerals.

It's a cruel mockery for some to say, *"That's just their job — it's what they get paid for,"* when officers' lives are on the line for us every day. Their pay can never compensate for the risks they take or the damage they suffer on our behalf, but they do their job anyway because they believe in something more than money or safety or a stress-free existence. Even the most jaded officer will *"go all in"* to protect the innocent. Jesus tells us, *"The greatest love you can show is to give your life for your friends"* (John 15:13). By this definition, officers are our friends even when we are not theirs. If we do not care about officers for altruistic reasons, we should at least care about them for selfish ones. Remember, they form the thin blue line that stands between us and horror. Everyone has a personal stake in their welfare.

I have deeply personal reasons why I understand and care about officers. I was an officer myself for years, and personally know the challenges and problems they face. I know the feeling of living in a fishbowl with a target painted on me. I know what it means to personally flirt with the statistics — to duck the devil. I know how it feels to get hurt physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually because of the job. I know the losses. I deeply, personally, know how much I needed the Lord's help and protection, and the support of others in those years — how much officers still do.

I never had a chaplain when I was an officer, but I remember how special it was when my pastor rode along with me in my patrol car. I appreciated the time he took to enter my world and try to understand my challenges. It helped just to know he cared. More importantly, God understands. God cares. That is why I serve those who protect and serve us. That is why we produce God's Word for Peace Officers. Everyone needs peace, faith, hope, and love, including officers, including you!

SECTION ONE — THE PATH TO PEACE FOR A PEACE OFFICER

A Cop's Road of Conflict

Like most officers, I entered law enforcement with a desire to help people in my corner of the world, and, in fact, I had a rewarding ride. I engaged in a mission that serves and protects society, from local law enforcement to federal law enforcement, from traffic control to counterterrorism. Along the way, I served with honor, had a good career, and traveled with some wonderful partners.

However, like my fellow travelers, I discovered early on that a peace officer's road is littered with landmines, and I ran into my share of barriers and detours both on the job and off. I found a lot of truth to the cop wisdom that states, *"We'd be fine if all we had to worry*

about were the bad guys.” The “*bad guys*” were only part of the problem. In my career I not only pursued perpetrators, but also crossed paths with unprofessional people, broken bureaucracies, corrupt courts, muddled media, and uncaring communities. I found the troubling reality that truth and justice sometime surrender to flakes, flukes, flaws, and flunkies. Even more disturbing was my discovery that I was personally vulnerable to some of the same mistakes and tragic circumstances I witnessed around me. The untouchable aura I basked in as a rookie lost its glow over the years as I realized that, even if I did my best, I too could screw up, break down, be sued, be fired, be hurt, and even get killed.

Most troubling of all was the loss of idealism I experienced as I discovered the full extent of our defective human condition. I found that truth is indeed stranger than fiction, and that none of us is immune from the ravages of evil and tragedy. That realization was reinforced by call after call and case after case, and penetrated not just my professional existence, but also my personal life. I discovered that I did not always measure up to my own ideals. More than once, I had to honestly admit, “*There but for the grace of God go I.*” I found I had to fight to survive not just physically, but emotionally, relationally, morally, and spiritually. I struggled to hold onto integrity, hope and peace through trial and temptation. I had to fight for my marriage and family. I had to fight for my health. I had to fight to keep my faith. It seemed I had to fight for everything. My journey was often the devil’s own road of conflict and led to a painful loss of innocence. Sometimes even family couldn’t grasp what I was going through, but that was understandable because I struggled to make sense of it too.

Along that rough road, however, I made another find. I discovered the devil brought a knife to God’s gunfight. I found God backs me up on life’s journey, and ultimately guns down evil. With God at my side, I found that truth shines through reality, hope overtakes despair, joy washes away tears, faith bears up under frustration, wisdom illuminates experience, forgiveness erases failure, love overpowers hatred, and life conquers even death. I discovered that peace officers *can* have peace, because along my rough road I followed “*the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*” I found this Way in God’s Word — the Bible. It has guided millions from the road of darkness and death to the path of light and life. I consider it both a God-given privilege and duty to introduce this ancient yet modern book to you and invite you to join me on a life-changing journey of discovery here and now in the pages of God’s Word. The true truth of the Bible will help you with the truth about *your* life (Psalm 1).

God’s Word Spotlights Our “*Good Shepherd*” Champion

A peace officer friend of mine once said to me, “*We live in just a tiny corner of the universe. No matter how smart we are or how hard we try, we can never go past that little corner of knowledge and experience. What if there is some unknown reality that changes everything, including our beliefs? How can we be sure of anything? How can we have hope, especially with all the evil we see in the world?*” To sum up his questions: “*Has life stuck me in a blindfolded no-win situation?*”

My friend was right on target. On our own, we are limited in our knowledge, ability, and control. On our own, we cannot be sure of anything. Peace officers see much sin and suffering in the world. Without God, we would be like so many, lost in this life and finally falling into the darkness of despair (Ecclesiastes 1, Psalm 14, Romans 1:20-22). The all-knowing Creator and Caretaker of our universe must reveal himself to us if we’re to know

our place and purpose in that universe (Psalm 139, Romans 11:33-36). He must speak and we must listen if we're to have hope (Psalm 13).

The good news is that he has spoken! The God of the universe — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — speaks to us in his Word (Psalm 119:105-112, Isaiah 55, 1 John 5:1-12). We aren't alone. God loves us, the children he created. He is our all-powerful Champion who protects us and lights our path with a hopeful, positive, and winning attitude in life's challenges (Psalm 27). He is The Good Shepherd we shepherds need. He is our Champion who won his fight with the devil and death and provides your backup. You can win! (Psalm 23, Psalm 91, Psalm 100, John 1:1-18, 10:1-18, 16, 17)

God's Word Provides Spiritual Situational Awareness

A police psychologist friend of mine began his academy talk to rookie cops with this observation: *"You're not going to listen to me now because you've got the world by the tail and the last thing you need is some shrink taking up your valuable time better spent on the range. I get it. But even though you've got a handle on everything and don't need my advice, keep my number for future reference when your life does turn to (expletive deleted), because someday, somehow, it will."*

I remember speaking to a group of peace officers years ago and watching the bored reaction of some young officers when I began describing the issues they would face. I also watched the reaction of the older officers as they began paying closer and closer attention to what I was saying. I knew exactly why the younger officers tuned out and the older officers tuned in . . . experience. The older officers had experienced the issues I was describing. The younger officers had not. They hadn't yet run the gauntlet of multifaceted threats the older officers had, nor yet even asked the questions the older officers were trying to answer. If they had, maybe more of them would have survived spiritually, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and — yes, it's true — physically. Maybe there's more to situational awareness than just checking your six on the street, maybe more to survival than just physical survival (Deuteronomy 6:24).

Sometimes when I responded to a drunk call, he would want to fight me, and so I would explain, *"Yeah, you might be able to take me, but see this radio here? It's attached to some friends who will take a dim view of you forcing me to perform an impossible physical act instead of coming along with me nicely. And we take our work seriously so here's the deal . . . You can go the easy way, or you can go the hard way, but you ARE going to go."* And, easy way or hard way, they always did.

Life is like that. It's hard to fight persistent reality in the face of inevitable results. It's hard to beat truth with a fake narrative. It's counterproductive to show gravity who's boss by jumping off a cliff. For those who want to hotly argue and not humbly apply the time-tested truths of God's Word, here's a simple question: *"How's that working for you?"* After-the-fact consequences have a way of telling our narrative to *"Go pound sand!"* The problem is realization about reality can dawn too late. For some, the realization never dawns and the only ones who know are the folks around them. So, you can listen to God's Word and go the easy way, or go the hard way with consequences, but you *ARE* going to go (Galatians 6:7). In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, the Apostle Paul shares wise advice with his son in the Lord, Timothy. We, too, should pay attention to his sound counsel and be situationally aware in our personal lives, so that, in the words of Paul, we are *"completely prepared"*:

“Continue in what you have learned and found to be true. You know who your teachers were. From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures. They have the power to give you wisdom so that you can be saved through faith in Christ Jesus. Every Scripture passage is inspired by God. All of them are useful for teaching, pointing out errors, correcting people, and training them for a life that has God’s approval. They equip God’s servants so that they are completely prepared . . .”

Learn to ask the right questions. Look for the answers in God’s Word. Listen to those who have not only survived but successfully maintained their spiritual, mental, emotional, relational, and physical health, and their faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 11:1). Learn from those who have been there, done that, and got the t-shirt, especially Jesus (Hebrews 2, Hebrews 4:14-16).

God’s Word, also called Scripture (or the Scriptures), also called the Bible, speaks his law to all of us, and his love for each of us — peace officers included! It gives us examples of officers who exercised spiritual situational awareness. For instance, read the story of Cornelius the cop (Acts 10 — note that in those days the Roman soldiers mentioned in the New Testament were also law enforcement officers). Like Cornelius, we all need to listen to God’s law, honestly admit our failure to obey that law, and then receive God’s forgiveness and acceptance — the good news from the Good Shepherd about the good life he gives us (John 1:1-18).

God’s Word is unique. It doesn’t just give historical facts or human opinion, but boldly proclaims universal, eternal, and divine truths that help us through life. Therefore, be careful not to dismiss the Bible as just another ancient Code of Hammurabi, suitable maybe for footnoting a criminal justice class but not applicable to the real world that modern officers face. The Scriptures are not an irrelevant collection of religious writings. God’s Word is not the outdated opinion of long-dead men. It is the unchanging, authoritative voice of the living God (Isaiah 40:8). It proclaims his powerful word of law and love to the real world we live in today (again, read 2 Timothy 3:14-17). God’s Word is hotter than today’s headlines and more helpful and true, as officers should appreciate. God’s Good News beats the world’s bad news any day! (Isaiah 61:1)

Like the idealistic officers he inspires, God wants to help people and make a positive difference in the world. He also wants to protect and serve. However, unlike an often-frustrated officer, he is infinitely more powerful in that purpose. God’s fundamental nature is love and his primary mission on earth is to rescue us from our hostage situation of sin and hell (John 3:16-17, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 4:7-10). God’s Word speaks his eternal truths of law and love to all of us. He reminds us to apply these truths individually. In reading the Bible, we should ask, *“What is God saying to everyone?”* We should then ask, *“What is God saying to ME?”* I need to receive his promises for me and obey his commands to me. God’s Word is not a crutch, but a source of true strength (Proverbs 1).

God our Father is compassionate (Exodus 34:6). Like a good traffic officer, whenever his Holy Spirit speaks a warning in his Word, he is simply trying to keep us from getting hurt. Sometimes he warns us to turn from our destructive path. Sometimes he instructs us how to live. Sometimes he comforts us with his promises. Most importantly, he tells us that because of the death and resurrection of his Son, the God/man Jesus Christ, we are freely forgiven by faith and have the gift of eternal life because he took the punishment for our sins on his cross (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Bible addresses humanity's tragic loss of innocence — the sin and suffering officers see daily that affects them too. Scripture lays the foundation for the law that officers enforce and points to the love that God provides. Most importantly, once again, God's Word tells the true story of history's greatest Peace Officer, Jesus Christ, who laid down his life to protect and serve all people — including officers — including you! Are you situationally aware spiritually? (Genesis 3:1-15, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 53, Matthew 20:28, John 10:7-21, John 14:27, Romans 5:1-11, Philippians 2:5-11).

God's Word Is for Peace Officers

I have always thought it a tragic irony that so many peace officers provide peace for others but have no peace themselves. These officers win the battle on the street but lose the war within. Officer street survival is an important part of law enforcement training and practice, but to really win in life we must pay attention to all aspects of survival. True well-being involves more than street survival. In fact, the greatest personal risks an officer faces are not on the street, but in the mirror, and the risks we face are not just physical, but are also emotional, relational, moral, and spiritual. These can threaten all we have and all we are, including our physical well-being (Psalm 32).

A good officer survival mindset is: *"Train like you fight and fight like you train,"* not just in our professional lives, but in our personal lives as well. We must prepare for possible threats to every area of life. What does it finally matter if we survive on the street but lose our marriage, our children, our health, our integrity, our hope, or even our soul? (Mark 8:36) After all, what exactly are we fighting to defeat and fighting to defend? What good does it do to own every toy in the world, or go out on the street prepared to face any bad guy, but then wind up alone, bitter, and despairing because we neglected God's backup, misused God's gifts, abused those we should have loved, worshipped a world that in actual reality dismisses and even despises us, mocked wisdom, and misunderstood love? God's Word provides spiritual training and backup for the personal risks and challenges we face. We must proactively address threats to every area of life, and not wait until all we can do is maybe pick up a few pieces of what's left. Remember, however, his Word will help you find true forgiveness and healing even if you have waited too long (2 Samuel 11:1-12:25, Psalm 51).

Again, some of the greatest risks officers face are not professional, but personal. However, private problems can ripple into a public river of destruction that can flood and drown an individual, a family, an agency, or a community in a tidal wave of consequences. We have all seen how just one officer with personal problems can sow the seeds of corruption, destroy credibility, cause legal liability, incur costs, do damage, or even cause death. There are not only sound personal reasons, but also practical professional considerations for taking a total approach to officer survival. The stats emphasize the importance of this total approach to officer survival; the evidence shows that law enforcement poses more personal risks than most other professions, and these risks have the potential to impact effectiveness and destroy lives. Again, for instance, statistics show that officers are more likely to kill themselves than to be killed in the line of duty. Officers are also more likely than the general population to experience divorce, abuse alcohol or drugs, endure stress-related disorders and fall into despair. The bottom line is this: dangerous as their work is, officers are even more likely to be victims off the street than on. And, also again, experience backs up the statistics: The biggest threat an officer faces is the one in the mirror! (James 1:22-25)

Yes, we have a duty to protect and serve society, but we have a prior duty to take care of ourselves so we *can* protect and serve society. Also, along with our responsibility to care for ourselves comes an obligation to take care of those we love. There are many who can replace us in our professional duties, but no one can replace you or me in our families. The impairment or loss of a family member is devastating, especially if avoidable. It is true that professional law enforcement requires sacrifice, but that does not mean unnecessary and inappropriate sacrifice. The better we address our personal and family needs the better we serve society. And do we serve society if we let ourselves and our families “*go to hell in a hand basket?*” Isn’t it true that some of society’s biggest problems stem from neglect and abuse of self and family? Each of us should ask, “*Am I part of the problem or part of the solution?*” God’s Word is a big part of our solution (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

The Bible is a practical book that addresses many problems in officers’ lives. For instance, officers sometimes experience stress or loneliness in their work. Some turn to remedies like alcohol abuse or inappropriate sex to relieve the tension and fill the emptiness, but these unhealthy escapes are only crutches that collapse and cause us to crumble. Instead, we need someone and something to fill us with a lasting, truly satisfying peace. We all have a “*God-shaped vacuum*” — a hole inside us that only God fits. God’s Word helps fill that vacuum. The Bible eases stress and loneliness in a positive, life-giving way (Psalm 77, Isaiah 41:10, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 John 2:15-17).

Officers identify strongly with their God-given calling. This attitude may be necessary, but the emphasis on, “*I am a cop,*” rather than, “*I do the work of a law enforcement officer,*” can handcuff you to an unhealthy existence. For instance, when officers retire, they may no longer know who they are apart from their former role. They can become lost children, full of meaninglessness and despair. God’s Word gives an officer deeper identity as a beloved child of God. This more important identity lasts beyond the shift, beyond retirement and even beyond death. It lasts for eternity and provides purpose, strength, and direction for today (Philippians 3).

Every officer’s prayer is, “*Lord, help me to not screw up.*” Perhaps a cop’s biggest nightmare is making a serious mistake that leads to serious consequences. Unfortunately, sometimes even good officers with the best of intentions can get in over their heads. God’s Word gives comfort, forgiveness, and healing in these nightmare situations. Scripture gives infinitely better solutions than self-destructive behaviors such as crawling into a bottle or the wrong bed, or even worse, “*eating your gun*” — suicide (John 8:1-11, John 14, 1 John 1:5-2:2).

No competent officer would dream of hitting the street without training, equipment, and backup. Yet many officers hit the spiritual street without the resources and backup God provides, and they inevitably pay a heavy price. Some say, “*Religion is a crutch.*” They think that relying on God is a sign of weakness. However, this mindset “*lies and denies*” our real situation and our real solution. None of us is an all-sufficient, unreal John Wayne movie character. An astute person happily exchanges the tempting but ineffective crutches of this world for the true strength found only in God’s Word. An officer who recognizes that fact is exercising spiritual situational awareness and is more likely to survive in the ways that count. Faith is real, and really makes a difference (Psalm 147:10-11).

When I was a rookie, the only personal advice I received was from a salty old cop who bluntly warned me in politically incorrect language to “*stay away from booze, broads and bills.*” When I started my police career years ago, officers and agencies tended to avoid personal issues and ignore personal problems until they reached crisis proportions. Even then they sometimes turned a blind eye until it was too late. They tended to push problems under the rug until, sometimes at great cost, they were swept out the door, and then business resumed as usual until the next crisis.

Officers do need to keep their personal lives from adversely intruding into their duties, but this does not mean their personal lives do not affect their professional lives, or officers and agencies should ignore personal issues in their professional world. Professional performance is a product of personal beliefs and behaviors — for better or for worse. Agencies and officers that adopt a John Wayne Syndrome attitude toward personal issues do so at their own risk, hazarding a whole spectrum of possible problems from lower job performance to suicidal/homicidal behavior. Officers, including astute administrators, should recognize and address the ramifications inherent in turning a blind eye to these issues, including increased liability exposure.

The only time I was shot at in my career was by one of my field training officers. This sounds like a bad cop joke, but it's not. He and everybody else ignored his personal problems until he went over the edge. He got drunk, barricaded himself in a trailer, and over the course of several hours launched dozens of rounds in the general direction of his neighbors and fellow officers until he sobered up enough for us to talk him out. His personal problems had a professional impact on all concerned, including me. This is an extreme example, but veterans can recall similar situations. We shouldn't wait to react until after the fact. Instead, we should be proactive before-the-event problem solvers.

Officers pride themselves on being street-smart. Officers and agencies alike pride themselves on being professional. A professional and street-smart attitude demands we objectively address reality in every appropriate way, no matter how personal, painful, inconvenient, or even risky that may be. Isn't that the nature of law enforcement anyway? I have seen an improved attitude in the law enforcement community toward these issues as the development of counseling, peer support, and chaplaincy programs demonstrate, but we still have a long way to go.

God's Word helps officers survive and prosper in the ways that count (again, Psalm 1). It outlines the importance, authority, and mission of peace officers. It tells real-life stories of cops — stories that apply to us today. It fights feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness. In the face of temptation, trials, and trouble, it provides protection and power. It is a compass that gives God's guidance. It is an eternal foundation that anchors us in the storms of daily life. The Bible serves and protects those who protect and serve. I know. I have found peace in its pages. What about you? Will you let God's Word back you up on your journey? Will you let Him provide peace for you too? (Deuteronomy 6:1-7, Matthew 4:4, 6:19-21, 7:24-29, 16:26, John 14:27)

God's Word Certifies Officers

"Can a cop be a Christian?" For years I have heard variations of this question from people both inside and outside law enforcement. Incorrect assumptions often prompt this question. For instance, some people including officers I have met say, *"Cops carry guns. If they use them, don't they break the biblical commandment that says, 'Thou shalt not kill?' Doesn't their willingness to use deadly force preclude them from being Christians?"* Some who ask this question may be thinking about the old King James Bible version of the Ten Commandments, which says, *"Thou shalt not kill,"* or about Jesus quoting this commandment in his Sermon on the Mount (Exodus 20:13, Matthew 5:21). They may think that all killing is wrong or forbidden by God. That view is incorrect.

Remember that the Bible was not originally written in English. In the original Hebrew language of the Old Testament in Exodus 20:13, as well as in the original Greek language of the New Testament in Matthew 5:21, the word is not *"kill."* The word *"murder"* is used. Modern translations — including God's Word for Peace Officers — properly use *"murder"* instead of *"kill"* in these passages, thus correcting this possible misunderstanding. God allows killing in certain instances, such as the necessary and legal use of deadly force in defense of life, just wars, and properly imposed capital punishment. For instance, when soldiers approached John the Baptist about what they should do, he didn't say to not be soldiers or never use deadly force in their role but simply said, *"Be satisfied with your pay, and never use threats or blackmail to get money from anyone"* (Luke 3:14).

Scripture makes a point of praising those in law enforcement. For instance, a first century Roman law enforcement officer, the centurion of Capernaum, is praised for his character and dedicated service to the community (Luke 7:1-10). Cornelius, the centurion, is also commended (Acts 10). In the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul lays a foundation for the role peace officers play in society (Romans 13:1-7). He defines the authority and mission of officers, endorses the appropriate use of force, and describes governing authority not as a necessary evil, but as a God-given good. A study of the original Greek in Romans 13:1-7 shows that officers (included in the word *"government"*) are servants and ministers of God's law just like pastors are servants and ministers of God's Gospel. We can boldly state God's Word endorses the use of reasonable and necessary force, even deadly force, when legally justified. Officers, especially officers who have been involved in shootings, need to be comforted and encouraged by this truth. Guilt can be devastating. God's Word not only offers forgiveness for true guilt, but also helps officers avoid a false sense of guilt about a *"good shoot"* (this description refers to legality; officers never feel good about having to use any deadly force). Having a proper understanding of God's endorsement of the proper use of force can prevent or mitigate a stress reaction up to and including PTSD from a use of force incident. I recall hearing a well-known law enforcement trainer make this point based on an informal survey he conducted.

In our crime-ridden, terrorist-plagued, war-torn, corrupt world, officers must deal with devastating evil and tragedy. These experiences can erode and corrode us in a daily grind of grief, or suddenly overwhelm us with a major incident or line of duty death. God's Word lights the way in our walk with him, so we can find shelter and strength in the storm (Psalm 27, Psalm 119:105). God's Word points out that law enforcement is a God-pleasing profession, endorses the necessary and legal use of force, and gives examples of godly peace officers. It helps officers understand and keep a healthy balance between professional and personal life. It provides sure, strong, and lasting comfort when life crashes down around us. Rather

than being a roadblock, the message of the Bible paves the way for clear direction in the confusion and conflicts of life. Bottom line: God's Word certifies a peace officer's identity, role, and place in God's heart. With all that officers face, the question is not, *"Can a cop be a Christian,"* but *"How can a cop not be a Christian?"* And why put up with it all? It's because people need you, even if they don't know it. Sometimes the sheep don't like the shepherd. Psalm 10 describes the problems requiring your presence:

"Why are you so distant, Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? The wicked person arrogantly pursues oppressed people. He will be caught in the schemes that he planned. The wicked person boasts about his selfish desires. He blesses robbers, but he curses the Lord. He turns up his nose and says, 'God doesn't care.' His every thought concludes, 'There is no God.' He always seems to succeed. Your judgments are beyond his understanding. He spits at all his opponents. He says to himself, 'Nothing can shake me. I'll never face any trouble.' His mouth is full of cursing, deception, and oppression. Trouble and wrongdoing are on the tip of his tongue. He waits in ambush in the villages. From his hiding places he kills innocent people. His eyes are on the lookout for victims. He lies in his hiding place like a lion in his den. He hides there to catch oppressed people. He catches oppressed people when he draws them into his net. His victims are crushed. They collapse, and they fall under the weight of his power. He says to himself, 'God has forgotten. He has hidden his face. He will never see it!'"

"Arise, O Lord! Lift your hand, O God. Do not forget oppressed people! Why does the wicked person despise God? Why does he say to himself, 'God doesn't care'? You have seen it; yes, you have taken note of trouble and grief and placed them under your control. The victim entrusts himself to you. You alone have been the helper of orphans. Break the arm of the wicked and evil person. Punish his wickedness until you find no more. The Lord is king forever and ever. The nations have vanished from his land. You have heard the desire of oppressed people, O Lord. You encourage them. You pay close attention to them in order to provide justice for orphans and oppressed people so that no mere mortal will terrify them again."

Crime victims cry out, like the Psalmist here says, *"Why are you so distant, Lord?"* But God is not distant. The same God who sent his Son in the uniform of human flesh to save the whole world also sends you to help people in your own law enforcement corner of the universe, which actually is a pretty big corner to the victims concerned. The Psalmist says, *"Arise, O Lord! Lift your hand, O God. Do not forget oppressed people!"* You became a peace officer to help people and make a difference. Despite the cynicism about your original motivation that comes with your experience, remember this: Even by your presence you *do* help people and *do* make a difference. That's called deterrence. But you also respond when called, and, like Jesus, you are a good shepherd who stands between the sheep and the wolves. If you don't do your job the sheep are going to get eaten. It's that simple, and that hard. As the Psalmist says, you are the *"hand"* of God. There is no higher endorsement than God's own P.O.S.T. certificate.

God's Two Jurisdictions [of Justice and Mercy]

The officer was more than a little hot. He had just investigated the vicious brutalizing of a child by a sexual predator, and his long-simmering anger finally boiled over. He wanted to chew on God but had to settle for God's representative instead. Confronting the department chaplain he demanded, *"NOW tell me about your (expletive deleted) forgiveness!"*

The above true story is an example of the confusion that occasionally exists among believers and unbelievers alike about the two very different but necessary ways God works in the world. Sadly, this misunderstanding drives some people away from a God they view as either too judgmental or — ironically — too forgiving. For important professional and personal reasons, we need to clearly understand what God says in his Word about the two realms of his rule — his apparently contradictory jurisdictions of justice and mercy. However, first let's take a detour to ask some tough questions not about God and the above officer, but about ourselves:

Why do I question God but don't always take time to investigate his answers, and instead go off half-cocked with my own hair-trigger ideas? Is it possible that God has good answers I don't want to hear because those answers might require me to change, and I don't want to change? Do I use anger as cover and concealment for my self-centeredness, guilt, or irresponsibility? Why are my questions sometimes really accusations, which I use like an attorney's questions to impeach God, or like ear protectors to muffle him, or like changing channels to tune him out, or like creative report writing to blow smoke at him? Why do I duck God? Is my ego so big — am I such a slave to myself — that I refuse to listen to God no matter the cost to myself or the ones I love (Psalm 14)? Why am I so quick to buy into a John Wayne Syndrome go-it-alone-all-about-myself philosophy? How is it I can kid myself that I know it all and no longer need to learn, or change, or grow? Why am I so willing to cancel the proven and powerful backup of God's Word on the flimsy evidence of second-hand, second-rate information that carries all the credibility of a guilty suspect's story? Why do I refuse to consider a new path, especially when the one I'm on is only leading me to more misery? Am I addicted to my flawed logic like an addict is hooked on drugs (Proverbs 29)? Is it conceivable I would rather T-bone truth in the intersection of life and make a car wreck of myself than yield to God's direction? Am I so blinded by self-centeredness that I don't care or even notice that I am driving myself off a cliff of self-destructive denial (Jeremiah 17:5-9)? What makes me think, *"I'm above it all," "It can't happen to me," "I'm the exception to the rule,"* or *"I'm exempt from consequences"*? Why is it that I carefully prepare myself in advance for every conceivable threat to physical survival on the street, but am willing to wait until after tragedy strikes — when I'm in trauma and shock — to sort out the deeper issues of life, and so by my lack of preparation place myself in danger of being overwhelmed by these unavoidable events? Why do I sometimes insist on living in a downward spiral of unspiritual recidivism? Must I wait until it's too late?

I've known officers who creatively combined tunnel vision, bad information, lack of spiritual street smarts, poorly remembered Sunday School stories, faulty conclusions from so-called *"experience,"* examples of hypocrites, and simple stubbornness or laziness to find reasons — excuses really — to reject God. They never invested the effort to break their cycle of cynicism. They never studied a Bible, never attended church except at weddings or funerals, never found and listened to a squared-away pastor, and never worked through life's questions except under the influence of an elevated blood alcohol level at so-called *"choir practice"* with some drunk buddies. And yes, I've heard the comebacks: *"Christians are hypocrites," "I knew a pastor once who was a pervert,"* and so on, but please, for your own sake, understand that Christians in general and pastors in particular are like people in general and cops in particular. Nobody's perfect. Some are great. Some are good with bad days. Some are bad with good days. Some are mediocre most of the time, and some are just plain no good. That may be life but do yourself a big favor and don't use this imperfect reality as an excuse to shoot yourself in the foot — to dismiss a perfect God who is exactly

who you need to deal with life's issues, including this one. Invest the time to learn from God's Word how to have peace despite an imperfect world — how to have hope instead of a counterproductive cynical attitude that only deals you despair. God is not the roadblock in our search for answers. He's the path to find answers.

Now let's get back on track and look at some other examples. A convicted murderer claimed to have a death row conversion and lived a repentant life behind bars for several years. People on opposite sides of the religious fence wound up throwing rocks at one another. Some cried *"Mercy!"* and said her Christian conversion should void her death penalty. Some said justice demands execution for murderers apart from such considerations. How do we decide?

A Christian officer violates department regulations, and according to policy should be disciplined. He approaches his supervisor, who is also a Christian, and says, *"Look, Sarge, I'm sorry. As your Christian brother, I'm asking you to show some mercy and forgive and forget like Jesus would. Please don't write me up."* What should the sergeant do?

An unbelieving officer is talking with a believing officer at a restaurant and says, *"Look, even though I'm not a Christian, I basically live my life by your Golden Rule and Ten Commandments. I know I'm not perfect, but I do my best. If God exists, what more can he ask? That's only fair. That's only just."* How should the believing officer respond?

Without first asking for their permission, a chaplain places Christian tracts in all the officers' boxes at the station. When confronted he states, *"God wants Christian law enforcement. I'm just delivering his message."* Is he right?

An officer is at a party, and someone confronts her with, *"How can you be a Christian and a cop? How can you reconcile carrying a gun with Jesus' command to be meek and to love — to turn the other cheek? How can violence ever be considered Christian?"* What should the officer say?

An officer comes home to find that his wife has overdrawn their checking account. He tells her, *"You keep doing this. I've warned you before that I can't tolerate your carelessness anymore — it isn't right. Shape up, or I'm shipping out. No more breaks!"* Is the officer right?

The above are just some examples from a host of practical issues that need to be arbitrated according to God's two jurisdictions of justice and mercy. Let's consider each jurisdiction in turn:

God's Jurisdiction of Justice

Because our imperfect world needs protection and justice, God provides his divine naturally known law to guide society's laws according to our God-given human reason. His revealed law also guides us. Further, it shows us our personal need for a Savior apart from obedience to God's law, because none of us have kept his law (Romans 3:9-31). God requires perfection according to his law because he is perfect. Therefore, we need a perfect Savior to do what we cannot do, to take the punishment we deserve for our sins, thus fulfilling God's requirement for perfect justice and perfect love, because our God is both righteous (Psalm 19:8-9) and love (1 John 4:8).

Law and justice are naturally but imperfectly understood because of our sin-impaired nature, so our country's legal system has also derived governing legal principles from the divinely revealed legal precepts of Scripture such as the Ten Commandments (which agree with natural reason and principle-based consensus in a *healthy* society). This is a principle American citizens recognized in the past, but which is under vicious assault today. In a practical sense the rule of law saves a nation, *if* we honor the Declaration of Independence principle of *"the laws of nature and nature's God,"* and respect the Bill of Rights, and enforce the checks and balances of the U.S. Constitution that guard against corruptible human power! Here we recognize that these are universal legal principles, not a particular religious faith. Governmentally, divinely derived natural and revealed legal principles save a society. Spiritually, the divinely revealed and distinct Gospel of Jesus Christ saves a sinner.

Law judges us by what we do. It motivates us with a God-given natural sense of right and wrong and a promise of reward or fear of punishment. Law serves justice. Although law may allow for mercy and forgiveness (e.g. parole, probation, and pardon), it is not subordinate to them. We live primarily by the law professionally but should also apply it to our personal life (Psalm 119:1-16).

You need not be a Christian to understand and practice God's law. God has revealed it to every human heart by nature and reason (Romans 1:20 and Romans 2:14-15). He has also codified this law, for instance, in the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12), as well as, again, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). The Christian Golden Rule is independently expressed in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism, further evidence the law of God is naturally and universally understood. That is why the rule of law based on natural law works in a religiously diverse society. It is God's will and works to our benefit to govern society by just laws that reflect his naturally understood law of right and wrong, of good and bad (Proverbs 29).

Along with natural law, God gives everyone an accompanying moral nature, although this too is skewed because of sin, but with universally applauded virtues such as love of family and friends, integrity, truth, loyalty, conscience, compassion, courage, duty, honor, etc. Our individual values must reflect these universal virtues, or we will lose our freedoms. If too many citizens in a country fail to exercise self-control, dictatorial control will be imposed. God endorses the enforcement of just law by both the civil and military swords (Romans 13:1-7). He commands just punishment, including capital punishment, for violators of the law. *"An eye for an eye,"* the principle of proportional punishment, is given in Exodus 21:24 — a good guide to the administration of justice.

God's Jurisdiction of Mercy

Now let's address God's jurisdiction of mercy. Again, God's Word says that God is love (1 John 4:16). God's great love for us is expressed especially in the gift of his Son to us. The Bible tells us that in keeping with God's kind mercy and promises his Son came to earth two thousand years ago, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of his Holy Spirit. He came in the uniform of human flesh as Jesus Christ — true God and true man. Jesus obediently lived the perfect life we cannot live, willingly took the punishment we deserve for our sins, completely fulfilled the demands of God's justice concerning us, rescued us from hell and recovered us for heaven. We receive this free gift of salvation from God by simply trusting his Son and his sacrifice on the cross for full forgiveness and eternal life. Even this faith in him is

a gift, created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit when we hear God's good news, like you are hearing it now! This "*Gospel*" — "*Good News*" — of God's love, unlike God's law, is not naturally understood, but is revealed by God's Son Jesus Christ, who is called the Word, and who in turn is revealed in the pages of God's Word (Luke 1-2, John 1:1-18, Romans 10:5-17, Ephesians 2:1-10, Hebrews 1:1-3, 2 Peter 1:20-21). If you are not familiar with the Bible, I suggest you read the book of John first, which is a good summary of the Good News about Jesus Christ.

God's kindness, unlike his justice, focuses not on our failure, but on Christ's forgiveness. His forgiveness is total. God extends his forgiveness to everyone, despite our violation of his good law. The only requirement to receive mercy's reward of forgiveness and eternal life is to simply receive this heavenly gift in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit who works through God's Word in our hearts. As Christians, we then extend this unconditional love to all our personal relationships. For example, "*Turn the other cheek*," Jesus' imperative for unconditional love, is found in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:38-39. Mercy knows nothing about punishment. It is motivated solely by God's love for us in Christ. God's justice rightfully condemns. God's mercy graciously pardons.

Reconciling God's Two Jurisdictions of Justice and Mercy

Ideally, God governs society through the state in keeping with his naturally revealed law (Romans 1:18-20) and proper administration of justice (Romans 13:1-7). He governs Christians through his divinely revealed Word of law and Gospel, and through his church — biblically based teaching, preaching, fellowship, and the proper sharing of his gifts of baptism and communion (Ephesians 4:1-16). We should properly understand the unique place, purpose, and power of Church and state. They are different and distinct, but should always be complementary, not contradictory. (By the way, all the above are big reasons why so many people have fled *to* America and not *from* America!) Here it is important to note that, according to God's Word, Christian citizens also should serve both Church and state according to our respective rights and responsibilities (Matthew 22:15-22). Christians may in good conscience serve in the military or in law enforcement. They are also bound to obey the laws of the state, unless those laws are evil, in which case they are bound to oppose them (Acts 4:18-20). Remember that, by definition, our good God opposes all evil laws and supports all good laws. We, like all citizens, may appeal to the state for protection, as the Apostle Paul did (Acts 25:1-12). However, we should avoid taking other Christians to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Because of both God's divine call and their conscience, Christian people and pastors have an even greater responsibility in both of God's two jurisdictions! (Again, refer to Romans 13:1-7.)

Obviously, God's two jurisdictions of justice and mercy are as opposite as night and day, yet the same God rules both. How do we explain this apparent paradox, and, practically, how do we live according to both jurisdictions? Unfortunately, some officers believe it is not possible or prudent to do so and either give up or don't even try. They do so at their own peril, however. God created us to live in a perfect world under one undivided jurisdiction of love and holiness, but when humanity listened to Satan's lies the world was no longer perfect. Because of our rebellion, God was faced with a seemingly impossible conflict of interest, because love and holiness become contradictory concepts when applied to sinful human beings. How could God maintain his perfect love, which requires mercy and forgiveness for us, and at the same time maintain his perfect holiness, which requires justice and punishment for us? There was only one possible answer . . .

God's loving answer was to send his Son Jesus Christ to earth in human flesh. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, demonstrated perfect justice and mercy by taking our punishment on his cross. Psalm 85:10 states, *"Mercy and truth have met. Righteousness and peace have kissed."* God's holiness and love kissed at the cross of Jesus Christ. The crisis was solved. Christ's cross provides what we need (forgiveness and eternal life) and preserves who God is (perfect love and justice). No other event, religion or philosophy can resolve this conflict between mercy and justice. Only God's *"Jesus Christ"* solution to humankind's fall (Genesis 3:15) satisfies both God's nature and our need.

We still have a problem, however. Although we have the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life because of Christ, we are still imperfect people on this planet. (I once heard a radio preacher say he did not think he had committed any sins during the previous three days. My first thought was, *"Let's talk to your wife. She can probably enlighten us both!"* My second thought was that his claim was an unintended admission that he suffered from the sins of spiritual blindness and pride.) Although God has reconciled his jurisdictions of justice and mercy in the cross of Jesus Christ and given us the eternal solution to our dilemma, in our imperfect world we must still operate according to these two jurisdictions. Law governs his jurisdiction of justice within the state, where mercy is also sometimes exercised. The Gospel of Jesus Christ governs his jurisdiction of mercy within the Church, where God's law is also preached to point people to Christ and help lead us in our lives.

Both jurisdictions are good, because our good and loving God has established and rules both. We also need both. Because we need order and justice in our world, we must have the rule of law to govern society. We also need it to guide our personal conduct. But to have hope, because the law points out our sin (Romans 3:9-31), we must apply forgiveness in our personal lives and extend that forgiveness to our personal relationships with other imperfect people (Ephesians 4:32).

Using our examples, how do we apply these truths in practice? In the first example, the chaplain correctly told the officer that although God gives eternal forgiveness to every repentant sinner, the perpetrator must still answer for his crimes in this life, because God's law requires justice in earthly government. The woman convicted of murder was properly executed for the same reason although we have every reason to believe she was a genuine Christian. In fact, she was willing to receive her just punishment, thereby proving her sincerity and giving a wonderful Christian witness!

A Christian officer who violates legal policy should be disciplined according to proper procedure. His sergeant can extend the spiritual forgiveness of Christ as a Christian brother, but a supervisor's responsibility is to exercise effective authority and discipline according to law and procedures. Temporal consequences remain. This is fair, proper, and just (Peter 2:13-17, 1 Peter 4:15).

The unbelieving officer has admirable qualities, but he is still imperfect like the rest of us and therefore cannot earn his way to heaven by his good deeds. The jurisdiction of justice, governed by law, to which he appeals, requires perfection before God, and as we say, no one's perfect. To obtain eternal salvation he must shift to God's jurisdiction of mercy and rely on the perfection of Christ, who died in our place to satisfy the demands of justice and who gives us by faith the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life apart from our merits which fall short of God's mark (Romans 3:21-24).

The chaplain who placed tracts without permission is out of line. It is true that God *“wants all people to be saved and to learn the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:4). But as Christians we have a responsibility to *“lovingly speak the truth”* (Ephesians 4:15). 1 Peter 3:15-17 says, *“Always be ready to defend your confidence in God when anyone asks you to explain it. However, make your defense with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear. Then those who treat the good Christian life you live with contempt will feel ashamed that they have ridiculed you. After all, it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong.”* Placing tracts in officers’ boxes without permission is an invasion of privacy and insensitive witness and violates both jurisdictions of justice and mercy. Officers need Christ but *“Christian law enforcement,”* improperly understood, can confuse God’s two jurisdictions. For instance, an officer cannot forgive a perpetrator and let him go. The perpetrator must be arrested. A Christian officer, like any other officer, cannot literally turn the other cheek in the line of duty but must apply the law in a legal and just manner, including the legal and proper use of force. At the same time, he or she needs to personally rely on faith and forgiveness for spiritual strength in every situation. Personal faith provides professional motivation. The best witness a Christian officer can give on the job is to be the most professional officer possible — to fulfill his or her duties within the jurisdiction of justice so he or she will be taken seriously when the opportunity comes to shift to God’s jurisdiction of mercy and share his or her Gospel faith.

The officer who is confronted about the apparent paradox of turning the other cheek as a Christian but using force as an officer should remind her accuser that her different responsibilities before God are complementary, not contradictory. As a Christian, her attitude — like Christ’s — is one of compassion, forgiveness, and service. Her attitude causes her to turn the other cheek by risking her own interests of safety and security on behalf of others. This personal attitude under God’s jurisdiction of mercy motivates her to serve and protect a sometimes ungrateful and abusive public in a professional way with patience and at great personal sacrifice which is, once again, turning the other cheek. Her personal attitude as a Christian motivates her as an officer to defend society properly and professionally, including as needed the necessary, legal use of force according to law and the mandates of God’s jurisdiction of justice. Therefore, while God’s jurisdiction of mercy is different from God’s jurisdiction of justice, here mercy serves justice and there is no real paradox. All this is not a game of words but a real and practical distinction officers need to make.

Using our final example, an officer especially needs to apply God’s jurisdiction of mercy in his personal relationships. This is particularly true in marriage, the most intimate — but because of our sinful nature the most vulnerable — of all human relationships. Marriage requires ongoing forgiveness to survive and flourish because it involves two imperfect humans committing themselves to each other for a lifetime. There is no greater guarantee to that relationship or hope for happiness than forgiveness and acceptance based on the forgiveness and acceptance we ourselves receive because of Christ (again, read Ephesians 4:32, also read Matthew 18:21-22). Marriage problems should be viewed as opportunities to exercise forgiveness and the love of Jesus, which in turn create healing and a haven — a home — for imperfect people (Colossian 3:1-19).

Officers need to correctly apply God’s two jurisdictions of justice and mercy to their professional and personal lives. Because officers spend so much time with the law in their

professional existence, they need the counterbalance of Christ's love and forgiveness in their personal lives. Many officers, even some Christian officers, do not understand this, and incorrectly apply the law to every aspect of life. This legalistic mindset creates a huge amount of stress because it demands perfection without providing forgiveness and loving acceptance. Legalism also leads to hypocrisy, because it tempts us to be dishonest, to hide flaws and *"fake it"* rather than be honest and seek forgiveness. Legalism leads to conflict, stress, failure, unresolved guilt, breakdown, and despair, and contributes to risk physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually (Psalm 32, Matthew 23).

Officers need a safe place to confess faults and failures. The confidentiality, legally supported, of a wise and discreet pastor is just such a safe place . . . use this spiritual resource! Cops need a command presence at work, but when they take off the uniform, they need to also remove an all-controlling, legalistic attitude. Removing an attitude is much more difficult than removing a uniform, and that is why officers must have God's help, because what is necessary on the job and works well there can destroy their personal lives. They need to give family and friends what they themselves need — a safe place to relax. Forgiveness and acceptance make this possible, but we must all begin by receiving God's forgiveness and acceptance ourselves, through Jesus Christ.

We must properly apply justice and mercy. Justice, tempered with mercy, should be our *modus operandi* professionally. Mercy, tempered with justice, should be our *modus operandi* personally. All our beliefs, attitudes and actions should spring from Christ's sacrificial love (Philippians 2:5-11). God's two jurisdictions of justice and mercy can be hard to understand, and even harder to exercise, but we must do our best to apply these necessary truths in our personal and professional lives so we can have sure direction and solid peace for ourselves and for those we love and serve.

God's Word Lays Down God's Law

God's Word reveals his good and perfect law. God has also placed his law in the heart of every human being. We are all born with a sense of right and wrong, what is just and unjust (Romans 2:14-15). Although imperfectly understood and selectively practiced because of our flawed human condition, this natural law of the heart agrees with the perfect revealed law found in God's Word. This law of God, which he has placed in our hearts and reveals in his Word, is to be applied in three ways. First, God gives his law to guide society's laws and curb lawlessness (Romans 13:1-7). Second, God gives his precepts to guide our personal and professional principles (Psalm 119:1-8). Third, and most important for us regarding our eternal destiny, God gives his law as a mirror to show us our sin and our need for a Savior (Romans 3:19-31). Let's look at each of these in turn . . .

God's Law Guides Society's Laws

God's law forms the foundation upon which society's laws must be built, and by which society must be governed if justice is to prevail. God's laws are fair, and when followed bring fairness to the people if the principle of *"blind justice"* — *"equal justice under the law"* — is honored. Here is a clear example of natural law that all major religions and philosophies support, even if despots don't (e.g. *"The only stable state is the one in which all men are equal before the law."* — Aristotle). Throughout history, God's laws have been recognized as a sound basis for society's laws. For example, at least until more recent times in America, the people always recognized the rule of God and his laws. The courts spoke of *"a law*

beyond the law,” and “the laws of nature and nature’s God.” The people pledged allegiance to *“one nation, under God.”* Many courtrooms and other government buildings still have the Ten Commandments on their walls. (Exodus 20:1-17) Even U.S. currency reminds Americans that *“In God We Trust.”* In the Declaration of Independence, the founders of the United States held that God’s law informs man’s law and ultimately his authority is higher than government’s authority. Therefore, they boldly stated that all people are created equal and have God-given rights even a king must respect. They asserted the law of God transcends the law of kings. In that assertion is an implied admission that without God a king is not bound to a higher law, and a people who deny God and his laws open themselves to abuse by both king and criminal. To be clear, we do not have a theocracy by direct rule of God through a religious dictatorship, but we do have a representative constitutional republic founded on a theistic worldview. God’s Word is compatible with our constitution and consistent with support for our historic and legal heritage, including our oath of office (Psalm 97, Daniel 2:20-22).

America’s founders knew that freedom without responsibility before God can never last. John Adams, himself a framer of the U.S. Constitution, once wrote that the Constitution was written only for a moral and religious people. It is suitable for the governance of no other because the Constitution relies on the piety and character of the people to work properly, not upon force of arms. This is the only way freedom can survive. The founders knew that rights and responsibilities are the two sides of the coin of liberty, and we must honor God and his laws if peace, freedom, and justice are to prevail (2 Chronicles 7:14). Americans hold these truths to be both self-evident and sacred.

There have always been those who ignored or defied God’s law, abused their position, or lost their integrity, but when scandals and injustice came to light there was public condemnation and common recognition that there must be accountability and we should aspire to a higher standard. Our national God-given conscience even prompted Americans to endure a civil war for the cause of freedom and justice. There was a moral and spiritual consensus that served as guard and compass for the nation. But a troubling ill wind is blowing the country from its proven course. Unprincipled and even illegal acts have been excused and defended in ways not seen before and the nature of law itself has been redefined to accommodate our lower standards. America’s courts have shifted away from a historic understanding that government is to be governed by God’s unchanging laws. Many no longer recognize God-given law in our post-modern era, and so the rule of law is now in danger. The disturbing question for society is, *“When God no longer defines law and justice, who does?”* The historically proven and disturbing answer can only be, *“The strongest.”*

God’s Precepts Define Our Principles

There’s a vital relationship between good law enforcement and the Good Lawgiver. Law enforcement must be built upon proper authority. Proper authority must be built upon just laws. Just laws must be built upon sound principles. Sound principles must be built upon universal truths. Universal truths must be authored by a universal, authoritative, and good Source. That Source can only be God. He always stands ready, willing, and able to guide us according to his eternal precepts (Psalm 119:89-94). Peace officers must stand on principle. Principles provide the foundation on which protection and service to society are built, and by which we find guidance and strength in our personal lives (Psalm 119). In remarking on a very basic principle, one officer described the thin blue line by saying, *“We*

are the shepherds who stand between the sheep and the wolves.” The role of an officer is to stand between violator and victim. That role comes from both God and the state (Romans 13:1-7). If necessary, an officer uses reasonable force to defend society, including deadly force if needed and lawful. In this tough duty he or she needs God’s tempering truth, from which the steel of strong law and love is forged. To do otherwise is to also become a violator or victim. Principle, based upon God-given precepts, gives a shepherd strength in the stresses of life and duty (1 Samuel 17). We cannot govern principle. Principle — not power or party or person — must govern us. Lack of principle is what produces the wolf of dictatorship in a people or the worm of degeneracy in a person. If we deny God and his universal truths, we usurp his authority, author our own truth, and invent our own self-centered principles. We shepherds then turn into wolves ourselves and destroy one another in a Darwinian “*survival of the fittest*” fight to the death, and justice goes the way of both wolves and unprotected sheep — it dies too (Ezekiel 34, Hosea 10).

What do we do when we fail to live up to God’s precepts and our own principles, as invariably happens? First, even though it is impossible for us to be perfect in this life, we should always strive to live honorably. The world needs more, not less, integrity (Job 2:9-10, Psalm 25). This requires practice. To illustrate, just because I will never learn to shoot perfectly does not mean I give up going to the range. Instead, this reality motivates me to go as often as I can to improve stance, sight picture, grip, trigger control etc. to be as skillful as possible with imperfectible skills. Second, just because we stumble and fall does not mean we must remain in the mud. God forgives. We also need to forgive ourselves, and others, and get up and go on (Matthew 18:21-35, Luke 11:4, John 8:1-11). Third, there are just and proper consequences for lapses, even if our sinful human condition makes those lapses unavoidable. These consequences take a variety of forms. They act to inhibit and restrain our bad behavior, and act as a future deterrent. They make us think twice. Again, it’s like I used to tell my drunk clients who didn’t want to go along with the program, “*You can go the easy way, or you can go the hard way, but you’re gonna go.*” Even King David himself, although repentant and forgiven by God, still had to face terrible but just consequences for his sin (2 Samuel 12:9-14, Psalm 51). Fourth, to find true healing and happiness in our lives, we must always be careful to be honest and humble before God, and admit and turn away from our sins (Psalm 32).

God’s Law Convicts Us

God’s law is good, perfect, and necessary for our guidance, but we cannot rely on our observance of it to justify ourselves before God. If we do, we wind up convicted rather than commended (Romans 3:9-20 and 1 John 1:8-10). Some believe that if our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds, we can work our way to heaven and God will accept us. But again, we can’t rely on moral, civil, or even religious deeds to earn us a place in heaven, because none of us has kept God’s law perfectly (Psalm 130). God’s standard is perfection because he is a perfect God. God’s Word says, “*Because all people have sinned, they have fallen short of God’s glory*” (Romans 3:23). Peace officers face two temptations regarding God’s law. First, they may be tempted to think that they’re on a fast track to heaven because they are God’s instruments in enforcing the law. God’s Word tells us that this is not so. We all fall short of God’s glory, no matter what our role in life. If we take an honest look at ourselves in God’s law mirror, we know this is true. Second, one of the biggest dangers officers face is the temptation to live by the law in their personal as well as their professional lives. But what works well on the street does not always work well in the heart or in the home, as

spiritual, physical, emotional, marital, and family breakdowns prove. God's law is good, but we cannot live without his love and forgiveness. If we do not understand this in our lives, we become self-righteous hypocrites, denying, excusing, or minimizing our sin, and we crush ourselves and others under an unbearable load of legalism. The law of God is good, but we must understand its limits and its place. Because of our inability to abide by the law's righteous demands, it cannot ultimately give us a complete life in this world or lead us to eternal life in heaven. There must be another way (Romans 3:20-23).

God's Point Man Conducts Our Hostage Rescue

God's law is perfect. So too is his love (Psalm 103). In his love, he revealed to us the way of life. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, who took on himself the death sentence we deserved (Isaiah 53, Ephesians 2:1-10). In him we have forgiveness and eternal life {Read Titus 1:1-2}. Jesus is our Peace Officer — our *“Good Shepherd”* (John 10:1-18). He is God's Point Man. He was first through the door of this world and is himself the Doorway of our rescue from it. Jesus says, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). His claim is not unreasonable, because his actions are those of a hostage rescuer who shields us from hostile fire and carries us through the only door of escape (Zechariah 3:2), sacrificing his own life in the process. A pinned down person will not be so narrow-minded as to think the only way of escape is too restrictive. That person will instead gladly be saved and eternally grateful to the rescuer.

The entire world has been kidnapped and held hostage by Satan, with only one Rescuer and Way of Escape (Acts 4:12). No self-righteousness, no other faith, no religious or moral or civil works, no philosophy, no psychology, and nothing else, no matter how good and necessary, can ultimately save us from sin — only Christ can. Inadequate human ideas shout out the self-help dead-ends of *“Do!”* But the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that God's Point Man Jesus has executed entry into the world, conducted the greatest hostage rescue in history, gathered us up in his arms, carried us to safety, and announced *“DONE!”* (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Romans 5:6-11, Ephesians 2:8-9).

The message of Christianity revealed in God's Word is unique (Acts 4:8-12). This message proclaims that because of what Jesus did on the cross, we have the gift of eternal life. To survive we must avoid Satan's *“Stockholm Syndrome”* and allow Christ to rescue us. There is a *“free lunch”* of eternal life, which is ours by faith (Luke 14:15-24, Revelation 19:9). It's free, but not cheap. This banquet of eternal blessings was bought and paid for by God's Son, the ultimate Tier One Operator, with his own blood as the ransom price to save our life (Revelation 7:13-17).

God's Backup Responds to “Officer Down!”

Peace officers typically enter law enforcement with high ideals, but after years of dealing with the transgressions and tragedies of the human condition many become disillusioned with people and alienated from God. However, there is hope. God's Word explains our corrupted human condition and equips us to handle it (Ephesians 6:10-18, James 1:1-27, 1 Peter 4:12-19, 1 John 3:11-24). The Bible teaches us how to live joyfully despite troubles, opposition, and betrayal (Philippians 1-4). Instead of losing faith when people let us down, we need to place it where it belongs in the first place — on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:24-29, 1 Corinthians 3:11, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58). He justified our trust by responding to our *“officer down”* situation.

God's Peace Officer hears our hurting call for help and by his amazing grace transports us to safety. God's Word issues Spirit-inspired standard operating procedures to heal, guide and empower us. His Word is his written report and sworn statement detailing his protection for us against the perpetrator Satan. God legislates his law and litigates our case. His law passes sentence, but his Gospel "*Good News*" love proclaims our pardon. God frees us from the handcuffs of sin and death with the key of Christ's cross. God's Word is a weapon. It is a magnum equalizer that puts down the devil, the world, and our own weakness. God's Word trains us in his tactics and shines his spotlight on our late shifts of life. God's Word declares our independence from the devil. It provides our Christian constitution, our bill of redeemed rights, our mission statement, our spiritual weapons, and our badge of belonging to and authority from our ultimate Peace Officer who saves us.

God's Word Describes Our Peace Officer

I once heard a commentator say, "*I love God's law, but I have a hard time loving God.*" He was referring to his belief that God's law is good, perfect, and proper, but its demands are hard and stressful to keep. And, adding to this burden, someday we will all be accountable to a God who will judge us. This is an intimidating thought that makes it hard to love God even if we love his law. It is true that God is perfect, his law must be obeyed, and we are accountable, but we need something more than God's law and final judgment to know God's love and forgiveness.

That love and forgiveness is personified perfectly in the person and work of our Great Peace Officer Jesus Christ — our Savior and Lord. The Bible gives us the Gospel "*Good News*" that God is love, and the proof of his love is that he gave us his Son to be our ultimate Peace Officer who protects us from sin and Satan. Our Great Peace Officer Jesus Christ lived the life we failed to live, died the death we deserved, took our punishment on himself, and then rose from the dead to lead us to eternal life, all as a free gift of forgiveness we receive by simply trusting him! This truth gives us true peace, faith, hope, and love, and frees us to love the God who first loved us (John 3:16-17, 1 John 4:7-21).

I sometimes ask officers to list the top ten qualities of a good cop. Typically, the word "*integrity*" tops the list. Then I ask, "*How many of these qualities does Jesus have?*" The honest reply, based on God's Word, is simply, "*He's got them all!*" He is the perfect Peace Officer who patrols the whole world as his beat. In fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus Christ — true God and true man — came from heaven to take on human flesh as his uniform (For examples of prophecy, read Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 9:6, and Micah 5:2. Also, read about Jesus taking on human flesh and blood in Hebrews 2:14-18). He responded to our need for backup and arrived on scene 2,000 years ago (Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2). He threw himself between history's ultimate bad guy — Satan — and us (Matthew 4:1-11, John 12:27-33). He took the bullet of eternal death we had coming because of our sins (Mark 15). His heroic sacrifice on the cross of Calvary rescued us from the devil's own death sentence (Colossians 1:13-23, 1 Peter 2:22-25). Jesus' action in laying down his life to protect and serve the entire world above and beyond the call of duty makes him the greatest Peace Officer of all time (Revelation 5:5-14). God the Father has awarded him the greatest Medal of Valor of all time by raising him from the grave and giving him a place of honor and power (Ephesians 1:20-22, Philippians 2:6-11). Christ strengthens us (2 Corinthians 4:7-18, Ephesians 2:4-10, and Ephesians 3:20-21). He defends us against our accuser Satan (Zechariah 3:1-10, 1 John 2:1-2). One day he will return to gather all believers and take them to live with him in heaven forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). He gives us victory over death itself (Romans 8:28-39).

Peace officers often feel alone and under tremendous stress. I felt that way more than once when I was a cop, but remember, it takes one to know one. The greatest Peace Officer of all time knows peace officers. He knows who they are and where they're at and what they endure, because he is one also. He has *"been there, done that, and bought the T shirt"* (Hebrews 4:14-16). Jesus Christ paid the price of our forgiveness with his blood, and by his sacrifice proved God will always back you up in life and meet your spiritual needs, no matter what your circumstances (John 6:35, Philippians 4:11-13). *"God has said, 'I will never abandon you or leave you'"* (Hebrews 13:5). *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Deuteronomy 31:6).

When I was a young boy, my pastor gave me this verse with Jesus' words: *"I'm leaving you peace. I'm giving you my peace. I don't give you the kind of peace that the world gives. So don't be troubled or cowardly"* (John 14:27). I pray our Great Peace Officer gives you his peace and courage.

God's Word says "Now!"

God's Word is a true-to-life book that speaks to our daily struggles. *"God's Word is living and active"* (Hebrews 4:12). Like an emergency radio broadcast, the Bible warns us to be on the lookout for the devil, who is *"prowling around"* (1 Peter 5:8). Today, the Scriptures brief us to *"be careful, brothers and sisters, that none of you ever develop a wicked, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:12-15). Today, God's Word urges an immediate reaction to God's invitation to believe and receive his backup. It clearly says, *"Listen, now is God's acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!"* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The word *"salvation"* in the Bible means exactly what it says. Salvation through Jesus Christ is not just another option in a long list of personal choices. He is the only way to escape eternal death and have eternal life (John 14:6, Acts 2:14-41, Acts 4:1-12, Acts 17:15-34). Today, we need to confess to Jesus Christ, *"Lord, to what person could we go? Your words give eternal life"* (John 6:68). Only in the pages of God's Spirit-inspired book will we find lasting *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22-23).

God forgives our past — let go of yesterday (Philippians 3:12-16, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Titus 3:3-8). He will help us face the future — don't worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:25-34). Today is the day in which we are called to believe and to act. In his Word and by his power, God calls us to seize today. It's never too late because God gives us now. It wasn't too late even for the dying thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43). Seize God's Word now, his forgiveness now, his strength now, his guidance now, his hope now, his peace now, his eternal life and love NOW! God's Word has been proven in the lives of millions moment-by-moment and day-by-day. Let him prove his Word in your life too, now, today . . . every day!

Read the story of the corrections officer in Acts 16:16-34 and ask if the jailer put off being saved. Did he postpone listening to God's truth? Did he wait to get baptized, or make his family wait? Was today too soon or tomorrow too late for this man? What about you? What are you waiting for? Why? Is it time for you to look in the mirror and ask the hard, tough questions? What is your reaction time? What will be your response time?

God's Word says "Come!"

God's Word extends a personal invitation from Jesus to you (Matthew 11:28-30). We can't survive alone on our spiritual beat. We need God's partnership, but our relationship with God can't depend on us, because we're not perfect and fail even as believers (Romans 7:7-25). Our relationship with God is based completely on him and his gift of life which Jesus Christ has already won for us through his death and resurrection (Romans 8:1-4). We receive this gift of eternal life by simply receiving it in faith — by trusting him (John 1:1-18). We do the work of God by simply trusting his Son, and the rest of life flows from that (John 4:13-14, John 6:28-35). By the power of the Holy Spirit — the power of the cross — we turn to Christ from sin, and by his power daily trust and obey him (Acts 2:38, Romans 8:5-27, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

Our lives rest not in us, but in him — his love not ours, his grace not ours, his strength not ours, his power not ours, his control not ours — get the point? This truth forms the foundation on which our lives are built and rebuilt. It frees us from fear of failure to live a life of peace and joy and thanksgiving, despite the stresses we face. Sometimes we may feel we are walking on a high wire, but with the Lord beneath us we work with a safety net. We are free to follow and serve him not because of fear but because of knowing we are loved no matter what. This truth gives us courage to continue our journey despite obstacles and even failures.

Our relationship with God needs to be close. That's why he asks us to call him "*Father*." It may be hard to call him Father, especially if your earthly father was a poor one, but remember, God himself comes to us in his Word and shows us by his own example what a loving father should be so we can heal from past wounds (Deuteronomy 10:12-22, Psalm 27:10, Psalm 68:5-6, Luke 11:1-13, Romans 8:15). God's Word gives us strength and comfort through every circumstance of life (Matthew 6:25-34, Romans 8:28). We willingly and thankfully respond to God with the true worship of a devoted life (Romans 12:1-2). We do this not to earn his love but in loving response to the love he has already freely given us (1 John 4:10). We do this not to earn heaven but because our Peace Officer has already earned heaven for us. "*We love because God loved us first*" (1 John 4:19).

Praying is simply talking to God in faith. What is your response time? I invite you to respond right now with the following prayer and receive God's forgiveness and peace (Romans 1:16-17, Philippians 4:4-9):

"Father in heaven, I confess to you with sorrow and sadness that I have failed to keep your perfect law. I have been a victim of sin, Satan, and myself. I humbly come before you in faith to ask your forgiveness. I confess that I cannot rescue myself. Instead, I rely completely on your Son, Jesus Christ, who bore my sentence of death on his cross, and in that heroic act of love arrested Satan and took away my sins. Thank you that because of Christ's sacrifice I have received free pardon for all my sins. Thank you that because of Christ's resurrection I, too, will live forever. Because of your great love for me, I turn from my own way to trust and follow Christ by the power of your Holy Spirit. Jesus, my Peace Officer, please heal my heart. Come back me up in my journey and patrol my life. Protect and serve me forever in your peace and help me to always be your peace officer. Amen."

God's Word Empowers Us

Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6). When you follow him on his way, you will find peace, wisdom, and strength for the journey, like I have on mine. Just like you must be trained and equipped to survive on the street, God's Word trains and equips you for spiritual survival. And just like law enforcement training, you should engage in a regular regimen of spiritual training and preparation to keep your skills sharp and soul safe. Our spiritual life can be compared to weapons proficiency; it is a perishable skill. Practice, practice, practice! *"Take . . . God's Word as the sword that the Spirit supplies"* (Ephesians 6:17) to achieve spiritual proficiency — to survive and win on the spiritual streets. You must practice spiritual disciplines just like you practice law enforcement disciplines. Listen to how the Apostle Peter begins his letter to us in 2 Peter 1:1-11:

"From Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. To those who have obtained a faith that is as valuable as ours, a faith based on the approval that comes from our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. May good will and peace fill your lives through your knowledge about Jesus, our God and Lord!"

"God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and for godliness. This power was given to us through knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and integrity. Through his glory and integrity, he has given us his promises that are of the highest value. Through these promises you will share in the divine nature because you have escaped the corruption that sinful desires cause in the world."

"Because of this, make every effort to add integrity to your faith; and to integrity add knowledge; to knowledge add self-control; to self-control add endurance; to endurance add godliness; to godliness add Christian affection; and to Christian affection add love. If you have these qualities and they are increasing, it demonstrates that your knowledge about our Lord Jesus Christ is living and productive. If these qualities aren't present in your life, you're shortsighted and have forgotten that you were cleansed from your past sins."

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, use more effort to make God's calling and choosing of you secure. If you keep doing this, you will never fall away. Then you will also be given the wealth of entering into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

God provides the power for us to be Christians by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, the Bible. We need to spend time with him on a regular basis, so that we can be encouraged and empowered by that Word (Psalm 19). We also need to open our hearts to him in prayer. Don't worry about what to say or how to say it (Romans 8:26-27, 1 Thessalonians 5:17). God doesn't need fancy talk. His shoulders are broad enough to bear the weight of our humble honesty. He would not have it any other way because he loves you. He wants to hear our hearts — our sincere words — just as we listen to his sincere heart when we read his Word. If you are still unsure how or what to pray (and to give you another resource), we have provided some prayers in this introduction to guide you.

Try to join with other believers in Bible study and prayer on a regular basis. We need their encouragement and accountability, and they need ours. This can be formal or informal — just do it! Here a church, chaplain and other believing officers can be a great blessing. They have been for me.

We may be tempted to stay away from church because we sometimes see poor attitudes or behavior among Christians, or, ironically, because we may feel we aren't good enough to go. We may be tempted to think, *"I don't want to hang around a church full of hypocrites,"* but remember there's always room for one more, so welcome! Seriously, we're all sinners who have been saved because of God's undeserved kindness. The church is meant to be a hospital for sinners to find healing, not a showcase for perfection. Only perfect people don't need a church. The rest of us do. Also, and this is very important to remember, Jesus himself tells us that there will be imposters and con artists and failures in his church, just like at work and in the world, so what do you expect? Where else would the devil attack? You must have real currency to have a counterfeit, but would you throw away all your money just because you came across a fake twenty-dollar bill? Yet how many reject Christ and his church because of some counterfeit Christians, who should only prove that the real deal exists? Don't fall victim to this lame excuse to throw out the good with the bad and so lose out on a wealth of worship and true Christian fellowship and friendship (Matthew 13, Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:25).

Here I must admit that it may be hard for you to go outside cop culture and be friendly with folks who may not have a clue about who you are or what you face. You may be tired of hearing ticket stories and various other complaints about law enforcement and may not want to deal with the stress of explaining yourself to people. But remember, to lead a healthy and balanced life you need some positive involvement outside of cop culture. Christ gives us his Church to be our spiritual family. We each need to be involved in a local church that, like us, is never perfect in this life, but one which honors and correctly proclaims God's Word of commands and promises, properly shares God's gifts of baptism and communion, and provides real spiritual strength through other believers. Give the church a chance. Any worthwhile endeavor takes an investment of time and effort. Take the time and make the effort to find a good church and build a relationship with God and his people. Your investment will yield an enormous eternal return (Ephesians 4).

Go to church and bring your family. Remember that children follow examples more than words. If you want your children to go to church and have a spiritual life themselves, don't expect they will unless you do too. Don't make excuses. Don't blame someone else for your own unwillingness to do what is good for you. Remember that no TV preacher, no mountaintop, no fishing trip, no ballgame, and no nap, good as all that may be, can substitute for regular active membership in a good local church. Look until you find one. Get involved today (Hebrews 10:25).

You probably have questions that a good pastor can address. Some answers will have to wait until heaven, but that's okay, because we learn to humbly trust God now. Find a pastor who properly understands, distinguishes, and balances the Bible's message about God's two jurisdictions of law and Gospel — a pastor who, although imperfect like everyone else, lives a life of integrity, faith, and hope. Learn and grow and be patient in the process.

Sometimes God cuts our Gordian knots, and sometimes it takes time for him to untangle our rope, but he uses that time to teach us things we cannot otherwise learn and provide healing we cannot otherwise find. Don't give up on God in the process. He never gives up on you and provides you with the training and tools you need (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Rediscovering Our Lost Innocence

Maybe the toughest question an officer confronts is, *“Why does a good, loving, and all-powerful God allow the evil and tragedy I see?”* To address this question, we must begin with the account he gives us in Genesis 1-3. God’s Word here tells the story of the creation of humankind in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were created as perfect human beings. The Bible says they were created in the image of God, and with that image came free will — the capacity to choose good or evil (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:15-17). If they did not have that capacity along with the potential to also face the consequences of their choices, they wouldn’t have been humans created in the image of God. They would have been mere robots. Furthermore, if there were no consequences following their choices, their free will would mean nothing. They would have been denied the human choice and responsibility that provide dignity and purpose. For instance, if we make a bad choice and step in front of a moving freight train and nothing bad happens, it means nothing to choose not to step in front of the train, and so the decision either way is meaningless. There would be no good or bad choices about anything, because there would be no good or bad consequences for anything. All our choices, and therefore ultimately our existence, would be meaningless and a farce. The ability to choose good means nothing apart from the ability to also choose evil, with all the real consequences inherent in those true choices. All would be pointless. This was King Solomon’s own conclusion about *“life under the sun”* apart from God and his divinely ordered consequences. Read Solomon’s Book of Ecclesiastes. Note his conclusions in chapter 12. Here we observe pointlessness might be better than pain if God did not provide us with his answer, but in Jesus Christ, our backup *“Prince of Peace”* officer, he does — read Isaiah 9:6. God created us with dignity, and then, through Jesus, he restored our lost dignity, and in the process proved his personal investment of sacrifice to protect and serve. How wonderful is his love for us!

Adam and Eve made a bad choice, and because of that choice they cursed humanity with what theologians call *“original sin”* (officers simply observe that sin need not be taught . . . we are all born experts). Sin has now trapped us in the consequences of Adam and Eve’s free will decision. The evil that the devil and they brought into the world is an infectious, contagious, and fatal disease. This sickness of the soul has brought physical and spiritual death to us all. To make matters worse, every one of us in our sinful condition has willingly endorsed our first parents’ fall into sin and death. Each of us spread this contagion by our own poor choices. We are all infected by it, and only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from the eternal consequences of this death-dealing disease.

We have all missed the mark and are unclean before God. Another tragic consequence of sin is the victimization it has wrought in the world. Our world, unlike the Garden of Eden, is now a dangerous place for victims as well as perpetrators because of the fall of humankind. Officers often identify loss of innocence as the biggest loss they suffer because of their profession. However, none of us lost our innocence when we became cops or crooks or those caught in between. The truth is that we all lost our innocence when we were conceived (Psalm 51:5).

Knowing the history and theology of the fall of man, although it explains the origins of evil and tragedy, does precious little to comfort us when we confront the unpleasant realities of life. How do we cope with and find comfort in the tragic consequences of sin we confront? People in the Bible occasionally asked God *“Why?”* (Job 3). God, however, spent little or no time explaining the why questions he was asked. Even Jesus, hanging on the cross, asked according to his human nature, *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”* (Matthew 27:46).

God gave his own Son no answer, but instead left Jesus to suffer and die alone, as he had to do to save us. Jesus himself understands our “*Why*” questions. Much of the book of Job deals with the “*Why*” questions, but God never really gives a “*Why*” answer. However, note Job’s refusal to blame God despite his tragic circumstances (Job 2:9-10). Note his enduring faith in Job 19:25-27. We should avoid the mistake of Job’s friends, who rushed to judge him unjustly about why he was suffering (Job 42:7).

God does not devote much time to answering the many “*Why*” questions in Scripture, but he does spend a lot of time talking about his “*Who*” answers. For instance, he discusses who he is and who we are, and here we have the answers we truly need from God. Let me illustrate this truth with a story. When my youngest daughter was four, we went on a family vacation to California. If before our trip I had tried to explain to her our route, our schedule, and our activities, she would not have comprehended this information. She had never been to California except as an infant, did not have a developed concept of time, was not capable of translating concrete maps into abstract ideas of travel, and had no experience forming comparisons with unique California features. She didn’t even know what “*vacation*” was. My wife and I didn’t try to explain these things. Instead, we talked to her about the fun we would have and showed her how excited we were about our upcoming trip. She became excited too and adopted the certainty that she was going to have a great time even though she didn’t know why or how. The key to her confident excitement was not knowledge of the trip, which was unattainable by her young mind, but her knowledge of her parents. She knew who we were. She knew who she was. She knew we loved her and she could trust us. She knew her vacation was going to be a good thing simply because we said so. She put her hand in ours and went along for the ride not knowing where it would lead but knowing it was going to be wonderful. And it was.

This illustration shows what we need to know about the deepest and most difficult questions of life. Sometimes our journey through life is no vacation, but this is why we need our heavenly Father to help us through it. We need to trust his love. We need the faith of a child (Matthew 19:13-15). Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways,*” declares the Lord. “*Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.*” The gulf that exists between the mind of our Father in heaven and the mind of his children on earth is much, much wider than the gulf that exists between the mind of a human parent and child. How could God explain to us the why of the universe in terms we could understand? Let go of “*Why*.” Instead hold the hand of the God who made the universe.

Just as the mind of God is greater than ours, so too is his love greater than ours. God proved his love beyond a reasonable doubt by giving us his precious Son to live and die and rise again for us, and to walk with us on our journey and lead us to eternal life. Through Jesus Christ, God gives the gift of peace to everyone — including peace officers. His peace, “*which goes beyond anything we can imagine . . . will guard our thoughts and emotions through Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:7). This “*beyond anything we can imagine*” peace will help us cope with those unimaginably tragic times when we cannot grasp what is happening or why. His peace will lead us on the healing path. In trust we receive his love and take his hand. In holding his hand, we walk with him in peace on our way. Then, someday, we will go to that good place where his road leads and there discover our lost innocence. There we will fully know as we have been known (1 Corinthians 13:12). Like a child now grown, we will then find it was not really we who held his hand, but he who always held ours.

Reaching Our Final Destination

The folks at the little restaurant served up a friendly small-town feeling with their good homestyle cooking. And as my wife and I discovered on the way back to our breakfast table, they also served up great local artwork. We saw a variety of pencil prints on the walls, mostly western scenes, but hanging on the wall above our table was a different kind of print. Created by the same artist (who happened to also be a former officer), it showed an eye-catching profile of wrinkled old hands pressed together in prayer. Even more compelling, the hands tenderly wrapped around a small child who, head bowed and eyes closed, rested in them, its own small hands folded in prayer in tiny imitation atop the aged ones. The print was a portrait of one generation's legacy of faith, hope and love given to another (1 Corinthians 13). My wife couldn't take her eyes off the picture. *"I love it!"* she exclaimed. *"Those look like your grandma's hands."*

My grandma's hands . . . I remembered those hands from when I too was a child, and yes, they did look like the hands in the picture. Grandma Anna was short, wrinkled, and walked with a stooped arthritic shuffle. She was also one of the most beautiful women I've ever met. Like Anna in the Bible, her beauty came from the heart (Luke 2:36-38). Grandma had a hard life. She was born in poverty. Her father died when she was a baby. Her mother was deaf and needed her care. Her first husband was no good and she had to divorce him. She remarried to a man who was later disabled from emphysema. She suffered through the Great Depression, holding her family together as best she could. Later, because of unfortunate circumstances she had to raise four grandchildren while caring for her sick husband and suffering from her own rheumatoid arthritis. These are but a few of the things Grandma endured in her life. It seemed she never had a break and by human right and reason could have become bitter. And yet, some of the happiest times I had as a child were spent at her humble house. Grandma was the sun around which our extended family revolved. Not that she was the center of attention, but she was the center of attraction. The gravity of her love drew us into orbit around her, especially at holiday time. She loved her family and always sought to give us her best in every way. She had a servant's heart. She had the heart of Jesus.

As I looked at the print on the wall, I remembered the time before Grandma died, before my wife and I were married. I had just introduced them as we met to go into a restaurant, and my fiancée took Grandma's arm to steady her. As it turned out, Grandma steadied my wife-to-be instead. Most people stick to small talk when they first meet. Not Grandma. She cut to the chase as if the world could end at any moment and the most important things had to be said *now*. She lovingly wrapped my fiancée's smooth young hands in her wrinkled old ones, looked into her eyes, and gently said, *"Have faith, girl. I've trusted Jesus all my life, and he's never failed me."* At that moment my future wife fell in love with Grandma and from then on followed her around like a puppy. When I heard Grandma say those words, I did not pay much attention because I knew her and that was just Grandma. Years later, however, in that restaurant with the pencil drawing, the memory of her words moved me to awe. How could this woman say those things? How could she keep her love, her faith, her hope, and her joy through so many hard times? Where did she mine such gold that never failed, despite an endlessly difficult life? How could she, in her poverty, deliver such riches to her family, more than any earthly wealth could ever buy? How was she able to leave such a legacy to the ones she loved?

Here I need to go the long way around the barn to answer these questions. My mom always said it wasn't just Dad's South Pacific tan that won her heart after World War II. She saw how lovingly he treated Grandma and correctly concluded he would treat her with love also. Dad, for his part, saw that in addition to being friendly and cute, my mom, like Grandma, was a great cook and good with children. I suppose by today's politically correct standards those were questionable reasons for marriage, but they were good enough in 1946 to lead to a happy 50th anniversary celebration years later. Here's the point: Grandma was a key player in making my mom and dad's marriage and family a success. She loved her son with Jesus' love. He, in response, loved his mom. Mom saw that love and fell in love with Dad. Dad, because he had been loved by Grandma and so by her example understood love, loved Mom. In turn, my sister and brother and I experienced Dad and Mom's love and grew up secure and happy. End of legacy? No, not even now, years after Grandma died. She is still blessing many people through the family and friends she influenced before she went home to be with the Lord. Think about it. She is influencing you and me right now!

Some who are reading this have not grown up in a good family situation. You have not been blessed with a good legacy. I know there are some real horror stories out there. If that is your situation remember you don't have to perpetrate on your own family the same victimization you suffered. You can't change what people did to you, but with God's help you can change for the better what you do with others. If you do, you will not only bless them, but you will bless yourself as well. Don't continue the pattern of ignoring or blaming or excusing or attacking. Draw a thin blue line in the sand and let the abuse and neglect stop now with you. God gives us the power to change if we let him. Maybe you feel you have already made too many mistakes and it is too late, but if you are still breathing it's never too late for God to work his healing in your life. There are people and resources to back you up in this process, including God's Word. Let them.

I have known many officers over the years. I remember the many gods they sometimes chased: adrenaline, money, toys, sex, power, and other idols. King Solomon had it all, but how well did that work for him (1 Kings 11, Ecclesiastes)? What about you? Do you follow the one true God on life's road or other gods? If you follow other gods, ask if those gods will guard or rob your legacy. I once heard an officer comment, *"Wives come and go, but you have just one career."* Not surprisingly, his life — his legacy — missed the threats and hit the people he should have protected. For our own sake and the sake of others, we must aim better — aim higher.

Most cops enter law enforcement with the idea they want to help people and make a positive difference. In the real world they discover that instead of rolling over the world the world often rolls over them. Many people don't want to be helped. Many people don't care. Many people never notice when a cop's obituary is posted and even among fellow officers a brother or sister officer can be forgotten. Grandma made a greater impact than most by simply following Jesus on life's road and loving the family and friends God gave her along the way. She left a true legacy, including an example of faith and life for all of us to follow.

My wife wanted the print in the restaurant because she loved it. I wanted to give it to her because I loved her, and it was our 21st wedding anniversary. We both took it home to remember what really counts. Ask yourself, *"What legacy will I leave at the end of my*

earthly journey” (Joshua 24)? May our Peace Officer Jesus Christ back you up and give you his peace on your road through life, and someday, at the end of your watch, provide you with a joyful escort home to live with him forever!

“I have fought the good fight. I have completed the race. I have kept the faith.

The prize that shows I have God’s approval is now waiting for me.

The Lord, who is a fair judge, will give me that prize on that day.

He will give it not only to me but also to everyone who

is eagerly waiting for him to come again.”

2 Timothy 4:7-8

SECTION TWO — THE BIBLE, OUR BACKUP

How to Find a Bible Verse

The books of the Bible are named and divided into sections of numbered chapters and sub-sections of numbered verses. Chapter and verse numbers were not originally included by the divinely inspired writers of Scripture but were added later to help us find Bible passages. Looking up a Bible passage is easy once you know how to do it. For example, 2 Timothy 3:14-17 reads, *“Second Timothy, chapter 3, verses 14 through 17.”* “2 Timothy” means this is the second of two books of the Bible named Timothy (book names often refer to the recipient, the author, or the content). These two “books” were letters written by the Apostle Paul to Timothy. “3” is the chapter number of the book. “14-17” are the verse numbers within the book chapter. God’s Word for Peace Officers provides features to help you find and study the Books of the Bible. The commentary and tools in this Peace Officer Edition introduction are designed to assist you, but remember, this is only backup for your personal study of the all-important backup of God’s Word!

What is the Bible?

God’s Word was written down by humans but inspired by the Spirit of God for our benefit. Therefore, God’s Word empowers us for faith and life. The Bible is more like a library than an individual book. There are 66 “books” of the Bible. Many different writers penned them over a period of 1600 years, from about 1500 BC to about 100 AD. Because of divine inspiration (meaning that God is the true author), they show a remarkable consistency. The Bible itself tells us its purpose and how we should read it. Therefore, its message is the same for everyone if we humbly listen in faith. This does not mean the Bible is always easy to understand, or all our questions will be answered, but we can certainly learn what we need to know and grow as we need to grow.

The main purpose of the Bible is to tell the true story of God’s great love for us so we can have eternal life. God’s love was revealed in the gift of his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. “Lord” means “Master.” “Savior” means he saved us from our sins and freely gives us eternal life. “Jesus” is the human name of our Lord. It means “God Saves.” “Christ” is another word for “Messiah” and means “God’s Anointed One.” This refers to Jesus’ role as the promised Savior of the world. According to the Bible’s description God is three persons in one divine nature and essence (Genesis 1:26, Luke 3:21-22), God the Father’s eternal Son Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-35) and so is both true God and true man. Only as a true man could he die on the cross to take upon himself the death sentence we deserved for our rebellion against God. But only as true God

could he take away the sins of the whole world by the divine power of his redeeming death. Otherwise, at best, his death would have been only the martyr's death of a great teacher, maybe noble as an example, but useless for our salvation. "*Redeem*" means "*to buy back*." In this case it means that God bought back his helpless children from judgment by the blood of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus is also referred to as our Redeemer. We are God's children twice: first by creation, and then again by redemption (John 3). Our eternal life depends completely upon the undeserved kindness of God — his grace. This kindness is revealed by the Spirit of God in the pages of Scripture and is received in our hearts simply by belief. From Genesis to Revelation, God's Word tells the complete true story of our peace with God won by our Peace Officer Jesus Christ.

The Word of God is divided into two sections, the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament was written before Christ was born — by Moses, the prophets, and other spiritual leaders of Israel like King David and King Solomon. The Old Testament tells of humankind's creation and fall into sin, and the troubled journey of God's people. God's prophets detail our need for the promised Messiah who would come to save not just Israel but the entire world. If you are unfamiliar with the Old Testament, some parts may seem strange, like the sacrificial system of Israel, but they all point to a need for the coming "*Messiah*" ("*Anointed One*") — the coming of Jesus and his "*once for all*" sacrifice as the "*Lamb of God*" (Hebrews 10:1-23). The Old Testament historical writings tell stories of integrity, dedication, nobility, and sacrifice, but also record many trainwrecks of human behavior pointing to the sad reality of our sinful human condition requiring the Messiah to save us from Satan, sin, and self. Many of the great people of faith in the Old Testament experienced glaring weaknesses or failures, such as Abraham, Moses, or King David, but it is comforting to know that God forgave them as he forgives us when we come to him in repentant faith. Stories about our shared fallen human nature have been preserved by God to provide "*poster child*" examples about what not to do or be in our lives and to show us all our spiritual need for a Savior. The wisdom literature (e.g. Proverbs) instructs us, the poetic writings (e.g. the Psalms) inspire us, and the prophetic writings predict Jesus' coming including genealogical documentation referenced by Matthew and Luke in the New Testament providing evidence that Jesus is the promised Messiah (Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38). The first of many prophecies concerning Jesus' coming is Genesis 3:15, and maybe the greatest description of his future suffering is in Isaiah 53, which reads like an eyewitness account of his crucifixion although written hundreds of years before the event. Accurate prophecy about Jesus in the Old Testament is solid evidence for the Christian faith (e.g. study Zechariah 3, written about 520 years prior to Jesus' birth, describing Jesus' High Priest Savior role).

The New Testament written by Jesus' followers after he returned to his Father in heaven tells the story of Jesus' life and the first century Christian Church. It relates God's promises first made in the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis and continuing to their final fulfillment when Christ returns. Both Testaments contain God's Law (his commands) and his love (his "*Gospel*" promises) — the "*Good News*" of the forgiveness and life that we have because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Law Enforcement in the Bible

There are many outstanding examples of faithful men and women in the Old Testament who served and protected despite difficulties. These servant protectors faced many of the same problems officers face today because human nature does not change. They serve as role models for modern officers who must also overcome obstacles to protect and serve. Below are some examples of faithful servant protectors in the Old Testament:

- The Story of Joseph — Genesis 39-50
- The Story of Joshua — Joshua 1-4, 24
- The Story of Gideon — Judges 6-8
- The Story of Ruth — Ruth 1-4
- The Story of David and Goliath — 1 Samuel 17
- The Story of Nehemiah — Nehemiah 1-13
- The Story of Esther — Esther 1-10
- The Story of Daniel and His Friends — Daniel 1-7

Romans 13:1-7 in the New Testament is one of the primary passages in Scripture concerning law enforcement. Here the Apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes five points:

- 1) Everyone is subject to civil authority. This authority derives from God and must be respected as God's authority unless it contradicts God's commandments.
- 2) Christians can be peace officers. This is an honorable calling, not a so-called *"necessary evil."* An officer is a minister (minister means servant) of God's law and justice on earth, just as a pastor is a minister of God's Gospel of mercy and forgiveness.
- 3) God grants government the exercise of lawful authority and force, including the lawful use of deadly force and capital punishment by its officers.
- 4) *"Because of your own conscience,"* Christians have an added motive for honoring officers.
- 5) We should respect and honor officers as agents of God's authority.

The New Testament makes clear that everyone should hold peace officers in high regard. Christians have an additional duty to befriend, pray for and be a witness to peace officers. Scripture gives us the examples of Peter and Paul, who befriended, witnessed to, and prayed for the officers they met. Their beliefs about law enforcement were not affected by the improper treatment they received at the hands of some of the officers they met. Rather, while asserting their God-given rights and duties and upholding the ultimate sovereignty of God, they honored God's presence and work in an imperfect system. While circumstantially addressing the individual and institutional wrongs of Roman law enforcement, they looked beyond those wrongs to see God's law enforcement and extended the love of God and the Gospel of Christ to officers at every opportunity.

Who were the peace officers of the New Testament, and what can we learn from them? In the first century, there was no clear separation between law enforcement and the military in the Roman empire that ruled Israel. The Roman military acted as both soldiers and police, depending on the situation and need. In the New Testament soldiers are always referenced in connection with their law enforcement role. Here we may only remember the abusive soldiers at Jesus' trial, but others are mentioned. We should be careful not to assume those

officers were all the same. In the first-century Israel of Jesus and his apostles, there were three law enforcement jurisdictions. We may roughly compare these with our local, state, and federal jurisdictions, except in Israel each represented different nationalities and interests. These jurisdictions had varying degrees of authority which sometimes overlapped. The bottom rung of the jurisdictional ladder was the Jewish Temple Guard. This guard was headed by the Jewish Levites and was the main enforcement arm of the ruling Jewish elders, the “*Council of Seventy*” which presided over the religious and political affairs of the nation of Israel. The guard was allowed limited authority by the Roman governor Pilate, and the intermediate Roman satraps of Herod the Great’s family. They were normally in the Temple Mount area of Jerusalem, where their primary job was to guard and protect the temple area. They had limited powers of arrest, as when they arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane outside the walls of Jerusalem on the other side of the Kidron Valley (Matthew 26). They could not impose the death penalty on their own. Since the Jewish rulers wanted Jesus killed, they had to turn him over to the Roman government for trial and execution. (But note that Jesus’ death was not about man’s plot but God’s plan. We all put him on the cross by our sin.) The guard served by consent of the Roman rulers who held ultimate authority in provincial Palestine.

The next rung up on the law enforcement jurisdictional ladder was the Herod family. The Herods ruled Israel on behalf of the Roman emperors for about 150 years, from 47 B.C. to A.D. 100, but they were neither Roman nor fully Jewish. They were half-Jewish Idumeans. To maintain power the Herods constantly walked an unsteady political and religious tightrope between the emperor in Rome and the Jews in Jerusalem. For instance, to win favor with the Jews and memorialize himself, Herod the Great rebuilt the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. But to win approval from the emperor and stay in power, the Herods were sometimes vicious in their repression of the Jews and extorted exorbitant taxes from them. Their soldiers were often corrupt as well. The Herods used mercenaries and draftees for their military and law enforcement needs. These Herodian officers helped exercise civil authority and maintain the Herods’ go-between rule.

At the top of the law enforcement authority ladder were the Romans themselves. The Roman governor in Judea (the southernmost province in Israel, where Jerusalem was located) at the time of Jesus’ ministry was Pontius Pilate. He ducked his proper duty on at least one occasion when he symbolically, futilely, washed his hands of responsibility for Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27:11-26). Because of their sometimes overlapping and conflicting authority and politics, Pilate and Herod Antipas (Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and son of Herod the Great) were personal enemies, but in a demonic irony, their conspiracy to railroad Jesus made them friends (Luke 23:1-12).

The Roman soldiers were Pilate’s enforcement arm. They were often brutal and corrupt in performing their duties. Only a Roman citizen had any civil rights — rights the Apostle Paul claimed. The above competing jurisdictions explain the complicated legal maneuvering surrounding Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion. All three jurisdictions were involved, and none are acquitted in the annals of ethical jurisprudence. But there is another picture of law enforcement officers in the New Testament. These officers serve as an example and inspiration to peace officers of every time and place, no matter how corrupt, brutal, or ungodly their law enforcement environment may be, as was often the case in the Roman Empire. These are the Roman centurions of the Bible. They are models of both faith and life. Centurions were first-line Roman army officers, roughly comparable to the sheriff’s

sergeant rank I once held. They were selected for their qualities of faithfulness, courage, and integrity, and were an important component of the whole Roman government. We have four examples of model centurions in the New Testament (note that in this translation centurions are called officers).

The first example is the centurion of Capernaum (Matthew 8:5-15, Luke 7:1-10). He was compassionate, generous, and humble before Jesus and God-given authority. He was a community-oriented law enforcement officer in a hostile environment. Because of this he was able to win over his enemies the Jews and make them his friends. Most importantly he had great faith — so great that Jesus marveled he had not seen such a faith in all Israel. He is a wonderful example for us.

The second example is the centurion at the cross (Mark 15:39). It can be debated whether his outcry that Jesus was the Son of God was a confession of faith or fear, but it can at least be said he was an honest witness to the evidence of Christ's deity and bowed before that reality.

The third example is Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10). He is described by Luke as being devout, God-fearing, generous, a man of prayer, humble, obedient to God, righteous, respected, hospitable, and honest. Despite his excellent character, note that he recognized he still needed a Savior, as do we all, no matter what our character or credentials. When Peter preached to the obedient and listening Cornelius, he was filled with God's Spirit and was baptized with his family and friends. He too is a marvelous example of faith and life for us.

The fourth example is Julius the centurion (Acts 27). He was kind to the Apostle Paul; Paul had undoubtedly made a tremendous impression on him. Julius courageously protected the prisoners — including Paul — in his custody from being killed by the soldiers under his command. His soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to avoid the risk of them escaping when the ship they were all on ran aground. The protectiveness, integrity, courage, honor, and dedication to duty of Julius are especially notable because prisoners in those days did not have the same civil rights we enjoy today. Further, if they had escaped, Julius and his soldiers would have had to serve out the prisoners' sentences according to Roman law. This makes his courageous stand more remarkable.

These examples are quite instructive. We see that peace officers can be honorable and upright even in a corrupt criminal justice system. We also observe that those who wield the sword are not precluded from a relationship with God, but rather can hold the esteem of both God and people and can maintain a good relationship with both. Once again, we see that law enforcement is an honorable, good, and God-pleasing profession and not a so-called *"necessary evil."*

Finally, and most importantly, we see that while commendable and necessary, civil, moral, and even religious righteousness is no substitute for a saving relationship with God through the freely given merits of Jesus Christ (e.g. Cornelius). Modern-day peace officers have been called *"new centurions."* The faithful new centurion of today needs to also be a renewed centurion, and bow before God in both jurisdictions of justice (the law of God) and mercy (the Gospel of Jesus Christ), as did the centurions in Scripture. Here the men and women of law enforcement should pause and ask, *"Am I a renewed centurion?" "Have I bowed before God?"*

Much of the Book of Acts is devoted to presenting the Gospel in the context of a law enforcement and legal environment. Even the Apostle Paul functioned as a lawman prior to his conversion to Christianity. As an abusive special agent of the Sanhedrin, he obtained warrants and exercised powers of arrest and punishment against Christians before Jesus confronted him with a higher authority and calling on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.

There is significant meaning for us in the frequent mention of peace officers, law enforcement, and legal proceedings in the books of the New Testament. We need to listen to what God is saying and apply these truths in our lives. Speaking as a former major crimes investigator with a good track record and case clearance rate, I'm convinced by the biblical evidence presented in both the Old and New Testaments, enough so to have devoted my life to Christian service. I have had some regrets in life, but not about my decision to trust God's Word and follow Jesus Christ — a decision validated in my heart, mind, and life beyond a reasonable doubt. I hope you make the right call too.

Selected Scripture Readings

Jesus Christ, Our Great Peace Officer

Genesis 3:15 ... The first promise of Jesus' coming to "protect and serve."

Psalms 22 ... Prophecy of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross for us.

Psalms 23, John 10:1-18 ... Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:4-5a ... Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 52:12; 58:8 ... Jesus is both our point man and our rear guard.

Isaiah 53 ... Jesus took the bullet that was meant for us.

Zechariah 3 ... The courtroom of God — a prophetic vision about Jesus.

Zechariah 9:10 ... Jesus proclaims peace to the whole world.

Matthew 4:1-11 ... Jesus confronts history's worst criminal — the devil.

Matthew 7:28-29; 9:1-8; 28:16-20 ... Jesus speaks and acts with authority.

Matthew 16:19, Luke 4:14-21 ... Jesus is the key to unlock sin and death.

Luke 19:45-48 ... The plot to ambush Jesus.

John 1:1-18 ... Jesus comes "in service" in the duty uniform of human flesh.

John 3:16-17 ... Jesus came to save the entire world.

John 14:27, Romans 5:1, Colossians 1:19-20 ... Our Peace Officer gives peace

John 12:23-33; 15:13, 1 John 3:16 ... Jesus lays down his life to save us.

John 13:20 ... A true report about Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

John 21:24-25, 1 John 4:13-14 ... Testimony about Jesus.

Romans 5:6-11 ... Jesus willingly died responding to our need for backup.

1 John 4:9 ... Jesus gives us life.

Revelation 12:7-12; 20:10 ... Jesus defeats the devil.

New Centurions need to be Renewed Centurions

Psalms 51:10; 103:5

Isaiah 40:27-31

Acts 10:30-43

Romans 12:1-2

2 Corinthians 4:16

Ephesians 2:1-10

Titus 3:5

God's Word, Our Standard Operating Procedure

Deuteronomy 8:1-3

2 Samuel 22:31

Psalms 1; 119

2 Timothy 3:14-17

God's Law, Our Judge and Guide

2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 33 ... Blessing is based on reverence for God's law.

Romans 1:18 - 2:16; 3:9-20 ... God's law cannot justify us before God.

Psalm 34:11-14, James 2:14-19, 1 John 4:7-21 ... God's law guides us.

Satan, His Suspect Description

Genesis 3:1-13 ... Satan commits the worst crime in history.

Isaiah 14:12-15, Luke 10:18 ... Satan's attempted coup and exile from heaven.

John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 11:14 ... Satan is a murderer, liar and con artist.

Sin, Our Hostage Situation

Genesis 3:1-13

Psalm 14:1-3; 51:5

Isaiah 30:15

Romans 1-3; 5:12-14

God's Word, Our Weapon on the Spiritual Streets

Ephesians 6:17

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Hebrews 4:12

God's Word Gives Us Our Spiritual Mission

Matthew 28:16-20 ... Christ gives us the Great Commission.

1 Timothy 6:11-16 ... Fight the good fight of faith.

Angels, Jesus' Deputies, and Our Backup

Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1, Jude 1:9, Revelation 12:7 ... Michael, the cop angel.

Matthew 4:11, Hebrews 1... Angels are spirits who are subordinate to Christ.

Our Spiritual Strength, Backup, and Equipment

Psalms 18; 25; 50:15; 91 ... God, our divine partner.

Romans 1:16-17 ... Power and strength come from faith in the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Ephesians 4:1-16 ... The church, our partner.

Ephesians 6:10-18 ... Briefing and equipment inspection.

Ephesians 2:4-10, Hebrews 11:1-12:3 ... Power of love, roll call of faith.

More Spiritual Strength and Guidance

Authority of God's Word ... 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 3:15-16

Compassion and comfort ... Psalm 23, Psalm 139, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Contentment ... Philippians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Courage ... Psalm 27, Psalm 91, 1 John 4:16-18

Creation reveals God ... Psalm 91, Romans 1:20

Duty to God and man ... Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 20:20-26, Romans 13:8-10
 Encouragement ... Romans 15:4
 Endurance ... Isaiah 40:27-31, Luke 21:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:3
 Equality ... Galatians 3:26-29
 Faith ... Proverbs 3:5-6, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 11
 Forgiveness ... Psalm 51, Psalm 103, Matthew 18:21-35, Mark 11:25,
 Ephesians 4:31-32, 1 John 1:5-10
 Freedom ... John 8:31-36, Galatians 5:1-6
 Golden Rule ... Matthew 7:12
 Gospel of eternal life ... John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 15
 Growth ... Ephesians 4:1-16
 Hope ... Psalm 103, Lamentations 3, Romans 8:28
 Integrity ... Proverbs 10:9, 13:6; Romans 12; Titus 2:7, 11-15
 Joy ... Matthew 5:3-12, Philippians 4:4
 Life ... John 10:10, 15:1-8; Romans 8, Galatians 5:22-26
 Love ... John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:19
 Patience ... Proverbs 15:18, 16:32, 19:11; 1 Corinthians 13:4, 2 Peter 3:15
 Peace ... Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 6:25-34, John 14:27, 16:33; Philippians 4:4-7
 Prayer ... Matthew 6:5-15, 7:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:17
 Self-control ... Ephesians 4:17-32, 1 Thessalonians 5:6-11
 Ten Commandments ... Exodus 20:1-17
 Victory ... Romans 8:31-39
 Wisdom ... Proverbs 8-9, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Verses to Use in Confronting:

Abuse ... Matthew 18:21-35, 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 5:33-6:4, 1 John 3
 Addiction ... Proverbs 25:28, Galatians 5:16-26, 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11
 Adultery ... Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:27-30, Hebrews 13:4
 Anger ... Proverbs 14:29; 29:11, Matthew 5:21-26, Ephesians 4:26-32
 Anguish ... Psalm 118:5, Lamentations 3
 Anxiety ... Psalm 139, Philippians 4:6
 Arguments ... Psalm 133, Proverbs 15:18, Philippians 2:14, 2 Timothy 2:23
 Arrogance ... Psalm 119:78, Romans 1-3, 1 Timothy 6:17
 Bitterness ... Luke 23:34, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:13
 Boasting ... Galatians 6:14, James 4:13-16
 Bribery, Extortion ... Exodus 23:8, Psalm 26; 62, Ecclesiastes 7:7, Luke 3:14
 Broken Heartedness ... Psalm 34:18; 147:3, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:14-21
 Complacency ... Psalm 90, Proverbs 1:20-33, Matthew 24:42-44
 Conceit ... Romans 12:16, Galatians 5:25-26
 Corruption ... Psalm 1, Proverbs 4:24-27; 24:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:33-34, Galatians 5:1
 Coarse Talk ... Exodus 20:7, Matthew 5:33-37, Ephesians 4:29-32, James 3
 Darkness ... Isaiah 42:16, Matthew 4:12-17
 Death ... 1 Corinthians 15:12-58
 Deception ... Ephesians 4:14-15
 Defeat, Struggle ... Romans 7:14-25, Romans 8:31-39, Hebrews 2:17-18
 Depression ... Psalm 42; 43; 55; 62; 77; 88; 102; 103; 116; 138:7
 Despair ... Psalm 22, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18
 Devil ... Matthew 4:1-11, 2 Thessalonians 2, James 4:7, Revelation 20:10

Disaster ... Psalm 57:1, Proverbs 3:25-26
 Discontent ... Philippians 4:10-13
 Discouragement ... Romans 15:4, Philippians 1:6
 Disrespect...Exodus 20:12, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 1 Peter 2:13-17
 Divorce ... Matthew 5:31-32 19:1-9
 Doubt ... Psalm 145, Proverbs 3:5-6, John 20:31, Romans 10:9-15
 Drunkenness ... Proverbs 20:1) 23:20-21; Luke 21:34, Ephesians 5:18
 Enemies ... Proverbs 16:7, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27-36, Romans 5:6-11
 Error ... 2 Timothy 3:14-17, James 5:19-20
 Evil ... 2 Samuel 22, Psalm 34:11-17, Matthew 6:13, Romans 12:9
 Exploitation ... Proverbs 22:22-23
 Extremism ... Ecclesiastes 7:18, 2 Corinthians 12:20, Galatians 5:19-21
 Falsehood ... Exodus 23:6-7, Proverbs 13:5; 19:5, John 8:42-47
 Fault, Faultfinding ... Psalm 19:12-14, Matthew 18:15-35
 Favoritism ... Leviticus 19:15, 1 Timothy 5:21, James 2:1-13
 Fear ... Psalm 23, Proverbs 1:7, Isaiah 51:7-8, 1 John 4:16-18
 Flattery ... Psalm 12, Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 26:28, 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6
 Foolishness ... Proverbs 14:15-18; 26:1-12
 Gossip ... Psalm 101; 140, Proverbs 11:13; 26:20-28
 Greed ... Matthew 6:19-24, Luke 12:15, Colossians 3:5, 1 Timothy 6:9-19
 Guilt ... Psalm 32; 51; 130; 143, 2 Corinthians 7:10, 1 John 1:9
 Hatred ... Proverbs 25:21-22, 1 Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:13-15, 1 John 4
 Hypocrisy ... Matthew 7:1-5; 23
 Idolatry ... Exodus 20:1-6, 1 Samuel 15:16-23, Ephesians 5:5
 Immorality ... Matthew 15:1-20, Romans 13:8-14, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
 Impurity, Intemperance ... Mark 7:1-23, Ephesians 5:1-20, Colossians 3:1-17
 Inaction ... James 2:14-26, 1 Peter 1:13-25
 Inequality ... John 3:16, Acts 10:34, Galatians 3:26-28, Ephesians 6:9
 Injustice ... Deuteronomy 16:19-20, Psalm 69; 82; 94; 146, Proverbs 14:31
 Insults ... Proverbs 12:16, Matthew 5:11, 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9
 Jealousy, Envy ... Exodus 20:17, Proverbs 14:30, James 3:13-18
 Laziness ... Proverbs 10:4; 19:24; 26:13-16, Hebrews 6:10-12
 Lies ... Exodus 20:16; 23:1-3, Leviticus 19:11, Proverbs 19:28; 26:18-19
 Loneliness ... 1 Kings 19, Psalm 25; 32; 34; 139, John 14:16-20, 25-27
 Lust... Romans 1:21-27, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, 1 Peter 4:1-5, 1 John 2:15-17
 Pain, Sickness ... Psalm 41; 103, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Revelation 21:4
 Perjury ... Malachi 3:5, 1 Timothy 1:8-11
 Persecution ... Psalm 31; 35; 118; 142, 2 Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Peter 4:12-19
 Powerlessness ... Psalm 147:5, Proverbs 24:5, 2 Corinthians 12:9, James 5:16
 Pride ... Psalm 10, Proverbs 16:25, Romans 12:16, James 4:6
 Rebellion ... 1 Samuel 15:23, 1 Timothy 1:9
 Recklessness ... Proverbs 12:18; 14:16
 Revenge ... Matthew 5:38-48, Romans 12:17-21, 1 Peter 3:9
 Selfishness ... Philippians 2:1-11, James 3:13-18, 1 Peter 5:2-4
 Shame ... Psalm 25:3, Proverbs 13:18, Joel 2:25-27, 2 Corinthians 4:2
 Sin ...Romans 6:23, Galatians 5:16-6:9, Hebrews 12:1-4, 1 John 1:5-10
 Sorcery ... Leviticus 19:26, Revelation 21:8
 Sorrow ... Psalm 6; 23; 30; 116; 126, Isaiah 60:19-20, Revelation 21:1-5
 Suffering ... Romans 5:3-5, 8:17-39, 1 Corinthians 12:26, Philippians 3:7-21

Temptation ... 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 4:14-16, 1 Peter 5:8-11
 Timidity ... 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, 2 Timothy 1:7
 Tragedy ... Romans 8:18-39, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
 Trouble ... Psalm 9:9; 32:7; 46:1; 50:15; 59:16, Proverbs 11:17, John 16:33
 Unbelief ... Psalm 14:1; 19; 95; 100; 127:1, Romans 1:18-22, 1 Timothy 1
 Weariness ... Isaiah 40:28-31, Matthew 11:28-30, Galatians 6:9
 Wickedness ... Psalm 1; 10; 73, Proverbs 4, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
 Worldliness and Worry ... 1 John 2:15-17, Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:6-7

Ten Tips for Officer Spiritual Survival

1. Use your backup: Luke 11: 1-13; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 4:14-16, 12:2-3
2. Get your rest: Psalm 62:1-8, Psalm 91, Hebrews 3:18-4:11
3. Stay alert: Mark 13:32-37, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
4. Be on the lookout: Luke 22:39-46, 1 Corinthians 10: 13, Hebrews 4:14-16
5. Watch suspect Satan's hands: Romans 6:1-4, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 2:15-17
6. Stay in shape: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
7. Use your gear and communicate: Ephesians 6:10-18
8. Train like you fight; fight like you train: 1 Timothy 4:8
9. Always keep your weapon ready: Hebrews 4:12
10. Never give up: Isaiah 40:28-31, Romans 8:28, 37-39, Philippians

Ten Characteristics of a Competent Christian Chaplain

1. Compassion: 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-21
2. Character: Romans 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1-15
3. Common Sense: Book of Proverbs
4. Communication: Ephesians 4:1-15; 1 Peter 3:15
5. Courage: 1 Corinthians 16:13; Joshua 1
6. Conviction: Acts 4:1-31; 1Thessalonians 1:5
7. Commitment: Matthew 10; John 21
8. Congeniality: 1 Corinthians 6:3-13; Philippians 4:4
9. Confidentiality: Titus 1:8, 2:2, 5, 6, 12
10. Cross of Christ: Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

The Authority of a Peace Officer

Romans 13:1-4 ... A peace officer's authority comes from God.
 Romans 13:4 ... Officers have a duty to use lawful and necessary force.
 Romans 13:5-7 ... We should all honor and submit to lawful authority.

Blessings Come to Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9
 Romans 12:18
 Ephesians 4
 Colossians 3:15
 James 3:17-18

Passages on Authority and Attitude

Daniel 6, Luke 20:20-26, Acts 5:29: Should we always obey the government? How do we manage conflict between human and divine authority?

Acts 22:22-29: Does obedience to government void our civil rights?
Romans 1:18-32, Romans 10:1-17: What are the two ways God reveals himself and his will?
Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-14: Further injunctions to obedience.
2 Corinthians 5:11-21: Our Christian motivation to honor law enforcement and obey the law.
Acts 10 & 16:16-34, Philippians 1:12-13, 1 Timothy 2:1-6: Does God love and care for officers? Are we to pray for them and minister to them?

Examples of Peace Officers In The Bible

Luke 3:14 (Herod's soldiers): John the Baptist and the Soldiers
Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10: The Officer (Centurion) of Capernaum
Mark 15:38-39: The Officer (Centurion) at the Cross
Acts 9:1-2: Saul the Abusive Special Agent
Acts 10&11: Cornelius the Officer (Centurion)
Acts 16:22-34: A Corrections Officer (Jailer) is Converted
Acts 21-23: Riot, Arrest, and Attempted Lynching
Acts 27: Julius the Officer (Centurion)

Notes:

Sample Bible Study: The Centurion of Capernaum

Community-oriented policing is emphasized in many law enforcement agencies. However, this concept is not new. In fact, we can find an excellent example in the Bible. I am referring to the remarkable story of the officer (centurion) of Capernaum. I once visited the site in Capernaum where this early Roman believer, out of love for the Jewish people, built a synagogue for them. I was reminded about how and why we need to love and serve those who may be different from us, and where this love comes from. Look at this story in Luke 7:1-10 and answer the following questions:

- 1) What was this centurion's attitude toward people who were different? Where do you think his attitude came from? Why is this important for us to consider?
- 2) Based on these verses, what do you suppose the centurion had heard about Jesus? What do you think he believed about Jesus?
- 3) The centurion asked the Jewish elders to intercede with Jesus on his behalf. Why did they?
- 4) The Romans were the hated foreign occupiers of Israel. They were often cruel, corrupt, and exploitative in their dealings with subject foreigners. Only Roman citizens had any civil rights. And yet the Jews of Capernaum "*went to bat*" for this Roman centurion. What had he done to overcome their prejudice and hatred? Do you suppose this process was accomplished easily or quickly? What do you think were some of the obstacles and temptations along the way for both the centurion and for the Jews? Why do you suppose they worked to overcome these difficulties?
- 5) Why did the centurion tell Jesus not to come under his roof? (Here you may need the help of a good Bible commentary.) What does this indicate about his racial and religious sensitivity, also about his humility and sense of place, and about his confidence? Was all this a sign of weakness or strength, of smarts or stupidity? Why?
- 6) What did the centurion recognize about authority in general, and about Jesus' authority in particular?
- 7) The Bible records only two times when Jesus was amazed, once in Nazareth when he was amazed at people's unbelief (Mark 6:6), and once here when he was amazed at the centurion's belief. Why was the centurion's faith so amazing? Where did this amazing faith come from? Why did the centurion have faith when so many others (including many today) lack it?
- 8) Do you think the centurion was more, or less, effective as a police officer because of his faith and his attitude and actions toward the Jews? Was he stronger or weaker? Why?
- 9) What can the Centurion of Capernaum teach us about effective law enforcement, faith, and human relations today?
- 10) As a "*new centurion*," how can you be a "*renewed*" Centurion?

Sample Bible Study: God-Given Virtues Shape Our Values

To see the applicable nature of God's Word to the life of a peace officer, look at the following paraphrases from a study I did of the original Greek words of the New Testament (using helps you too can find online) and here put into law enforcement vernacular:

God's Word Translation of 2 Timothy 1:7 —

"God didn't give us a cowardly spirit but a spirit of power, love, and good judgment."

Peace Officer Paraphrase of 2 Timothy 1:7 —

"God gave us a spirit not of cowardice, but of powerful principled performance, courageous caring service, and street-smarts."

God's Word Translation of Titus 1:8-9 —

"Be hospitable, love what is good, use good judgment, be fair and moral, and have self-control . . . be devoted to the trustworthy message we teach. Then . . . use these accurate teachings to encourage people and correct those who oppose the word."

Peace Officer Paraphrase of Titus 1:8-9 —

"Be friendly to all, even suspects when possible. Love what God loves, and practice a divinely centered spiritual heartbeat, breathing and balance. Be a standup person after God's own heart. Practice self-discipline. Hold firmly to the trustworthy truth as taught. Provide backup in both principle and practice. Take on any and all who fight these things."

Notes:

SECTION THREE — PRAYERS

The Lord's Prayer

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

A Peace Officer's Prayer

"Dear Father in heaven, You are worthy to receive all honor and glory, and I praise and worship you. Thank you for the many blessings you give, but most of all for the free gift of new life in Jesus Christ, my Lord, who laid down his life for me. Thank you for your Son, my Savior, who protects and serves me as my Peace Officer — my Prince of Peace. Forgive me for those times when I do not live in your love or follow your commands. Help me trust and obey you and find my peace and hope in you. Fill me with your love so that it flows out to others. Guide me in all my relationships. Send your holy angels to watch over me and those I love. Guard me from all dangers to body, mind, and heart. Preserve me from evil, protect me from stress, and provide me with integrity, courage, and wisdom in my work. By the guidance of your Word and in the power of your Spirit, lead me in my life and calling, so that I may serve and protect others as your peacemaker, according to your justice and love. I pray this In Jesus' name. Amen."

A Chaplain's Prayer

"God my Father, I give you praise and thanks for your lovingkindness. Thank you for the blessings of this day, and for my mission to live and proclaim your holiness and love according to your guiding and empowering Word of law and Gospel. I confess I sometimes fail to live up to my high calling and ask your forgiveness. Give me character and strength to show your compassion and share your message of hope and healing with those I serve. Thank you for the people in my life. Bless and protect them. Give me courage and discernment when and how to speak and act. Help me always faithfully serve those who protect and serve. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord, I pray. Amen."

A Prayer of Invocation

"God our Father, We give you thanks and praise for the blessings of this day – for life, for liberty, and for your great love. I ask your special blessing for those gathered here. Bless our time together. Guide us in our lives, in our families, in our marriages, and in all our relationships, both personal and professional, and help us in our God-given and God-pleasing work. I pray you give us your peace in a world that sometimes knows no peace. May you give us victory in the battle against evil, and wisdom and right action in our calling to preserve peace and order, to uphold law and justice, and to serve and protect. Guide our country, so that we may be a blessing to our citizens, and a blessing to our world. May we always honor and obey you. I pray this in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. "

A Prayer for the Sick or Injured

“(Say person’s name), you are hurting, and I want to pray for you. I am going to talk to God, but I want you to listen too, because God wants you to know how much he loves you, and he wants you to have his peace and hope.”

“Dear God, (say person’s name) has been hurt (is sick, etc.). Your message to us in the Bible says that you love everyone because we are all your children, and it hurts you when any of your children are hurting. You love us. You proved your love by sending your Son Jesus to live and die for us so we can be forgiven for all our sins and go to heaven to be with you forever. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know we too will live forever if we just trust in Jesus to save us. I pray (say person’s name) will trust you now, and you will give him/her healing, comfort, peace and hope and joy that will last forever. Thank you for taking him/her in your loving arms. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

A Prayer for Peace

“God of peace, You sent your Son, the Prince of Peace, to reconcile us to you and to one another. It is your will that we live together in peace in this world, but we have not obeyed you. We have not loved one another. Forgive us, dear Father, because of the grace given us by your precious Son. Stop those who would commit violence and wage war. Especially protect the innocent from harm. Help the defenders of your peace and promoters of your justice to overcome evil so peace can be restored and preserved. Help us always remember our Savior’s words that peacemakers are blessed. Give us peace that goes beyond human understanding so we can boldly and calmly face all the circumstances of this life. I pray this in the Name of our Prince of Peace. Amen.”

A Prayer to Deal with Sin and Suffering

“Father, I admit I sometimes wonder why you allow the pain and evil I witness every day. I don’t know the reasons, but I do know who you are and who we are. We’ve got problems on this planet. We need your help. Thanks for sending your Son in the uniform of human flesh to rescue us from the sin and sorrow I see all around. I pray that the people I deal with in my work will turn to you in their sin and misery, so they experience the peace you want to bring to everyone, but force upon no one. Bring that peace to me too, as I wrestle with the troubling realities I see and experience every day that weary and discourage me. Help me to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

A Prayer for Strength to Face Evil and Corruption

“Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for the example of the centurions of old in Scripture. Help me, as a new centurion, to also be a renewed centurion. Help me follow the centurions’ example of faith and life. Help me remember that if they could maintain faith and integrity and hope despite the corruption and evil around them, I can too, by your power and strength. Help me to stand strong. Thanks for being my centurion and peace officer. Amen.”

A Prayer to Combat “John Wayne Syndrome”

“Father, it’s tough to admit I sometimes need help. I’ve been conditioned in my calling to carry an attitude of control and command presence. However, life in general is like the street in particular, and a ‘John Wayne’ attitude can hurt me. I need to be part of a team including both you and others. Sometimes the smart thing to do is simply call for backup and that’s what I want to do right now. . . (here tell God where you need help in your life). Help me to always be aware when I need help, and wise enough to ask for it, from you or anyone else who can help. Amen.”

A Prayer for Spiritual Situational Awareness

“Lord, sometimes I get tunnel vision and have trouble seeing the big picture, because I’m not you. I need your help to look at life the way it really is, and not just how I think it is. Help me take care of myself and those I love. Don’t let me ever make the mistake of thinking that my trusting you is a sign of weakness, but instead help me always understand that only by trusting you will I be truly aware and spiritually strong. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

A Prayer to Take Time for the Important Things

“Jesus, when you walked this earth, you often took time in your busy schedule to go up on a mountain and talk with your Father in heaven. You took time to care for one sick woman in a crowd of people. You took time to patiently teach those who too often didn’t listen. You took time with the woman at the well, with Zacchaeus by the road, and with the children in your arms. You took time to wash your disciples’ feet. Lord, you never watched the clock, but you always used your time well. You never let urgent things interfere with the important things. In your Word you remind me that the whole law of God can be summed up simply: ‘Love God, and your neighbor as yourself.’ You always put your Father and people first. Help me to do the same, and take time to take care of myself, so I can better serve you and others. Amen.”

SECTION FOUR — TOPICS

On Integrity

Some years ago, I read a book by a well-known university philosophy professor in which he made the troubled observation that major institutions of higher education no longer seem to teach students to be moral and good people. Here I pose his observation as a question and add my own: *“Have we lost true integrity?”* I recently read an article on integrity that claimed the core concept of integrity is *“fullness of self.”* It made no reference to any outside guide, standard or accountability. Instead, it listed these key words in its definition of integrity: Consistency, honesty, and truthfulness or accuracy of one’s actions. *“Truthfulness”* meant fidelity to and consistency with subjective personal values and personal *“truths”* (not fidelity to objective universal virtues and *“true truth”* — *“true truth”* here referring to divinely authored and immutable natural law, not religious doctrine).

By that article’s definition Hitler had integrity, and Satan has even more. Hitler was consistently honest and truthful in his antisemitism and *“fullness of self.”* Satan was, is, and always will be consistently evil and prideful — full of himself. And I believe that article was consistently full of it.

After I left local law enforcement to become a federal special agent, I attended FCI (foreign counterintelligence) training at CIA. I was surprised to see carved on the marble wall in the main lobby this quote from John 8:32: *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* I’m guessing the Agency 1) was referring to intel, not the Gospel, and 2) CIA does not — I sincerely hope and pray — define truth like the above article did, because in the intel community analysis based on subjective opinion absent from objective reality costs lives and loses wars. If you idealize an enemy’s intentions to accommodate your boss’s wishful thinking, and ignore their capabilities, their capabilities can bite you in the posterior, as history repeatedly demonstrates. Here’s the point: If you travel life without

a sound external reference to steer by, you will get lost. You need a compass, and it needs to be a good one. God's Word gives us direction through the fog of our own wars. Ask yourself, *"Do I really want to navigate through life without the compass of God's Word?"*

Both history and the Bible are clear that integrity must either be integrated with God's integrity or die a disintegrated death at the expense of ourselves and others — in the case of Adolph Hitler at the expense of millions. Someday our integrity, or lack of it, will be held accountable by God's.

"In those days . . . Everyone did whatever he considered right." — Judges 21:25

A Prayer for Integrity

"Lord, all excuses aside, I must admit that my sin gets in the way of my walk with you. Sometimes I find an empty hole where my heart should be, and I have no strength or even desire to follow you (here give him your specific sins and sorrows). Lord, my prayer is the same as King David's in Psalm 51: 'Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a faithful spirit within me. Do not force me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of your salvation to me and provide me with a spirit of willing obedience.' Lord, give me a heart of true integrity. Amen."

On Questions About the Bible

If your knowledge and worldview have been shaped by typical 21st century narrative, reading the Bible might seem odd or even offensive. However, consider the possibility that much of what you've been sold as normal and normative in our culture today is a recent bill of goods with no reputable history or shelf life and would have been considered over-the-top abnormal, shocking, and unacceptable by most people throughout the history of our country. If you don't know what I'm talking about you're either living under a rock or more likely uninformed or misinformed, but don't take my word for it. Like I said at the beginning of this Bible introduction, do your own due diligence. Just make sure your information is not propaganda. This requires critical thinking coupled with due diligence, the exact same tools my partners and I brought to investigative work that made it possible to solve homicides. Without these you will never know the wonderful truth that can set you free (John 8:32). We need some proper humility in the face of our own limitations and God's greatness.

Here's a question to consider: Should we throw out our time-tested pillars of faith and civilization including the Bible and replace them with selfish, abusive, immoral, violent, destructive, dystopian, dysfunctional, nihilistic, anarchistic, evil, and dumb (I've got many more adjectives, but you get the point) ideas where virtue is dead and no one is secure, safe, or loved, including most importantly our children? Consider Benjamin Franklin's warning to a skeptic who was publicly opposing religion: *"If Men are so wicked as we now see them with Religion what would they be if without it?"* Much modern narrative holds that more than 3,000 years of Judeo-Christian heritage, including the Bible, is not only worthless but harmful and should be discarded in favor of a new opposing narrative (mostly warmed-over failed ideologies and destructive paganism) that ignores or dismisses both historical and legal precedent, defies all opposition, and demands unquestioning social and even legal obedience. But consider this: Human science and technology may have advanced, but human nature remains the same. Again, do your own study. As for me, I will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).

About miracles in the Bible: Is it any trouble for a God who created all matter, life, space (and time — “*Can God create an ‘old’ universe?*”) from nothing to bend his own physical laws a bit to do lesser miracles? And regarding divine biblical inspiration and inerrancy: Unless we take seriously every word of Scripture, we will not take seriously any word of Scripture. Listen again to God’s Word:

“Every Scripture passage is inspired by God. All of them are useful for teaching, pointing out errors, correcting people, and training them for a life that has God’s approval. They equip God’s servants so that they are completely prepared to do good things” (2 Timothy 16-17).

As a practical matter, how would a person pick and choose the Bible passages to believe? This doesn’t mean we don’t have questions about the Bible, but we should do our homework. There are many things in God’s Word that become clearer with study. Experience backs up God’s Word, including in my own life. I know, for instance, that my wife and I have grown closer in our love after many years not because we are better than other couples but because of the Lord and his Word.

“In regard to this great book . . . it is the best gift God has given to man.”— Abraham Lincoln

On Marriage and Family

My wife and I joke, “*Divorce, never! . . . Murder maybe . . .*” Despite very different personalities we are still very much in love after fifty years, thanks to God and his Word. So you might want to pay attention here before bailing out of your current marriage to hook up with your future ex-spouse . . .

Law enforcement poses risks to every area of life, including marriage and family. The biggest relationship issue officers face is usually marriage, followed by family. God’s Word has much to say about this topic, and my own observations and experiences back up the Bible. Officers must project a competent, in-control “*command presence*” on the job. They need above average character and qualifications to do their demanding and stressful duties properly. However, they must beware of letting their strengths, experience or attitude form a hard shell of arrogance, alienation, and isolation, allowing “*Dr. Jekyll*” professional assets to become “*Mr. Hyde*” personal liabilities. And a controlling attitude is sometimes needed on the street, but that same attitude can ruin relationships, including marriage and family relationships. God’s Word helps officers manage “*game face*.” It provides outside perspective and inside balance to officers (Philippians 2:5-11).

God orders his creation. Just as his physical laws govern his universe, his spiritual laws should govern our lives (Isaiah 45:8-9). Here he provides us his manual, the Bible. Don’t kid yourself that violating this manual carries no adverse consequences for you and others. So, choose, but choose wisely. And you may have a right to be wrong, but not to shove wrong on rights. Remember, “*It’s not all about you!*” We have a responsibility to protect and help — especially the helpless. For our own good our good God gives us good rules; he has good reason for them; we have good reason to listen:

“God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female. God blessed them and said, “Be fertile, increase in number . . .”

Genesis 1:27-28a

Here is a simple observation: It's hard to be fertile and increase in number unless you have distinct males and females capable of cooperative reproduction. God is a God of life, not infertility and death. He gives and protects life, including life in the womb of a mother. So should we. The Bible clearly says that heterosexual marriage that produces children is the foundational norm for society. People may have freedom to engage in other relationships, but not the moral right or social duty. Marriage and family are the best providers and protectors of life in an imperfect world (certainly not government!). Jesus quotes Genesis and adds his best standard and practice regarding marriage:

"Haven't you read that the Creator made them male and female in the beginning and that he said, 'That's why a man will leave his father and mother and will remain united with his wife, and the two will be one'? So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, don't let anyone separate what God has joined together" (Matthew 19:4-6).

The Bible just does not have good things to say about sex outside of a lifelong marriage between a biological man and woman. God made sex for heterosexual marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). Scripture says marriage is also for the purpose of having children, and if a marriage is so blessed, raising them by Mom and Dad in a loving home. Common sense supports this biblical best practice. For those who fight against this order of creation which until recent times was assumed to be true, we again pose the question, *"How's that working for you?"* Here's another: *"How's that working for society?"* And one more: *"Is it all about you and your selfish needs, or also about what children and society need?"* The Ten Commandments say: *"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you"* (Exodus 20:12). This is not just a command to children, but a command to us all to honor marriage and family as the foundation of society. God has wise words about morality, marriage, and family (e.g. Ephesians 5-6:1-4). We should listen.

As I write this my wife and I look forward to our upcoming wedding anniversary — again, if she doesn't kill me first. I wish I could say our love has lasted half a century because we are a perfect couple, but I would be lying. The truth is our marriage wouldn't have survived without the Lord. I just phoned one of my daughters to verify this conclusion. I could visualize her eyeroll as she answered, *"Absolutely!"* God and his Word have kept my wife and I together in true love despite our differences and disagreements. Women and men are incompatible anyway (you're right . . . I'm only half-joking). Our compatibility is with the Lord, not with our personalities. But the closer we draw to him the closer we draw to each other. My daughter verified the VIN on that one too (1 John 1:1-9). One of the Bible passages my wife and I chose for our wedding was Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

"Two people are better than one because together they have a good reward for their hard work. If one falls, the other can help his friend get up. But how tragic it is for the one who is all alone when he falls. There is no one to help him get up. Again, if two people lie down together, they can keep warm, but how can one person keep warm? Though one person may be overpowered by another, two people can resist one opponent. A triple-braided rope is not easily broken."

Without a doubt, the Lord is the strong third strand that over the years has kept my wife and I from being snapped by sin, self, and circumstance. Another passage we chose was 1 Corinthians 13:

“... Love is patient. Love is kind. Love isn’t jealous. It doesn’t sing its own praises. It isn’t arrogant. It isn’t rude. It doesn’t think about itself. It isn’t irritable. It doesn’t keep track of wrongs. It isn’t happy when injustice is done, but it is happy with the truth. Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, never gives up. Love never comes to an end. There is the gift of speaking what God has revealed, but it will no longer be used. There is the gift of speaking in other languages, but it will stop by itself. There is the gift of knowledge, but it will no longer be used. Our knowledge is incomplete and our ability to speak what God has revealed is incomplete. But when what is complete comes, then what is incomplete will no longer be used. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I no longer used childish ways. Now we see a blurred image in a mirror. Then we will see very clearly. Now my knowledge is incomplete. Then I will have complete knowledge as God has complete knowledge of me. So, these three things remain: faith, hope, and love. But the best one of these is love.”

“I may be wrong, but I’m never uncertain.” This bit of humor reminds me to be humble, including in discussions. I never win an argument with anybody about anything, including with my wife. It’s best to not confuse steamrolling her with winning an argument. That’s not winning; it’s a waste of time and a blood pressure problem for all concerned. A key to marriage is conflict management, not compatibility — except for biblically based spiritual compatibility like my wife and I share, which is foundational to a loving, lasting marriage. Our forgiveness, based on Christ’s forgiveness for us, is at the heart of conflict management. Here is some biblically based practical advice that works well for my wife and I:

- *“I’m sorry you think I did/said that” or “I didn’t mean that”* is not asking forgiveness.
- Don’t shift or deny responsibility, but fully accept it.
- Believing you are only 49% responsible for the problem does not let you off the hook.
- Just bite the bullet and ask forgiveness for what you did . . . *according to your spouse.*
- Say (and mean it) *“I’m wrong and I’m sorry I hurt you for (. . .) Will you please forgive me?”*
- Saying *“Forget about it”* when asked to forgive is not forgiveness but harboring a grudge.
- Say *“I forgive you”* and, again, mean it, which means you let it go completely and forever.
- Don’t let feelings control forgiveness. *“Just do it.”* Feelings follow forgiveness.
- Don’t confuse feelings with inability or insincerity. Emotion is not in charge, you are.
- Learn to pray together. Once you have extended and received forgiveness, pray!
- Just talk to the Lord. Dump your feelings at Jesus’ feet. Ask him to deal with them. He will.
- Read the Bible together, talk about it together, pray together, and you will stay together!

I’m an expert at asking for forgiveness. My wife is an expert at giving it (Psalm 103, Luke 17:4). We pray together. We read God’s Word together. We walk the talk. It’s worth it; *nothing and no one* can replace the history, the journey and the love my beautiful wife and I share. Again, you should listen; do you want to help people, make a difference, and be a hero? Then start with your family. Before pulling the pin on your marriage, think about your promise, loyalty, future payoff for current investment, and *suck it up*. Do the job God gave you for the sake of your spouse, your children, society, and yourself. Discover the lasting love only marriage, family, time, and the Lord can bring.

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

Ephesians 4:32

On Dealing with Disaster

(Adapted from my 9/11 New York church workers guide)

The terrorist attack that unfolded on 9/11 was beyond the scope and scale of anything we have ever experienced. It is natural for us to ask, *“How do I bring help and healing to others while keeping myself and my own family together?” “What and who can I call on for help?” “How do I diagnose the problems?” “How do I figure out the solutions for these monumental issues I confront?” “How do I carry out God’s mission and present God’s love despite these challenges?”* And further, *“What happens after the adrenaline subsides and life goes on?” “How are we ever going to get back to something resembling normalcy?”* And . . . *“How do I hang on to my own faith in the face of this?”* These questions and more are the terrorists of our mind and now target us.

Here are some foundational and practical suggestions based on God’s Word and years of dealing with critical incidents which I pray will help you as you walk through the difficult days ahead:

God has provided and will provide what you need for whatever you face (Psalm 23, Romans 8:28-39). His promises are true (Psalm 145). This event shakes us to our core. God, however, is unshakeable. Focus your eyes on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-3). Our faith truly works in true crisis. I have seen this before and I am seeing it here. Let it be. Be bold and strong with God’s mighty arm. In the shocking and seemingly unreal evil tragedy we see our faith becomes even more real and meaningful to us.

Trust the knowledge, the gifts, and the skills God has given you. Trust your professional training and experience. There is a God-given reason you are here today. He will help you do what he has equipped and called you to do. Trust him. Trust yourself. Take care of yourself as much as possible under the circumstances. You can’t help anyone else if you crash yourself. Prioritize the pressing demands. Separate the *“must do”* from the *“it can wait.”* Don’t try to do it all and all at once. Delegate tasks whenever possible to the people who are willing and able to help and who will find a measure of healing in helping if you let them. You can serve them in this way too.

We are physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual beings. This attack is an assault on every aspect of our nature. The real need for service *and* self-preservation demands we take care of both. So, to the extent this situation allows (again, try to let go of those things you can defer or delegate), get your sleep, eat right, drink plenty of fluids, and maintain your physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual routines and disciplines. Have your quiet time, stay connected to family and friends, and avoid addiction to the news. We all have a responsibility to take care of ourselves so we can take care of others. The reality of this tragedy is that the crises arising from this event may be extended well beyond what we have experienced before, and we will burn out if we do not take care of ourselves and pace ourselves. So . . . get your exercise, get your rest, watch your diet, avoid addictions, get some physical and mental recreation, spend time with your family, and spend time with God. Use the means, the techniques, and the tools that are true, both for others and for you.

God and circumstance call us to survive and serve. (1 Corinthians 12:12-26) Do not play John Wayne. You are not a rock. You are not an island. Jesus sent out his disciples in twos. We all have different gifts, abilities, knowledge, and resources. Give them. Share them. Use

them together as a team. In law enforcement work officers rely on each other. You need backup. Help one another. Encourage one another. Pray for one another. Do it *TOGETHER* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Galatians 6:2).

We have been traumatized by this shocking, unexpected, and evil act. We have suffered tremendous losses, including loss of control. Be intentional about rebuilding control for yourselves and those you love, always, of course, remembering God is ultimately in control. Take time each day to plan for the day and follow it as best you can while allowing for necessary flexibility and communicating with those you work and live with about the plan, again, delegating tasks and responsibilities best done by others. This crisis is fueled by disorder, so we need to restore order in every way possible. Let others help you in this and understand and act on the fact they may have better ideas than you. Everyone here is a leader, but that does not automatically make us self-sufficient, right, or wise. A good leader humbly relies on the people and resources God provides. God promises that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church. I think of the love I share with my family and friends which can never be erased by circumstances and deepens at a time like this.

Trust your biblical heritage in this crisis. We do have the Gospel answer from God's Word even as we struggle with our situational questions. This Gospel answer will faithfully light our way through these dark days and serve as a compass in our confusion. Our Gospel heritage has withstood the trials of Satan's terrorism before, and it will now too and in the future. My prayer for you is that the foundational hope, peace, love, joy, perseverance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, protects you in the coming days and guides and strengthens you for the healing work ahead as you rebuild on Jesus, the Rock of Our Salvation. God will provide what you need for what you face. His promises are true (Psalm 145:13). Crisis shakes us to our core. God however is unshakeable. And so "*Focus your eyes on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2). Our faith really works in real crisis. Be bold and strong with God's mighty arm!

Questions for Reflection, Discussion and Action:

- How has this event affected you? What replays in your mind? Pray now and give it to God.
- How has this event affected those around you? What replays for them? Pray with them.
- In order of priority, what are the immediate issues you should address, *one at a time*?
- What do you need and what will help you address these issues, *one step at a time*?
- What are your priorities for your work, your loved ones, and you during this time?
- What practical steps will you take to honor those priorities in the days ahead?
- How can you best help those you serve — your family, church, community?
- How have you been helped and how will you be helped by God's people?
- How will you take care of yourself so that you then can care for others?
- What Scripture promises have helped you, and will help, in all this?
- What things will always remain constant in life, no matter what?
- How will you "*focus your eyes on Jesus*" and move forward?

On Suicide

Law enforcement is a very risky profession; I have been to too many line-of-duty death funerals. But dangerous as the street is, sadly the statistics tell us the risk in the mirror is an even greater one. Our own experience backs up this statement that suicide is a bigger risk to officers than bad guys. How can officers protect themselves against this threat from within? Here again we can and must arm ourselves with the Word of God.

The Bible tells the stories of two men who betrayed Jesus and were driven to suicidal despair. Judas betrayed Jesus and hung himself. Peter betrayed Jesus but survived. What was the difference between Judas and Peter? What can we learn so that, like Peter, we too can survive guilt, loss, stress, and overwhelming feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness?

Judas and Peter, like all of us, were flawed people. Judas was dishonest and harbored ulterior motives. Peter could be weak, cowardly, impulsive, reckless, power hungry, and boastful at times. Both men had flaws but handled them very differently. Judas rejected Jesus and his solutions and thus allowed himself to be open to Satan. Twice Scripture tells us that Satan entered into Judas. Judas listened to Satan and his warped and evil logic, and so Satan led him to despair and self-destruction. On the other hand, Peter, despite and even because of his weaknesses relied upon Jesus for forgiveness, guidance, and strength. Even when he failed to walk on water like Jesus did, he still looked to Jesus to bail him out, and Jesus did, not just despite Peter's weakness and failure, but, again, because of them — because of his love for Peter (Matthew 14:22-33). Peter knew that even when he failed Jesus, Jesus would never fail him and so he kept showing up. Peter trusted Jesus and not himself and Jesus led Peter to restoration and a new life (John 21). Peter let God turn his weakness into strength (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). The basic difference between Judas and Peter was not that one was a good man, and one was a bad man. Instead, it was simply this: Judas refused to accept God's forgiveness and life, but Peter did. When we put on Jesus' ballistic protection, his "*breastplate of righteousness*" (Ephesians 6:14), and not our own (Ephesians 2:8-9), Satan will never be able to penetrate our lives and deceive us into despair and self-destruction.

I ministered to a woman whose deputy husband shot and killed himself at the sheriff's department. Her son was a young teenager and he wanted to know if his father went to hell because he had committed suicide. She turned to me for answers. I told her that we need to be compassionate, and it was not my place to play God and judge her husband, but at the same time we should be careful about what we believe and say about suicide, especially for the sake of protecting those still living. Here we should note that one of the incentives to suicide is a person's belief that suicide is an escape from suffering and pain, and further, we know there can be copycat suicides in a family, a school, or a community. I asked this woman what conclusion her son might reach and therefore what danger he might face if he thought suicide was an escape and if people told him his father was surely in heaven. Might he later be tempted when under stress to copy what his father did to "*escape*" his own troubles? She told me she had never considered the issue that way before and agreed it was too late to save her husband but not too late to warn and help her son.

I know someone who was prevented from committing suicide by the fear of hell. She went on to live a happy and productive life. We should factor this example into our thinking.

In dealing with this unpleasant topic, should we dismiss the reality that fear of hell can be a deterrent to destructive — in this case self-destructive — behavior? Can the doctrine of hell actually be a life-saving truth? We should discourage suicide and not unintentionally encourage it by tiptoeing around the question of eternal consequences. Life is a precious gift from God, and we should guard it carefully with every tool at our disposal. As I write this, in four days I will be conducting a funeral for a suicide. Yes, her father would have — if only he could have — absolutely used the fear of hell to save his daughter's life. The Bible talks about hell. Maybe we should listen and talk about it too. Jesus did.

We know from the Bible and from nature itself (the law of self-preservation) that suicide is a sin and an act against nature. Once again, without presuming to play God and judging the eternal destination of a person who commits suicide, we must not rush to excuse that act or temper its consequences. Above all other considerations we must protect the living, especially our children, and not give them false hope that in a tragic irony could lead to even more death.

Those considering suicide need to know that God's Word condemns murder (Exodus 20:13), and holds out no guarantee of forgiveness, peace, and eternal life for those whose dying act is to murder themselves. Suicide is not an escape. It is an act of despair and anger that leads to only more pain and suffering. It is a horrible permanent solution to a temporary problem. Seek help, not escape.

God's Word gives us an alternative way, an infinitely better way, to deal with the pain in our lives. God can heal the most wounded person if that person lets him do so. We must turn our back to the lie of Judas, and our face toward the life of Peter. Like with Peter, Jesus provides you hope, help and worth! Listen to the words of my mom's favorite hymn, "*Abide with Me*," and make them your prayer:

*"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."*

For Your Study:

- Judas and Peter Betray Jesus: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 12:1-7, 13:18-38, 18:1-27
- Judas' Suicide: Matthew 27:1-10
- Peter's Restoration: John 21, I Peter 1:3-6

Prayer:

"Father in Heaven, I confess that I am, like Peter, a flawed and sinful person. But help me, like Peter, to never give up or give in to guilt, loss, or stress — to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness. Help me always to see those feelings for what they are — Satan's lies and attacks. Protect me from doubts and despair, and fill me with the peace, faith, hope, life, and love of Jesus, in whose precious name I pray. Amen."

SECTION FIVE — OUR DUTY TO PROTECT GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

Our Heritage of God-Given Duties, Rights and Freedoms

Unless we are anarchists, we know we need commonly accepted standards in society. In law enforcement, best standards and practices are promulgated through entities like P.O.S.T, CALEA, IACP, National Sheriffs' Association, FBI National Academy, etc. Local and state law enforcement officers have vehicle and penal codes. The military has the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Federal law enforcement has U.S. Codes. At your department or agency, you have SOP's, rules, regulations, and directives. On duty you have orders. At the range you have targets, and just because you can't always hit the ten-ring doesn't mean you don't always try. It doesn't mean the bullseye is wrong, doesn't exist, or is meaningless. Instead, you routinely hang up a target and try to hit center mass. You must train on the range to serve on the street. Just because we are imperfect does not mean we deny perfection or give up shooting for it (Matthew 5:48). Our country's founders understood this principle when they wrote, "*We the People of the United States, in order to form a **more perfect Union** . . .*" They understood that imperfectible man must still strive for "*more*" perfection.

Life is like that. You must have a target to shoot for, and that target is called "*Normal*." "*Normal*" is based on "*Norm*." "*Norm*" means a common normative ideal or standard by which true belief is defined and true action is determined, taken, measured, and judged. Normative standards must be decided by an authoritative "*norming norm*." History, including American history, shows the *only* norming norm that demonstrably works is God's normative standard. Only "*In God We Trust*" and "*One Nation, Under God*" is functional. "*In government we trust*" and "*One nation, under government*" is dysfunctional (and frightening) because here the norming norm is based on man, and man routinely screws things up, as the need for law enforcement proves. Government is necessary but must be constrained by a (recognized!) outside norming norm, and that can *only* be God. Because all other norming norms are based on fallible man, all other norming norms inevitably fail and inevitably lead to confusion, corruption, conflict and chaos. "*Normal*" is necessary for law and order, for peace and stability, and for sanity. Some will claim there is no such thing as "*Normal*." But again, "*How's that working for you?*" Have proper target identification . . . and shoot for it!

In legal circles it's said that "*hard cases make bad law*." Abnormal examples and exceptions to rules prove, not disprove, rules and norms. In society and government, we must promote healthy function, not enable sick dysfunction. Laws, rules, and standards are necessary not just for law enforcement, but for societal order. For instance, if people exercise proper self-control based on healthy norms and sound rules, the government doesn't need to exert control over them through law enforcement. But when people exercise license instead of liberty, that's when the cops show up. Free people must be responsible people to remain free. What does the world, wisdom, and God's Word teach us?

Even in the first century world of Acts 4, the Apostle Peter exercised his God-given right to free speech, including religious speech in a public setting. Despite the religious authorities refusing to recognize his God-given right to preach the Gospel, that right was, is, and always will be real. Peter did not passively wait hat-in-hand for official approval to do his duty according to conscience but exercised his rights. When told he could not preach the name of Jesus, he said he had to obey God rather than people (Acts 4:19-20, Acts 5:29).

This biblical example illustrates the universal truth that our right to free speech is neither granted nor denied by government, but only and always given by God. Our rights must be publicly exercised and publicly recognized, including by the government. If we fail to exercise, protect, and defend the divinely inspired rights so many have sacrificed their lives to protect and serve, we will lose both our religious freedom and our country. If not restrained by a recognition of God and his law, unprincipled corrupt human authority will inevitably consolidate ungodly, dictatorial, and abusive control over *"We the People."*

On September 18, 1787, on the last day of the Constitutional Convention, a woman asked Benjamin Franklin, *"Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?"* Franklin replied, *"A republic, if you can keep it."* We have a *constitutional republic* based on divine natural law and principle that is required to maintain justice, protect rights, and defend freedom, if we can keep it.

The Declaration of Independence declares we have God-given *"unalienable"* rights no corrupt king or cabal can cancel. For instance, the First Amendment spells out our God-given right of free speech and free religious exercise, unobstructed by government, which our government is constitutionally sworn to defend against ALL enemies, both foreign and domestic. This recognition of God-given principles is what guarantees human rights and freedom and makes America special. That is why folks flee dictatorship for democracy. And just because dictatorship calls itself democratic does not make it so. To misquote Shakespeare, a dictatorship by any other name would still stink. Or as God's Word says, *"You will know them by what they produce"* (Matthew 7:16).

The Book of First Peter in the Bible was written to persecuted Christians. In 1 Peter 2:13-17, the Apostle Peter writes about both freedom and responsibility:

"Place yourselves under the authority of human governments to please the Lord. Obey the emperor. He holds the highest position of authority. Also obey governors. They are people the emperor has sent to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. God wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing what is right. Live as free people, but don't hide behind your freedom when you do evil. Instead, use your freedom to serve God. Honor everyone. Love your brothers and sisters in the faith. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

The same Peter who said he had to obey God rather than man also said to obey the emperor. How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction? God's Word here and elsewhere (e.g. Romans 13:1-7) says to obey government, but also says that when God-given government clearly violates God-given rights and duties, God rather than man must be obeyed despite possible persecution or punishment (again, Acts 4:19-20, 5:29). Even if not specifically recognized as God-given, this principle has been used by courts regarding, for instance, crimes against humanity (e.g. overcoming the fallacious Nuremburg Defense of, *"I was only following orders"*).

A fundamental question for all Americans regardless of faith is: *"Who or what is the 'emperor' of America?"* The answer is in the first three words of the preamble of the U.S. Constitution, which says: *"We the People . . ."* It is true we live in a representative democracy, but our representatives are servants — not rulers! — of both the people and their Constitution. Ultimate legal authority lies with *"We the People."* The three branches of

government have neither right nor duty to change, ignore, misconstrue, or misapply the U.S. Constitution, but by law must properly uphold it, and we the people *must hold them accountable*. Our constitutional republic is defined by these principles.

American principles are both a source and product of our founding documents and help form our law enforcement standards and practices. They are *distinct from* but *compatible with* the Christian faith, or for that matter any faith that accepts the principle of divinely given natural law. Historically and legally our rule of law derives from God's natural law (Romans 2:14-15) and revealed law (Matthew 7:12), but also references the Christian Gospel. This is why, for instance, we see Moses and the Ten Commandments depicted on the U.S. Supreme Court and other governmental buildings, and why historically the Bible has been quoted or otherwise referenced in legal decisions. In more recent times, these principles have been under relentless attack and so now as always we must properly understand, support, and defend them, or lose our country and our freedoms.

Put yourself in the position of the founders of our country prior to the Declaration of Independence. How do you fundamentally — legally, morally, and spiritually — justify rebellion and war against the King of England? And do you just want to replace one form of human despotism with another? (e.g. pure democracy absent constraining republican constitutional principles will inevitably lead to majority dictatorship, mob rule and tribal despotism.) Here's a clue to the above question: If you can't trust corrupt humans to provide good governing principles, who else is left?

The following is the answer given by America's founders and defenders. Critics who attack their time-tested solution have the burden of proof, not supporters who defend it. Take the time to work through their formal eighteenth and nineteenth century language. It's worth it . . .

George Washington, First President, in his Farewell Address to the Nation:

"It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositaries, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern; some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit, which the use can at any time yield."

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the

duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

"It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?"

John Adams, Second President:

"We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by morality and Religion. Avarice, Ambition, Revenge or Gallantry, would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Thomas Jefferson, Third President:

"Under the law of nature, all men are born free, everyone comes into the world with a right to his own person, which includes the liberty of moving and using it at his own will. This is what is called personal liberty, and is given him by the author of nature, because necessary for his own sustenance."

James Madison, Fourth President:

"Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe . . ."

"Belief in a God All Powerful wise and good, is so essential to the moral order of the World and to the happiness of man, that arguments which enforce it cannot be drawn from too many sources."

"The first amendment declares, that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" This leaves the entire subject in the same situation in which it found it; and such was precisely the most suitable course. The people of the United States having, in this most solemn of all their enactments, professed themselves to be a Christian nation; and having expressed their confidence, that all employed in their service will practice the duties of the Christian faith; and having, moreover, granted to all others the free exercise of their religion, have emphatically declared, that Congress shall make no change in the religion of the country. This was too delicate and too important a subject to be entrusted to their guardianship."

"It is the duty of Congress, then, to permit the Christian religion to remain in the same state in which it was, at the time when the Constitution was adopted. They have no commission to destroy or injure the religion of the country. Their laws ought to be consistent with its principles and usages. They may not rightfully enact any measure or sanction any practice calculated to diminish its moral influence, or to impair the respect in which it is held among the people."

American Founder and Supreme Court Justice James Wilson:

“That law, which God has made for man in his present state, which is communicated to us by reason and conscience, the divine monitors within us, and by the sacred oracles, the divine monitors without us . . . has been called natural. As promulgated by the holy scriptures, it has been called revealed law. . . . But it should always be remembered that this law, natural or revealed, made for men or for nations, flows from the same divine source. It is the law of God.

Benjamin Franklin, in a Letter to a Skeptic:

“Tho’ you allow a general Providence, you strike at the Foundation of all Religion: For without the Belief of a Providence that takes Cognizance of, guards and guides and may favour particular Persons, there is no Motive to Worship a Deity, to fear its Displeasure, or to pray for its Protection. I will not enter into any Discussion of your Principles, tho’ you seem to desire it . . . If Men are so wicked as we now see them with Religion what would they be if without it?”

Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President, and the Great Emancipator:

“These communities, by their representatives in old Independence Hall, said to the whole world of men: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ This was their majestic interpretation of the economy of the Universe. This was their lofty, and wise, and noble understanding of the justice of the Creator to His creatures. Yes, gentlemen, to all His creatures, to the whole great family of man. In their enlightened belief, nothing stamped with the Divine image and likeness was sent into the world to be trodden on, and degraded, and imbruted by its fellows.”

“They grasped not only the whole race of man then living, but they reached forward and seized upon the farthest posterity. They erected a beacon to guide their children and their children’s children, and the countless myriads who should inhabit the earth in other ages. Wise statesmen as they were, they knew the tendency of prosperity to breed tyrants, and so they established these great self-evident truths, that when in the distant future some man, some faction, some interest, should set up the doctrine that none but rich men, or none but white men, were entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, their posterity might look up again to the Declaration of Independence and take courage to renew the battle which their fathers began — so that truth, and justice, and mercy, and all the humane and Christian virtues might not be extinguished from the land; so that no man would hereafter dare to limit and circumscribe the great principles on which the temple of liberty was being built.”

The Declaration of Independence

I once visited the Jefferson Memorial in Washington D.C. and saw this quote on the wall from Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of The Declaration of Independence:

“God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just . . . that His justice cannot sleep forever.”

The Declaration of Independence begins with these words:

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation . . .

WE hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights . . . “

The Declaration of Independence appeals to *“the laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.”* God’s laws are naturally understood in the human heart (Romans 1:20, 2:14-15). They are God-given, just, moral, universal, and transcend all other law and human authority, even including kings. Without this claim to divine authority, the Declaration of Independence would have been unable to legally justify overturning a human king’s arbitrary authority!

The Declaration of Independence:

- Recognizes the laws of nature and nature’s God,
- Establishes a lasting moral basis for a free and just nation,
- Asserts the divine rights of people above even a king,
- Appeals to a good Creator who alone bestows our human rights.
- States that all people are created equal,
- Defines the representative *“consent”* nature of government,
- Gives the fundamental purpose of government — to protect individual rights,
- Pledges to uphold these truths with *“our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”*

There is good reason God is mentioned twice in the opening sentences of the founding legal document of the United States. The America of rights and the rule of law could not have been born without the heartbeat of God, as her founders knew. The Declaration appeals to the opinions of mankind regarding the justice of America's cause based on this foundational recognition of God. God is at the heart of good government. The founders' world view was rooted in the recognition of our need for a personal, powerful, perfect God. They knew that the imperfectability of man (acknowledged, for instance, in the principle of limited government and checks and balances) requires the perfection of a supreme God. Only a divine King can check the power of an earthly king. Only His divine principles can guard against corruptible human power, but *only* if we honor God and His principles. It remains to be seen if our American experiment will survive constant assault.

As we consider our mission to protect and serve, and the cost to those who defend these divinely informed principles, the words of Sir Edmund Burke should inspire us: *"The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."* Pray (1 Timothy 2:1-2) . . . and do something!

The Constitution

America is governed by the rule of law, with the U.S. Constitution serving as the legal foundation for *"a more perfect union,"* not the *"divine right of kings,"* or even *"majority rule"* except as constitutionally allowed. God is not mentioned in the Constitution (except with the date signed — *"the Year of our Lord"* — demonstrating a common faith), but this does not mean God and our proper submission to Him and His governing principles are not present or recognized — and legally applied — in this foundational document. (Law enforcement chaplaincy is an ideal *"bully pulpit"* for reinforcing these principles.) There is an unspoken but implied commentary regarding both God (e.g. the oath of office denoting a divine Overseer) and man (e.g. *"checks and balances"* because of our permanently flawed human condition). Properly viewing the Constitution requires a common sense *"textualist"* understanding, which also considers *"originalist"* historical, philosophical, and even religious meaning in its creation (*"religious"* here meaning fundamental norming and guiding beliefs). The following normative conclusions can and should be drawn from the Constitution:

- 1) The Preamble calls us to form a more perfect union, but the constitutional division of government into three branches to provide checks and balances is recognition that while maintaining the goal of perfection, perfection is unattainable by imperfect people, and therefore the rule of law must be maintained and human power must be circumscribed by recognized righteous, sovereign, superintending, unified, universal, benevolent, providential and finally legally applied divine eternal principle to avoid the danger of absolute human power corrupting absolutely (not theocracy but constitutional republican democracy necessarily based on a theistic understanding and a divinely authored natural law). *"Many forms of Government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time"* (Winston Churchill). This is a price we are willing to pay to preserve freedom. Despite attack, this legal understanding remains constitutionally based and normative.

2) The oath of office in the Constitution is legal recognition of divine principle rooted in divine authority — the oath-based requirement of submission to God and his eternal principles. The oath and constitutional rule of law (including the alternative affirmation) exclude hostile understandings of true divine authority. God is:

- ✓ One “*I Am*” in nature and essence, eternal Creator of time, space, matter, and life
- ✓ Personal Spirit, not anthropomorphic, mere object, or force
- ✓ All Good, Righteous and Personal, not dualistic light *and* dark nor good *and* evil
- ✓ Omnipotent (all-powerful)
- ✓ Omniscient (all-seeing, all-knowing)
- ✓ Omnipresent (all-present)
- ✓ Sovereign and Engaged in Universal Divine Governance over all His creation
- ✓ Overseer, Judge and Awarder or Avenger of human belief and behavior
- ✓ Normative Guide and ultimate “*Norming Norm*,”
- ✓ Immutable and unchanging, not mutable and changing
- ✓ Eternal and Universal
- ✓ Benevolent and Providential

Here note that America’s founders did not require a particular religious understanding of God but did intend a legal understanding in keeping with the above definitions. While avoiding a specific religious doctrinal requirement, they also specifically intended this legal understanding to not undermine, contradict, or compromise a biblical and Christian understanding of God and his words of both law and Gospel.

The Constitution is the supreme law of the United States, a land governed by the rule of law. The Constitution enshrines the oath of office, and the oath guards the Constitution. The oath is specifically mentioned three times in the Constitution (Article I, Section 3; Article II, Section 1; and Article VI). The oath has always been legally understood as being a religious oath; it is sworn to God, not to government. Even the alternative affirmation has its roots in the religious convictions of the Quakers to not swear any oaths. The Constitution specifies that no religious test can be required of a person holding office but does require that all persons holding office in the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of both federal and state governments must take the oath or affirmation (Article VI).

Definition of “Oath” (Black’s Law Dictionary):

“An external pledge or asseveration, made in verification of statements made or to be made, coupled with an appeal to a sacred or venerated object, in evidence of the serious and reverent state of mind of the party, or with an invocation to a supreme being to witness the words of the party and to visit him with punishment if they be false. See O’Reilly v. People, 86 N. Y. 154, 40 Am. Rep. 525; Atwood v. Welton, 7 Conn. 70; Clinton v. State, 33 Ohio St. 32; Brock v. Milligan, 10 Ohio, 123; Blocker Burness, 2 Ala. 354. A religious asseveration, by which a person renounces the mercy and imprecates the vengeance of heaven, if he do not speak the truth. Leach, 430.”

We should occasionally review the Oath of Office, and reflect on what fidelity to that oath, for the sake of justice and freedom, has won at such great cost:

“I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God.”

The Oath of Office is only as good as the character of the person taking it. As responsible citizens, we had better clean up our act. Once again, this is why John Adams wrote:

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion . . . our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” (Letter of October 13, 1789)

The Declaration of Independence recognizes God as Supreme Creator and Lawgiver, and that his laws are naturally understood, just, moral, universal, eternal, and *required*. The Constitution’s Oath of Office implicitly recognizes God as an Overseer who watches over the diligent discharge of duties, a Judge who will rule on the faithful fulfilment of duties, and a Helper who will assist in the performance of duties. We must honor the full meaning of these understandings today, especially because — again — our historic respect for God is under vicious assault.

In *Cotting v. Godard*, 183 U.S. 79 (1901), the United States Supreme Court stated:

“The first official action of this nation declared the foundation of government in these words: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’”

“While such declaration of principles may not have the force of organic law, or be made the basis of judicial decision as to the limits of right and duty, and while in all cases reference must be had to the organic law of the nation for such limits, yet the latter is but the body and the letter of which the former is the thought and the spirit, and it is always safe to read the letter of the Constitution in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence.”

“No duty rests more imperatively upon the courts than the enforcement of those constitutional provisions intended to secure that equality of rights which is the foundation of free government.”

The Supreme Court said the Constitution is the letter of our law, but the Declaration of Independence is the spirit of our law!

Abraham Lincoln was accused of illegally using the Declaration of Independence (*“all men are created equal”*) to abrogate the constitution, which in his time allowed slavery. Lincoln *did* assert that the positive law of the land *should* be, but was not legally *required* to be, normed by the natural law outlined in the Declaration, but he still gave sound *constitutional*

reasons for opposing slavery. Indeed, the Constitution is the law of the land we are oath-bound to protect and defend, but this letter of the law should always be informed by the Declaration of Independence — again, the spirit of our law. If America is to be preserved as a free and good nation, our changeable Constitution must always and only be amended in keeping with unchanging God-given principles and rights. That's why John Adams said the U.S. Constitution was meant only for a moral and religious people. Our Constitution, our rights, and our freedom will be lost if we become immoral and irreligious.

God's Word reflects divine principles in both law and Gospel:

- Isaiah 56 — *“This is what the Lord says: Preserve justice and do what is right . . . my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”*
- Galatians 3:26-29 — *“You are all God’s children by believing in Christ Jesus. Clearly, all of you who were baptized in Christ’s name have clothed yourselves with Christ. There are neither Jews nor Greeks, slaves nor free people, males nor females. You are all the same in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants and heirs, as God promised.”*

The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights are the first ten amendments ratified when the Constitution was adopted. These were written to recognize and protect the God-given rights of United States citizens. A fundamental principle in America is that these rights are given by God, not government. For instance, the First Amendment establishes the five rights of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition the government for redress of grievances:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

The *“Establishment Clause”* prohibits the government from establishing a state religion, but it also prohibits government from interfering with the free exercise of religion. The First Amendment curbs the government, not the people. American citizens have the private and public right and duty to speak, pray and worship according to conscience, and to practice their faith.

We must not allow our God-given and constitutionally recognized rights to be stolen from us under color of an arbitrary and corrupt human authority. Many have suffered much and even died to protect and defend our Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. We too have a sacred duty to protect and defend them at all costs.

The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics

The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics is the long-standing, universally recognized foundational statement of duty and mission for American law enforcement officers. This Code supports morals, ethics, duty and integrity in law enforcement, and honors God. We should firmly implant this code in our professional and personal DNA. As both our Code and our Oath make clear, we ultimately report to a righteous God, not corrupt man, or we would become law breakers, not law enforcers. We would become like the Nazi stooges who shrugged, *"I'm just following orders."* Keep to this code even if it costs you promotion, friends, reputation, job, freedom or even your life! No paycheck is big enough for this duty. You must believe in it or do yourself and everybody else a favor and leave. Sometimes the thin blue line can get very, very thin, but you're not alone; God himself backs you up. Do what's right even if that means being a whistleblower: *Keep to the code!* (Psalm 17, Psalm 101)

"As a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve the community; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all to liberty, equality and justice."

"I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all and will behave in a manner that does not bring discredit to me or to my agency. I will maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self-restraint; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed both in my personal and official life, I will be exemplary in obeying the law and the regulations of my department. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty."

"I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, political beliefs, aspirations, animosities, or friendships to influence my decisions. With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice, or ill will, never employing unnecessary force or violence and never accepting gratuities."

"I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of police service. I will never engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will I condone such acts by other police officers. I will cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and their representatives in the pursuit of justice."

"I know that I alone am responsible for my own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve my level of knowledge and competence."

"I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession . . . law enforcement."

Questions:

- Put yourself in the position of America's Founders prior to the Declaration of Independence. How do you justify rebellion against the King of England?
- Here is a question for American Christians: *"As both Americans and Christians, can we serve both our Constitution and Christ without violating the standards and requirements of either? In fact, can we serve both better by serving each according to the distinct and different requirements of both? And do we just have the right or also the responsibility to faithfully serve both according to our 'dual citizenship'?"*
- Why do we need an oath of office? What is its purpose? Who is it sworn to?
- When George Washington was inaugurated as our first president and took his oath of office, he began the presidential tradition of placing his hand on the Bible, and then spontaneously added an emphatic *"So help me God!"* at the end. . . Why?
- What kind of citizens did John Adams say were required for successful constitutional government?
- According to Thomas Jefferson, who is the author of nature and nature's law? According to him, who gives the right of personal freedom, government or God?
- What did James Madison say should be true about every member of Civil Society?
- What is the *"Establishment Clause"* of the First Amendment? Does it allow government to influence, restrict, punish, or control religious ideas, including unpopular ideas?
- Does the First Amendment restrict government or the people? Do we have both a right and duty as Christians and citizens to speak our conscience and convictions? Why or why not?
- In our post-modern world, what is our right and duty as citizens of God's two jurisdictions of justice and mercy to defend God's law and love?
- Are you willing to pledge your life, your fortune, and your sacred honor to defend the great principles this country was founded on?

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God lays out his divine precondition for a nation's healing:

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves,
pray, search for me, and turn from their evil ways,
then I will hear their prayer from heaven,
forgive their sins and heal their country."*

SECTION SIX — QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

2 Jurisdictions of God's Justice and Mercy

God created a perfect world where neither justice nor mercy was needed, but because we sinned, his unchanging, integrated, undivided holiness and love applied two different ways to meet the new and distinct requirements for both justice and mercy in our imperfect world. We must understand and properly practice both to live, serve, and protect in our fallen and hurting world...

God's Jurisdiction of Justice:

God's "*Kingdom of the Left*"

God's naturally known or revealed Law

God's justice exercised through the State according to the rule of law . . . preserves order in an imperfect world

Law of proportional punishment . . .

"Eye for an eye" (Exodus 21:24)

Temporal consequences for violators

Based on our work: *'Do!'* (James 2:10)

Motivated by natural love and duty, sense of right or wrong, and fear of punishment or promise of reward

"Justice" is our professional modus operandi, tempered by mercy: All officers in their work must serve the needs of the administration of justice, according to *"Kingdom of the Left"* standards of professionalism to protect and serve according to law

God's Jurisdiction of Mercy

God's "*Kingdom of the Right*"

Good News of Christ revealed in God's Word

God's mercy and kindness given through his Word and Church according to Gospel . . . provides forgiveness for imperfect people

Unconditional forgiveness of Christ . . .

"Turn the other cheek" (Luke 6:29)

Temporal and eternal undeserved kindness!

Based on Christ's work: *'Done!'* (Hebrews 4)

Motivated by the Spirit of God and his unconditional love . . . We love because He first loved us . . . *"No Fear!"*

"Mercy" is our personal modus operandi, tempered by justice: A Christian officer or chaplain lives and proclaims Jesus Christ in keeping with a *"Kingdom of the Right"* spirit of mercy and sacrifice to protect and serve in keeping with the Gospel, guided by duty, and guarded by rights

"How are God's two jurisdictions reconciled?"

"Mercy and Truth have met.

Righteousness and peace have kissed."

Psalm 85:10

Only one event in all history answered the need of the whole world for both justice and mercy. God's nature and our need kissed at the cross, where Jesus Christ paid for our sin (justice), gave us salvation (mercy), and *"reconciled us to Himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). We must still live by the differing demands of justice and mercy in our imperfect world, but by his cross we are reunited with God and one day will witness the reconciliation of his rule back into one jurisdiction of perfect love.

10 Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17 says:

“Then God spoke all these words:

‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of slavery in Egypt.

‘Never have any other god. Never make your own carved idols or statues that represent any creature in the sky, on the earth, or in the water. Never worship them or serve them, because I, the Lord your God, am a God who does not tolerate rivals. I punish children for their parents’ sins to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. But I show mercy to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments.

‘Never use the name of the Lord your God carelessly. The Lord will make sure that anyone who carelessly uses his name will be punished.

‘Remember the day of rest by observing it as a holy day. You have six days to do all your work. The seventh day is the day of rest—a holy day dedicated to the Lord your God. You, your sons, your daughters, your male and female slaves, your cattle, and the foreigners living in your city must never do any work on that day. In six days the Lord made heaven, earth, and the sea, along with everything in them. He didn’t work on the seventh day. That’s why the Lord blessed the day he stopped his work and set this day apart as holy.

‘Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live for a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

‘Never murder.

‘Never commit adultery.

‘Never steal.

‘Never lie when you testify about your neighbor.

‘Never desire to take your neighbor’s household away from him.

‘Never desire to take your neighbor’s wife, his male or female slave, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to him.’”

The 10 Commandments given by God to Moses, summarized here, have helped guide us for more than three thousand years:

- *You shall have no other gods.*
- *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.*
- *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*
- *Honor your father and your mother.*
- *You shall not murder.*
- *You shall not commit adultery.*
- *You shall not steal.*
- *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
- *You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.*
- *You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

3 Ecumenical Creeds

God is not created by man in our image according to our preferred narrative, but we were created by him in his image. *“God is a spirit. Those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth”* (1 John 4:24). The Christian faith identifies God as three coequal persons within his one nature and essence in keeping with the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, and expressed, for instance, in the story of Jesus’ baptism in Matthew 3:16-17, where we see God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all present:

“After Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up from the water. Suddenly, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down as a dove to him. Then a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love — my Son with whom I am pleased.’”

The biblical truth about God’s nature and our need have been summarized in three ecumenical creeds — the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the longer Athanasian Creed (not included here) — formulated by the Christian church in earlier centuries to clarify God’s nature and our need:

Apostles Creed

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth,”

“I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.”

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

Nicene Creed

“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.”

“I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.”

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

10 Deadly Sins Against Officer Survival

When I was a rookie officer, I taped the following “10 Deadly Sins Against Officer Survival” to my metal clipboard and carried it next to me on the front seat of my patrol car. These warnings also serve as a metaphor for spiritual application:

1) Inattentive Attitude —

“If you don’t keep your mind on your work or carry personal problems onto the street, you will make mistakes that can cost your life.”

Spiritual Application: If I am not “*situationally aware*” in my personal life, Satan can exploit my inattention to mislead, tempt or discourage me with his lies (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8). These personal problems will then cause problems on the job and may even pose a physical threat because of their demoralizing distractions! I must tune in to the truth of God’s Word to stay focused and on track.

2) Tombstone Courage —

“Yes, you have courage, but don’t play John Wayne. In circumstances where time allows, wait for backup. Only in rare instances of necessity should you try to make a dangerous apprehension just by yourself.”

Spiritual Application: God gives me his church — His pastors and people — to back me up on my road through life. I need to sort through the good, the bad and the ugly to find those solid Christians upon whom I can depend, those who will truly comfort, encourage and hold me accountable in my life (Galatians 6:2). This shows spiritual smarts and strength, not weakness. God backs you up!

3) Not Enough Rest —

“To do your job you must be alert. Being sleepy or asleep on the job not only violates departmental rules, but also puts you, the community, and fellow officers in danger.”

Spiritual Application: Even God rested on the seventh day. I am a physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual being. I need to take healthy Sabbath rest and recreation in all these areas. My ultimate rest is in Christ, my Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4), who is my refuge even in the pressures of work.

4) Taking a Bad Position —

“Don’t let an apparently innocent subject manipulate you into a position of disadvantage. Always be aware of defensive position and physical spacing. Maintain the advantage. Even routine calls and stops should be treated as potential threats.”

Spiritual Application: I must maintain a position of strength, which means avoiding seemingly harmless but potentially bad ethical, moral, or spiritual circumstances. I should bail out when a potentially bad situation finds me (Genesis 39:6-12; 2 Timothy 2:22).

5) Ignoring Danger Signs —

“As an officer you must recognize danger signs. Pay attention to furtive or quick movement, strange cars, etc. Learn to pay attention to the feeling at the back of your neck. These are warnings that should alert you to watch out and approach

with caution. Know your community and look for what seems out of place. Follow up on your suspicions, no matter how apparently minor they may be.”

Spiritual Application: Temptation and trouble often first approach in seemingly innocent encounters, disguised as harmless friends rather than these deadly enemies. I must not find myself trapped in a corner with my defenses down (1 John 2:15-17). Listen to God-given spiritual instincts. Remember, things like alcohol can impair your judgment and decision-making . . . watch out!

6) Failure to Watch the Hands of a Suspect —

“Is he reaching for a weapon or getting ready to grab or strike you?”

Spiritual Application: I need to watch my own hands (actions) as well as those of others. Beliefs and attitudes lead to actions, so I must be careful to stick with the truth, based on God’s Word, in what I believe and think, to avoid wrong actions. In all things I place myself in the loving and protecting hands of God (Psalm 24:3-6; Psalm 31:4-5).

7) Relaxing Too Soon —

“Observe carefully. Is the crisis really over? Don’t be quick to relax simply because the immediate and apparent threat has been calmed or contained.”

Spiritual Application: I should never take life and relationships for granted, especially marriage and family relationships. These require loving and routine attention I can’t ignore the principle of: *“Pay a little now, or pay a lot later,”* in which I fail to guard against sin, or fail to nurture important relationships with God and others (Ephesians 5-6).

8) Improper Use or No Handcuffs —

“See that the hands that can kill are safely cuffed. Once you have made an arrest, handcuff the prisoner immediately and properly.”

Spiritual Application: I must deal authoritatively and conclusively with apparently disarmed but still potentially dangerous threats to my personal welfare. I must never assume that former problems or habits are no longer a threat (Romans 7-8).

9) No Search or Poor Search —

“There are many places to hide weapons. Your failure to properly search is a crime against both you and your fellow officers. Criminals can carry several weapons and are prepared to use them against you if you fail to find them.”

Spiritual Application: Consider all the weapons the devil may use against me. What is my weakness or blind spot? What do I tend not to notice and confess to God? How can I bring these weapons of Satan to light and disarm him? (1 John 1:5-10) How can I best protect others also?

10) Dirty, Inoperative or Unused Weapon or Equipment —

“Are your weapons clean? Will they fire? Do you carry and employ the proper weapons, ammunition, and equipment? Do you wear your body armor? Do you keep your knowledge and skills honed?”

Spiritual Application: Have I put on and do I use the *“full armor of God?”* (Ephesians 6:10-18)

10 Gospel Truths to Trust for Peace Officers to Have Peace

1) Trust God —

“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.” (Psalm 118:8)

L. E. culture issue: *“Don’t trust anyone!”*

Sad worldly experience teaches us to not trust suspects, citizens, media, courts, superiors, subordinates, and others.

Trust Response: *“I trust God!”*

Jesus did not trust man, but on the cross just before he died, he committed himself into the hands of His loving Father, despite asking *“Why?”* (Luke 23:46, Psalm 22, Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 40:28-31)

2) Trust God’s Word —

“Blessed is he who delights in the teachings of the Lord” (Psalm 1).

L. E. culture issue: *Loss of Innocence.*

Law enforcement experience adds to a litany of losses, a big one being loss of innocence.

Trust response: *“I trust God’s Word of law (his commands) and Gospel (his promises).”*

God restores us by His Word, unlike opposing human narratives that eventually disillusion and destroy officers. God’s Word gives a true picture of the human condition and its remedy (Genesis 3:15, Psalm 119:105, 1 Peter 1:25, 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

3) Trust God’s Forgiveness for Myself —

“If we live in the light in the same way that God is in the light, we have a relationship with each other. And the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from every sin. If we say, “We aren’t sinful” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. God is faithful and reliable. If we confess our sins, he forgives them and cleanses us from everything we’ve done wrong.” (1 John 1:7-9)

L.E. Culture Issue: *Liability*

Confession leads to consequences, so *“lie and deny.”*

Trust response: *“I trust God’s pardon and direction!”*

The law requires consequences, but the Gospel provides God’s pardon through Jesus Christ, who paid the consequences of our sin on His cross (*“sin”* literally means *“missing the mark”* or *“missing the target”*). We receive this free gift by faith (trust in God) alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) through confession and repentance to God. (John 3:16, 1 Timothy 1:15)

4) Trust God’s Forgiveness for Others —

“Be kind . . . tender-hearted, forgiving . . . just as God in Christ has forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:32)

L.E. Culture Issue: *“Do the crime, do the time”*

Officers place their relationships at risk if they treat family like suspects. Love your spouse and children *unconditionally*. Discipline children, but with love (Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4).

Trust Response: *“I forgive you, as God has forgiven me!”*

All humans, Christians included, are sinners in need of forgiveness. We should extend Jesus’ forgiveness just like Jesus did on the cross, even if it’s rejected by those we forgive. We can forgive even if we must avoid toxic people. (Luke 23:34, Matthew 6:12; 18:21-35)

5) Trust God's "NOW" Answers of His Law and Gospel —

"You will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet . . . for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared." (Proverbs 3:24-26)

L.E. Culture Issue: *"Game Face"*

The strengths of *"condition yellow"* situational awareness, attention to detail, legal orientation, command presence, on-guard physical distancing and self-protective stance, suspicion, *"poker face"* stern demeanor, controlling behavior, desensitization, etc. can lead to *"condition black"* personal weaknesses and emotional or relational breakdowns from hypervigilance, emotional distancing, intolerance, paranoia, perfectionism, legalism, over-reaction, anger, depression, stress and *"big brother"* oppression!

Trust Response: *"I choose to live in the "now" according to the immediate and various needs of justice and mercy, by God's wisdom and strength. When on duty, I will do my best to maintain situational awareness that is attentive but inwardly calm in the Lord — exercising "grace under pressure" (Hemingway) and "taking my time quickly" (Wyatt Earp) as circumstances require but not over-reacting, keeping my "eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) and trusting in his care. When I take off my uniform, I will take off my game face, and allow myself to go to condition green with my family. When I am not on duty, I will trust the Ultimate Peace Officer to hold down the fort, and will "be at home," relax, and allow my family to also "be at home."*

6) Trust God's Community and Created Order —

"It is not good for man to be alone." (Adam and Eve gave each other community (Genesis 2:18a, Matthew 19:4-6)

L.E. culture issue: *Isolation and alienation.*

Officers are tempted to withdraw from the broader community, including the church, because they often feel people don't understand or care.

Trust Response: *"I will engage in a positive way with society, church, marriage, and family, as needed and appropriate, trusting God's created order. I will take a loving, patient and balanced view of people and stay connected with others who, like me, are imperfect."*

7) Trust God's "Sabbath Rest" —

"Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

(Matthew 11:28)

L.E. Culture Issue: *Stress*

Because of the nature of law enforcement, stress is unavoidable.

Trust Response: *"I will live and work in the sustaining presence of God with prayer, meditation on His Word, and regular church fellowship, and bring my family."*

To counter immersion in the justice system and exposure to the human condition, we should *regularly* come to Jesus and enter the *"rest"* of Christ (Hebrews 4:3) through the means God provides. We are physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual beings, and therefore need *"Sabbath Rest"* (Hebrews 4:9) in *all* these areas.

8) Trust God's backup —

"Carry each other's burdens." (Galatians 6:2a)

L.E. Culture Issue: *"Spiritual John Wayne Syndrome"*

Officers with some justification have been called *"trained paranoids,"* but if they carry this trait too far, they place themselves at risk if they isolate too much and refuse to recognize, respond, or seek help for a problem or need they have.

Trust Response: *"I will lay aside defensiveness in my personal life, trust God, and use all appropriate and necessary personal backup to find and maintain physical, emotional, relational and spiritual health."*

We all need assistance on occasion. God provides this assistance to us through a variety of resources and people. We should be intentional about recognizing when we need help and be open to receiving it.

9) Trust God's control —

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him . . . He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

L.E. Culture Issue: *Fear of loss of control*

Loss of control professionally can spell disaster for officers.

Trust Response: *"I trust that God is in control!"*

We must exercise responsibility in our lives and work, but also must ultimately trust God's control over things we cannot or should not control. In that trust we will find peace. We need to trust Him with those things that are *HIS* responsibility!

10) Trust God's "Who" answer to my "Why" questions —

"You haven't received the spirit of slaves that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the spirit of God's children by which we call out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15)

L.E. Culture Issue: *"Why does a loving God who is all-powerful allow the evil I see?"*

Officers experience many things that make them ask, *"Why?"*

Trust Response: *"I trust God's Who answer to my why questions."*

Satan and sin are the cause of evil in the world. God gives us the answers we need in the face of the harsh realities we witness. Here there is a much more important question than *"Why?"* to ask and answer, and that is, *"Who is God?"* God is our loving Father we trust with the unanswerable why questions of life, who proved His trustworthiness by giving us his Son, who willingly sacrificed his life to save us from sin. There is a related question: *"Who am I?"* We are God's beloved children, whom he both created and saved for eternity by the shed blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. God gives us healing and peace through his Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus is the Ultimate Peace Officer who laid down His life to protect and serve the whole world . . . including *YOU!* (John 1, John 3, John 10, Philippians 2:5-11)

10 Characteristics of a Christian Peace Officer

1) Compassion —

Compassion is a form of selfless love, which in turn is the greatest of all human and divine characteristics (John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:7-21). To have compassion is to have the desire and ability to understand and empathize with another person's situation

or predicament, and to also want to help and be able to help. Jesus had compassion for those around him (Matthew 9:36). As the compassionate Son of God, He took on the uniform of human flesh to become one of us. He understands us. He empathizes with us. He knows what we need. He wants to help and can help (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16). Following Jesus' example, Christian officers bring understanding and empathy to others, and a desire and ability to help from a Christian perspective. Helping — compassion — includes protecting innocent victims, including other officers and yourself (you can't protect others if you can't protect yourself) from perpetrators, and may include the use of force, even deadly force, when legal and necessary. This is why officers are required to wear weapons. To repeat, the use of deadly force by an officer is an act of compassion when necessarily and legally used to protect the innocent — including officers! — from serious injury or death. Here we recognize the necessity of always using less lethal means when possible but remember: An injudicious use of *less* lethal means could potentially *increase* risk to innocents and officers and fail to stop a suspect's immediate life-threatening actions. *(Again, please note that, like the rest of this introduction, this is not intended to be legal advice, law enforcement direction, or psychological counsel, but is religious and spiritual information for you to personally evaluate.)*

2) Character —

Law enforcement officers must have character — integrity — to function professionally. Christian officers must demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism along with the faith, virtues and hope they champion, or officers and others will dismiss the message with the messenger. The most important sermon preached is a personal example of outstanding faith, life, and job performance. A big part of character is honesty, especially to admit weakness and failure and to deal with them in a positive way. This is why, for example, professional tactical teams conduct debriefs. Without honesty, integrity turns into hypocrisy, because no one is perfect. A big part of authentic Christian ministry and mission is modeling forgiveness, and it begins with honesty before God and man, self-forgiveness, and self-acceptance because of Jesus Christ.

3) Common Sense —

The world of law enforcement requires common sense. An officer without common sense is a tragedy waiting to happen. Officers respect those with common sense and hold in contempt those without it. Common sense consists of the following: basic intelligence, critical thinking skills, and appropriate and timely knowledge applied to the situation — sound practical insight and action.

4) Communication —

Christian officers must be skilled communicators, and so must be situationally aware. They must know when to be silent, when to listen, when to speak, when to do nothing, and when to act. They need specific communication skills, such as active listening skills, to be effective. They must know when to maintain only a ministry of presence and when to speak God's Word of command or promise. They rely upon the Holy Spirit to open doors of opportunity to share their faith. They go only where invited or permitted and speak only when invited or permitted (1 Peter 3:15). This wisdom requires a spirit of discernment. They discern the appropriate moment to listen, shut up or speak, and are ready with words and actions seasoned with wisdom and grace.

5) Courage —

It was a zero dark thirty SWAT callout so there was no way to hide the seriousness of the situation from my wife as I climbed out of bed. While I quickly donned my Vietnam-era tiger stripes (yes, I'm a dinosaur) and collected my gear for the rural cross-country night op, she got on the phone with a team buddy's wife, and they started praying. My team deployed and was traversing a sidehill in the woods when a team member heard some noise and spotted a male subject flanking our movement. He instantly moved to put him on the ground and handcuff him. This was in the days before NVG's. We simply did what we had to do in the circumstances despite the assumed risk of blackout conditions and a potentially dangerous subject having home field and first move advantage. The bad guys often do. In my rookie days my senior officer and I once charged through a front door on the Fourth of July to tackle a drunk suspect holding hostages with a loaded 12 gauge (again, this was in the old days in my first agency, when a lead and backup officer *were* the SWAT team). We charged in blind with only suspect noise for direction, using his elevated blood alcohol level and our speed and surprise rather than cover and concealment for tactical advantage; a bold judgment call by my partner based on exigent circumstances. Just another pucker-factor day.

Officers require physical, moral, and spiritual courage, in keeping with what Shakespeare wrote, *"A coward dies a thousand times before his death, but the valiant taste of death but once,"* and as Winston Churchill said, *"Without courage all other virtues lose their meaning."* The law enforcement world requires courage because it confronts evil and tragedy in a no-holds-barred battle. There is no place for cowardice in a law enforcement officer. To properly protect and serve, we must be willing to sacrifice for the cause, no matter the cost (John 15:13). Courage does not mean the absence of fear, but proper action and discharge of duty despite fear. And just like physical *"muscle memory"* training helps overcome fear so we can react in the face of danger, so too does spiritual muscle memory training — prayer, Bible study, Christian church fellowship and worship.

6) Conviction —

To be without conviction is to be without conscience. Our mutable values must always align with immutable virtue . . . this is called integrity. In a deceptive, corrupt, and evil world in desperate need of truth and good, we must be people who can call a spade a spade, and act accordingly. We must be people of moral and spiritual conviction to truly serve and protect — to have meaning and truly survive as human beings. We must have immutable beliefs rooted in an immutable God who is the only firm foundation for life and work. We must have convictions to be effective and must be willing to *"go to the mat"* for them. Just as peace officers must have command presence to properly enforce the law, so too Christian officers — to properly represent God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ — must have spiritual command presence to be taken seriously, and this requires being *"all in."* Others may disagree with your convictions, but they will respect the fact that you have them. The standard or norm of conviction for a Christian officer is of course the Word of God — the Bible.

7) Commitment —

All officers demonstrate commitment to their profession by *applying* the high ideals reflected in the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics. Christian officers demonstrate the same commitment to their faith by *living out* the truths reflected in the Scriptures. To be effective in their witness, Christian officers are conscientious in life and work. Commitment begins

with God. While never perfect in this life, we commit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of life, according to the power God provides (Romans 7-8).

8) Congeniality —

Because I'm part Norwegian stoic I tell this joke: *"Do you know what they put on the Norwegian's headstone? (Pause . . .) 'I'm fine.'"* Congeniality (here meaning a friendly sense of humor) is a quality worth expounding on because it plays a huge and needed part in officers' lives. Officers love a good sense of humor. Humor tempers the horrors they witness and stresses they feel. Humor is an icebreaker, friend maker, and morale booster; I believe those with it are healthier than those without it. Proverbs 17:22 says: *"A joyful heart is good medicine, but depression drains one's strength."*

Cops often enjoy inappropriate or dark humor. Christian officers on the one hand must not let their boat get rocked by this humor or on the other hand get sucked in too much by it. For instance, Ephesians 5:4 says, *"It's not right that dirty stories, foolish talk, or obscene jokes should be mentioned among you."* In a cop world it's impossible to avoid hearing this stuff, but we can and should be in the world without being buried by it (John 17). But remember, one of the knocks against Jesus himself was that he hung out with rude and crude people (Matthew 9:10-13). And it's a fact that his first miracle was changing water into some very good wine (John 2:1-11). This is *not* justification for carousing (e.g. Ephesians 5:18), but recognition Jesus knew how to party properly.

Ecclesiastes 3 says there is a reasonable and appropriate time for every human emotion, feeling and response — including laughter. The Bible says God himself laughs, usually at the joke of human beings thinking they can or should be God. Psalm 2:1-4 says, *"Why do the nations gather together? Why do their people devise useless plots? Kings take their stands. Rulers make plans together against the Lord and against his Messiah by saying, 'Let's break apart their chains and shake off their ropes.' The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord makes fun of them."* Maybe we don't realize it because of Jesus' *"serious-as-a-heart-attack"* mission, but we get glimpses of his own sense of humor. For instance, he called his disciples James and John *"sons of thunder"* — sounds like biker brothers (Mark 3:17). The Bible says we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and so it's no stretch to believe that God, like the people he made, has a sense of humor too. It's the devil who doesn't have any funny bone at all in his evil spiritual body, even though he likes to pretend. He's all about wicked, vicious, and uncontrolled demonic deception, heartless rage, poisonous hatred, wanton drive, and cruel destruction — just like the folks who follow him (John 8:44).

I'm not impressed by comedians who rely on crude humor. Yes, it can be funny, but yes, it does get old. Real humor takes more skill and never gets old. The knock against believers sometimes is that they have no sense of humor. I believe the opposite is true. People of faith have the best sense of humor because they get life's jokes without becoming miserable and hopeless cynics.

We should maintain amiability while avoiding being a poor example. We are to be congenial and have a sense of humor without compromising Christian integrity. Other officers sometimes jokingly called me the *"the Rev"* not because of what I said and did but because of what I didn't say or do. And I reminded them it had been way too long since their last confession and my door was open. Humor is healthy and cushions an often-harsh reality. It's a door to friendship and Christian witness.

9) Confidentiality —

The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics requires officers to practice confidentiality. In a high-risk environment, with significant moral and legal issues at stake, they must exercise discretion, including appropriate confidentiality.

10) Cross of Christ —

All officers of any religious belief ideally share the common virtues described in these 10 characteristics except this one. Christian officers, like their fellow officers, must serve all people professionally, equally and without prejudice, whatever their identity, whether they agree with our Christian beliefs or not, or whether we are invited to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ or not. This is in keeping with both legal and biblical principles (1 Peter 3:15). However, only the cross of Christ offers ultimate hope for everyone. Jesus is our Peace Officer (Isaiah 9:6, John 14:27) who came to protect and serve us all (John 10:7-11) by dying on the cross for our sins and rising from the grave to lead us to eternal life (Philippians 2:5-11). We should always be situationally aware of Spirit-given opportunities for appropriate witness by invitation or permission . . . and it begins by setting a good example of faith and life. People need Jesus; you are there to help (Ephesians 2:10).

10 Stress Reducers for Officers

1) ENDORSEMENT vs. Condemnation —

Knowing we have God's approval, his endorsement, is crucial to minimizing stress. This divine endorsement extends to your duties, including the legal and proper use of force (Romans 13:1-7), and has been called the best preventer of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The principle of endorsement, defined by God's Word, helps us distinguish between true and false guilt. However, even if we cannot distinguish true guilt from false guilt, God dismisses false guilt and forgives true guilt because of Christ's cross (1 John 1:7-9).

2) HARMONY vs. Dissonance —

Internal agreement and consonance of belief, identity, attitude, and action reduce stress. When officers know they have God's approval of their role and duties, they no longer view themselves as a necessary evil, but a necessary good. Again, for example, knowing we have God's endorsement for the legal use of force leads to congruity between an officer's conscience and his or her legal use of force, including necessary and legal use of deadly force (Romans 13:1-7).

3) PURPOSE vs. Meaninglessness —

The Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible talks about life "*under the sun*" (life on this planet apart from God) as meaningless, useless, and despairing. However, life under the Son — life lived in personal relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ — gives us meaning and purpose. We then know our place in the universe — we are in God's orbit and plan, neither left outside it nor excluded from it (Jeremiah 29:11). God's purpose becomes our passion (Romans 12:1-2).

4) FAITH vs. Doubt —

Our faith is based on God's guarantee of our ultimate safety, survival, status, and security (Romans 8:28, Hebrews 11). Our faith works not because it is strong, but because of our strong Savior and Lord in whom we have faith (Matthew 14:22-33). We are no longer slaves of Satan but children of God; we know who we are and where we are headed (Galatians 3:26-4:7). We know nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ — even death (Romans 8:31-39).

5) RELATIONSHIP vs. Loneliness —

As Christians, we are no longer isolated and alienated from God and man but are connected to Christ and his Church and have the spiritual backup we need. We are not alone! As a chaplain, I once asked the chief of a major metropolitan city who he turned to in his *“Buck Stops Here”* responsibilities and isolated position at the top. He replied, *“I turn to the same guy you do.”* (John 14, John 15:1-17, John 17, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, 13:1-13, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Ephesians 4)

6) PROVIDENCE vs. Coincidence —

Our benevolent, good, and gracious God has a benevolent plan for those who trust and obey him that transcends the evil and tragedy we experience (Romans 8:18-39). As believers, we know life is not merely accidental and at the mercy of random chance and fickle fate. We are held for time and eternity in God’s loving arms (Psalm 31).

7) BALANCE vs. Instability —

When we understand and balance God’s law and Gospel — his justice and mercy, our different roles and priorities, responsibilities, rights, and duties in life — all according to God’s guidance and *“Sabbath rest”* (Hebrews 4:9), then we are better balanced and *“bladed off”* (Matthew 11:28) to withstand the destabilizing stresses and events of life (Psalm 1, Psalm 119:165).

8) FREEDOM vs. Bondage —

We obey God not to earn heaven, but because he has already won heaven for us, and therefore we live accordingly (Ephesians 2:8-10). We have the power to be free from sin’s addictions. Jesus says he came to set us free from the stressful slavery of sin and eternal death. We are free because we have been found. As the former slave trader and hymn writer John Newton said in the words of Amazing Grace, *“I once was lost, but now am found!”* (Luke 15:11-32, John 8:32-36, Romans 6)

9) OBJECTIVE vs. Subjective —

We no longer have the stress of trying to build our lives on the unstable sand of our own subjective ideas and strength (Matthew 7:24-29), or the stress of trying to blindly steer through the storms of life without the objective reference points provided by God and his Word. We no longer need to navigate through life by the seat of our pants, at the mercy of our own spiritual vertigo, but instead focus on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-3), who is our Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), Shepherd (Psalm 23) and Light (John 1:1-9). He is both our compass and North Star by whom we confidently navigate through life and safely arrive at our heavenly destination.

10) HOPE vs. Despair —

Despite the darkness we face, we have the Lord’s strength to defeat despair (Isaiah 40:28-31). We look past the trials of this life to the promises of God in his Word, and our eternal life to come. We can deal with stress by receiving our Peace Officer’s hope (John 14:27, Romans 15:13).

Following 9/11 I served as a chaplain at the World Trade Center. Standing in the collapsed center of Building 6, surrounded by the badly damaged eight-story walls in that amphitheater from hell, recovery workers found two steel beams in the shape of a perfectly proportioned

cross, with sheet metal over one arm like a Good Friday shroud. The cross became a shrine for the workers. I was the cross recovery chaplain, and when a crane laid it out in front of “*The Pile*,” I invited the workers to write on it their names and the names of those who died. I wrote this poem on the cross, which is now in the 9/11 Museum:

*From “God’s House” —
Fired new from dying flame,
this living sign remains,
arms outstretched,
embracing yet,
our avalanche of pain,
to still, to fill —
to heal again.*

Chaplain Steve Lee

Here I leave you — the peace officers I love — two Bible passages I shared with my cross recovery crew after midnight on October 4, 2001, as we stood on the highway abutment of what once was a walkway bridge where we had placed and now were dedicating the Ground Zero Cross. It is my duty and my honor to remind you that, yes, your name is also written on the cross of Christ! May the verses I read to my guys that night bring you hope in the midnight hours of your own life:

Romans 8:31-39:

“What can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us? God didn’t spare his own Son but handed him over to death for all of us. So he will also give us everything along with him. Who will accuse those whom God has chosen? God has approved of them. Who will condemn them? Christ has died, and more importantly, he was brought back to life. Christ is in the honored position — the one next to God the Father on the heavenly throne. Christ also intercedes for us.”

“What will separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death separate us from his love? As Scripture says: ‘We are being killed all day long because of you. We are thought of as sheep to be slaughtered.’”

“The one who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties. I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can’t be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation.”

Psalms 23:

“The Lord is my shepherd. I am never in need. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside peaceful waters. He renews my soul. He guides me along the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name. Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage. You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the Lord’s house for days without end.”

SECTION SEVEN — FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT CHAPLAINS

10 “*Spirit of the Law*” Action Steps

Years ago, I was invited by the supervisory special agent in charge of the FBI’s Behavioral Science Unit to participate in a chaplaincy working group called “*The Spirit of the Law*,” which met at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. The proposed mission statement said:

“The mission of the working group, ‘The Spirit of the Law,’ is to study methods to disseminate the best practices and standards of instruction regarding intentional spirituality in policing, to explore public safety officer career survival strategies and techniques for disseminating this information, and to discuss optimal strategies for ministering to public servants to include curricula development and internships.”

For two days, our working group had an intense discussion about the legal and practical issues involved in government sponsorship of this initiative. The following ten points are adapted from a letter I wrote to the BSU supervising agent following the conference:

In supporting officers with the spirit of the law . . .

1) We must respond to the multifaceted risks officers face:

Because of their work, officers are at high risk physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. As chaplains, we should identify these dangers and help provide comprehensive survival strategies. Here we cannot assess and address risk if we cannot observe carefully and think critically. We cannot think critically if we cannot think logically. We cannot think logically if our logic is not rooted in rational fact-based reality and context, simple common sense, and sound principles. We cannot apply sound principles unless we agree on those principles, but we cannot agree on common principles unless we have a commonly shared source and authority for principle, and we simply cannot discover that source and base apart from a shared recognition of God and his love and law that inspire the spirit of the law. This train of thought and practice leads to better chaplaincy care for officers.

2) We must return to our roots that made America great:

As chaplains, we have a duty to help restore and reinforce the God-given and God-recognizing foundational principles of our American heritage, which too often we take for granted, misunderstand, resist, or do not even know. Here we recognize that by promoting these principles we protect our officers who serve and protect them. If we do not support and defend our principles, we will lose the freedoms so many have fought and died to protect. Here the burden of proof lies not with those who defend our proven heritage, but with those who challenge and attack these time-tested truths. Here we ask: “*Why do people flee from other countries and flee to America?*”

3) We must rely on constitutionally permissible best practices:

If we are to “*disseminate the best practices and standards of instruction regarding intentional spirituality in policing*,” we must establish a government rationale. This

rationale cannot be personally and religiously based, but must be professionally and legally based, because our government and its law enforcement are necessarily based on law (as “*Spirit of the Law*” denotes). Our constitutionally based rule of law, informed by our other founding documents, is, in a sense, the public religion of our country. Here I point out that Christians like me believe everyone needs a personal Christian faith rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but we also believe that our own religious freedoms are best protected by protecting the rights of other religions also. In a religiously diverse society guarded by the First Amendment, we must therefore have a common ground to be “*E Pluribus Unum*” — “*One Out Of Many*,” or we will suffer from tribal conflict and collapse. That common ground is our priceless and irreplaceable shared American heritage, including our founding documents, our rule of law, and our traditions. In our country, people have the freedom to disagree with all these things, but that observation creates no obligation to make their stance our standard operating procedure. Officers need this clarity to reduce the stress of their work, and chaplains can help provide it.

We must articulate the legal basis for our practical work (which in truth does exist), especially because this proposal has potential for legal controversy. Here I suggest Bureau or Justice Department attorneys establish a formal legal rationale for this initiative, based on our country’s founding documents, traditions and sound legal precedent. With a clearly defined legal basis, we will avoid much misinformed confusion and possible opposition about what is permissible in developing our practices and standards. We must clearly differentiate and defend legal principle and permission from personal, political, philosophical, or religious bias, otherwise this initiative will be killed in the cradle, and officers will suffer along with others.

4) We must recognize “*Spirit*” also includes a historic understanding of God:

This “*Spirit of the Law*” initiative does not violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment. This proposal does not establish religion, but simply recognizes that our law is necessarily based on transcendent and universal beliefs (e.g. “*We hold these truths to be self-evident...*”), including belief in a supreme, good and just God who has created and rules both nature and mankind in keeping with his natural law from which our constitutional law flows (“*the law of nature and nature’s God*”), who punishes wrong and blesses right, and on whose providence we rely. We are “*One Nation Under God*,” proclaiming “*In God We Trust*.” These truths were recognized by our country’s founders. They talked about God by name, and we must be able to do so too, or this initiative becomes worse than meaningless, because what spirit are we describing, from where does it draw its authority and power, and to whom does it ultimately appeal? It is not enough to say, “*the people are the final judge*.” The people can be as corrupt and abusive as a king (note our republican form of government, with its checks on the people too).

Government recognition of these truths does not establish state religion, or deny the right of free speech, which government is bound to protect. Here the government is not required to be atheistic to guard the rights of an atheist. In a happy irony, our theistic (note I did not say theocratic) government is infinitely better suited to guard the rights of an atheist than an atheistic one (e.g. the former Soviet Union), because a theistic government is based upon restraining divine principle, while an atheistic government is ultimately based upon unrestrained human power, which always corrupts and eventually abuses everyone’s rights, including an atheist’s.

5) We must restore the truth that rights are given not by man but by God:

Some assert the Declaration of Independence, which addresses the universal rights and duties given by God to humankind, is not applicable today — that the Constitution is the only current legal basis for our country. This is dangerous ground. Following one of the most famous speeches in American history, Abraham Lincoln was criticized by the “*copperheads*” (Civil War pro-South northern sympathizers) for his Gettysburg Address, in which he quoted from the Declaration of Independence: “*Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*” In attempting to silence the foundational moral and legal principle of God-given human equality outlined in the Declaration of Independence but refuted by Constitutional law prior to the Civil War, his critics denied the legal standing of the Declaration. For instance, “*Accusing the President of ‘gross ignorance or willful misstatement,’ the New York World sharply reminded him that ‘This United States’ was not the product of the Declaration of Independence but ‘the result of the ratification of a compact known as the Constitution,’ a compact that said nothing whatever about equality*” (from the book “Lincoln,” by David Herbert Donald, published by Simon and Schuster, © 1995).

The inclusion of the three-fifths rule in the original U.S. Constitution is a harsh reminder to us all that the Constitution is the law of the land, but the spirit of the Declaration of Independence must govern its amendments and enforcement if we are to preserve our country and freedoms. The Declaration of Independence and Lincoln had it right . . . do we?

The Declaration of Independence is the foundational legal document of our country, and therefore fundamentally reflects the spirit of our law. We have a God-given duty to understand and disseminate its truths. As our Declaration recognizes, God is the ultimate check and balance to governmental power. He is our ultimate Lawmaker, Executive, and Judge, from whom our government ultimately derives its wisdom, goodness, and authority. This is the fundamental insight of the Declaration of Independence. This insight justified our American Revolution, and it must guide our government if we are to preserve our freedoms. The Declaration’s basic appeal is to the rights and duties given us not by a king, but by God. These rights help define and support an officer’s duty.

6) We must rediscover and reinforce the full meaning of the oath of office:

God is implicitly recognized in our Constitution, which enshrines the oath of office as the cornerstone of faithful service in our system of government. Legally, the oath has always been understood as an invocation of God. The purpose of an oath is to call upon a righteous, omniscient, and omnipotent God to oversee the faithful discharge of a person’s public duties. An oath invokes God’s righteous judgment on unfaithfulness (“*I do solemnly swear*”) and appeals to a benevolent God for help to be faithful (“*So help me, God*” was added by George Washington, who also began the tradition of presidents placing their hand on a Bible). The affirmation permitted by the Constitution in place of the oath was a concession granted to the Quakers by the Constitutional Convention, based upon the Quakers own respect for God. In oath or affirmation form, the constitutional principle of invoking God remains the same. Our permission of an atheistic affirmation, based on the freedom of individual conscience guaranteed by the First Amendment, is not the norm but the exception,

and should not cloud that fact nor keep us from disseminating the true meaning of the oath in our standards and practices. We should also include a presentation of the “*Law Enforcement Code of Ethics*,” which forms an excellent commentary on the oath. Here a chaplain can help an officer by reinforcing these truths.

7) We must respect freedom of religious expression in public settings:

While government is not permitted to establish religion, neither is it permitted to discourage, interfere with, or edit free speech and the free exercise of religion, including, for instance, a religious prayer offered at a public ceremony. Expression of personal belief at a government event does not mean government sponsorship of religion but instead publicly demonstrates proper government protection of free speech and the free exercise of religion. Remember that our President, serving as our nation’s chief law enforcement officer and Commander-in-Chief, has the God-given right (and duty if in keeping with conscience) at his public inauguration to lay a hand on a Bible and invoke and freely reference God in an inaugural speech. Government has both a legal and moral duty to protect and defend this God-given, not government-given, freedom for all of us. This is why our president swears an oath in the first place . . . to pledge his loyalty publicly to the spirit and the letter of the law. A chaplain who reminds officers of these things helps them also exercise their freedoms too.

8) We can reference religion for legal, moral, and ethical illustration:

In disseminating “*best practices and standards*,” we can appeal to religious formulas like the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. Religious belief is inextricably woven into the fabric of our history, law, morality, and ethics. We all — even atheists — have a worldview that ultimately must be based on faith because unlike God none of us can be all knowing. We must protect an atheist’s rights but that does not require adoption of an atheist’s beliefs or principles which, unlike religious principles, have no common or authoritative foundation.

We must be able to speak about the how’s, why’s and what’s of belief because we all believe something, and supporting the spirit of the law requires faith — in this case, belief in transcendent God-given normative principles. Here is a question for skeptics: “*If you reject the idea of God-given normative principles, what god, what norms, or what principles would you substitute?*” An atheistic answer leads to Darwinian “*Survival of the fittest*”, a nihilistic answer of “*Nothing*” leads to meaningless chaos, and a man-centered answer of “*Me!*” leads to unrestrained, evil despotism. None of these or any other alternatives to God are good . . . just do your history homework. And remember to not blame God but those who in his name violated his law to perpetrate their evil. Because officers see so much wickedness, chaplains need to remind them of these truths too.

9) We should reflect personal values that mirror eternal virtues:

The pursuit of “*optimal strategies for ministering to public servants*” begins with chaplains and other pastoral care providers understanding the culture of law enforcement and possessing certain qualities and practicing certain skills to minister to that culture. These are understandings, qualities and skills that should be encouraged through training and our own example. We should actively recognize, support, promote, and defend universal virtues and the eternal divine principles they reflect — integrity, honesty, morality, truth, courage, duty, honor, loyalty, compassion, wisdom, idealism, patience, endurance, service, self-sacrifice, diligence, and other universally

acclaimed virtues. We must be good people and avoid the attitude of a chaplain who once dictated her own morality to me by angrily stating: *"It's not our job to dictate morality!"* Neither she nor I have the power to dictate anything, but does that mean we are prohibited from taking a moral stand? Must chaplains be amoral?

10) We should be ready to offer positive belief to inspire an officer's hope:

I once met an officer who told me he asked another chaplain if he had hope, and the chaplain said he wasn't sure. Then he asked me if I did. I responded, *"Absolutely!"*, and explained why based on God's promises in his Word. He responded with, *"Glad to hear you say that . . . I was beginning to wonder about you guys."* I did not tell him it was inappropriate for me to discuss my religious beliefs but gave an honest, straightforward, and hope-filled answer to the question he asked. This unsettling illustration highlights the obvious truth that a pastoral care provider should never pour gas on a fire of existential despair because of personal angst or a false narrative about legality or propriety. Here it is both legal and appropriate (by permission or invitation) for a chaplain to discuss personal religious belief. Officers appreciate direct and honest answers to direct questions, even if they disagree.

A true cynic is a disillusioned idealist. Officers typically begin their careers as idealists (*"I want to help people and make a difference"*), but they soon discover a huge gulf between the ideal and the real. They face a disturbing dissonance in their work that is very stressful and can lead to despair. They often feel isolated and alienated from others and from God and disconnected even from themselves. They are deeply wounded by tragedy, evil, and the failures of the human condition, which are all spiritual and religious issues. This is the big elephant in our ministry room. We must not ignore this elephant by either denying these issues or denying our right or duty to speak to them because of improperly applied proselytizing restrictions (once again, we speak only by invitation or permission, and appropriate referrals can be made). Here government, the law, and even the spirit of the law are inadequate and inappropriate to the task, and they must bow out and give freedom to the pastoral care provider to step in and freely speak about God's love, including words of grace, forgiveness, hope, healing, and redemption. Without dictating the message, we must discuss the proper ways this can be done.

10 Law Enforcement Chaplain Qualities: An Administrator's Guide

When I began my law enforcement career, I had no chaplain to turn to if I had a problem. The only personal advice I remember from that prehistoric non-politically correct era came from a cigar smoking older officer who counseled, *"Kid, watch out for booze, broads, and bills."* Personal issues were viewed as private matters, unworthy of conversation. If an officer had a personal problem, he (almost always a *"he"* back then) either handled it himself or was viewed as a *"weak sister"* who had no business being a cop. This *"John Wayne Syndrome"* attitude sometimes caused officers to hide their problems and leaders to ignore them until they blew up or melted down. Then sometimes those problems and the officers with them were swept under the rug until the next time.

Today, proactive law enforcement leaders recognize the support needs of officers. To help manage those needs they provide psychological services and peer support, including

various stress management methodologies. Law enforcement chaplaincy is the third leg in this support stool. Although complementary and collaborative with other support efforts, chaplaincy is not a subset of these other tools and should not be controlled by them. Chaplaincy has its own distinctive form, function, place, and protections. Because we are physical, mental, *and* spiritual beings, and because conflict, stress and trauma wound not just body and mind but also the spirit, law enforcement chaplains provide specialized spiritual care to officers. Within this triad, especially in their one-on-one clerical role, they provide legally protected confidential specialized spiritual care. An example is the ride-along with a uniformed officer in a patrol car, which is an ideal relational setting for trust-building and confidential conversation between officer and chaplain.

Chaplains also serve the community, assisting, for instance, with death notifications and community policing efforts. Like Navy chaplains who hit the beach with the Marines, chaplains provide on-scene support including both man-made incidents and natural disasters. Some chaplains have deployment capability and respond nationally and even internationally. Chaplains are also cost-effective. Most serve as volunteers or representatives of non-profit organizations.

How should a chaplain be chosen? First, we recognize that, like a peace officer candidate, a chaplaincy candidate need not be from a particular religious faith. Here, for instance, there is no denial of the Christian faith, but the requirements for police chaplaincy are different than (but not incompatible with) the requirements for Christian ministry. The requirement for a faithful Christian minister is adherence to God's Word. The requirement for a faithful law enforcement chaplain is adherence to the rule of law, including both constitutional and statutory law, agency regulations, and chaplaincy best practices consistent with the above standards.

Here “Qualities” are listed rather than “Qualifications” because 1) agencies and organizations require different qualifications — there is no universally accepted standard, and 2) “Qualifications” implies more quantitative measurement and “Qualities” more qualitative, and therefore include subjective as well as objective criteria. This all means that “Qualities” is a more comprehensive (mixed method) and outcome-oriented description, and positive outcomes of course are the goal of administrators and chaplains alike. While recognizing that a chaplain with fewer qualities can serve effectively, and, conversely, that more qualities do not guarantee a perfect chaplain, the whole idea of professionalism and best standards and practices denotes that more qualities are generally better. With that principle in mind, here are ten top law enforcement chaplain qualities:

1) Outstanding Character:

“You can hire character and train skills, but you can’t hire skills and train character.” This human resource advice applies here. No chaplain is perfect, but an excellent character is the sine qua non of qualities. Chaplains must model the virtues they represent and promote. As a starting point, chaplains should meet the same character requirements as the officers they serve. They should reflect the virtues listed, for instance, in the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics. At the seminary where I taught chaplaincy, we highlighted the personal qualities a chaplain needs: Character, compassion, common sense, commitment, communication skills, courage, confidentiality, conviction, and congeniality, to name a few. Background checks, criminal history checks, third-party endorsements, references, and interviews all help in vetting character.

2) Law Enforcement Experience:

Law enforcement officers typically believe that only those who have worn a badge and gun truly understand them. Chaplains with law enforcement experience have unmatched experience-based knowledge and empathy, and therefore possess a significant advantage. They also have valuable insight into law enforcement principles and process (e.g. crime scenes). This background also mitigates the potential problem of the “wannabe” who gravitates to chaplaincy for the wrong reason. Like I say, *“I’m not a wannabe . . . I’m a has-been.”* Here note that sworn officers can concurrently serve as chaplains because of their law enforcement experience but face a potential conflict of interest — e.g. a chaplain’s requirement to protect confidentiality versus an officer’s requirement to report. This issue is not inherently unresolvable but should be clearly addressed.

3) Formal Education:

An advanced degree demonstrates commitment, discipline, academic achievement, knowledge, and ability. Formal theological education provides the intellectual ground on which a chaplain walks. Advanced education, especially with a police chaplaincy emphasis, is invaluable in forming and articulating a coherent worldview that can also address officers’ spiritual needs. This does not mean a chaplain candidate with an advanced degree is automatically qualified to serve, but a sound theological education can help provide a solid foundation for chaplaincy. Obviously, this education must be compatible with law enforcement principles and reinforce a chaplain’s own personal commitment to support the fundamental best standards and practices of the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, including integrity, duty, loyalty, honor, and respect toward historic American pillars including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the rule of law, self-sacrificing patriotism, and love of country and flag.

4) Law Enforcement Cultural Compatibility:

Law enforcement is a culture, not just a job. Chaplains must know this culture to be effective. Officers have their own language, customs, norms, mores, rituals and even race (the uniform). Chaplains must be aware of and allow for officers’ sensitivities. They should never compromise integrity and need not endorse every aspect of this culture or every action of all officers, but their values should fundamentally mesh with sound professional law enforcement principles. As an example, law enforcement constantly searches for less lethal options to deadly force, but there remains a fundamental need for a “*last resort*” deadly force requirement. A chaplain who opposes the use of deadly force would obviously not be a good fit and the last ride-along choice for any thinking officer. An officer should not have to debate law enforcement principles with a chaplain, and a chaplain needs cultural awareness and sensitive discretion about debatable issues.

5) Training and Certification:

Training is as important to chaplains as it is to officers. Learning and skill building are the marks of a professional chaplain. The amount of information to be learned and number of certificates to be earned are endless, including in-service training, chaplaincy training, Homeland Security training, conferences, Red Cross training and stress management training, to name just a few. Informal networking at training events can be as important as the training itself.

6) Ecclesiastical Endorsement:

“Ecclesiastical” means a recognized superintending religious organization that provides a letter of verification and support. Again, both endorsee and endorser should be reputable and a good fit with law enforcement. Ideally, an endorsing group has established spiritual care standards, including confidentiality standards.

7) Organizational Endorsement (Credentials):

Chaplains help establish credibility by being part of a team that is recognized and recognizes them. This team can be a government agency, a non-governmental organization, or a religious body, but in any case, it should have a clearly stated mission based on sound principles and clearly stated practices. If chaplains serve a police agency, like officers they should be willing to take an oath or affirmation. Just like an officer must carry a badge, a chaplain needs to carry identification. Administrators should consider whether it is better to issue chaplains badges or another form of identification to avoid confusion with sworn officers, including possible *“wannabe”* issues. In any case, chaplains should be clearly identifiable by visible ID, uniforms, lettered caps and/or jackets, and/or clerical collars.

8) Third Party Endorsement:

The best testimonials are provided by someone else. Third party endorsements such as letters of appreciation, commendations, recommendations and references all help establish a chaplain's bona fides. A chaplain should maintain these records and be able to produce them upon request. Administrators should ask for and keep these on file.

9) Chaplaincy Experience:

There is no substitute for chaplaincy experience. Here again, more is better, and we can learn from even bad experiences. A chaplain, just like the officers he or she serves, experiences the good, the bad and the ugly. A good chaplain uses every experience to learn, grow and become more effective. With time he or she builds a recognizable body of work that establishes his or her effectiveness, credibility, and ultimate legacy, which leads to the ultimate quality . . .

10) Effective Spiritual Backup and Support:

A good chaplain provides a ministry of presence, but also answers authentically when asked. Law enforcement officers confront existential questions regarding good and evil, justice and mercy, guilt, and innocence, suffering and death, faith and doubt. Officers and agents wrestle with personal life issues, including spiritual issues, and sooner or later will lay these on a chaplain as a challenge or question, and they will want an honest response, even if they disagree. Because they themselves must sometimes stick their necks out based on imperfect or incomplete information, they will not respect a chaplain who weasels out on giving a straight answer.

Effective spiritual backup is both the chaplain's road and destination, hard to quantify but easier to recognize, like other expressions of the spirit such as art, music, comedy, or drama — helpful to the heart and soothing to the soul . . . a touch from above.

Conclusion:

Good chaplains are an invaluable and cost-effective resource to help address the needs of both officers and communities in today's law enforcement environment. In their mission to serve, police administrators should utilize chaplains according to the age-old officer survival adage: *“Use your backup!”*

Ten Duties of an American Law Enforcement Chaplain

- 1) I will faithfully support and defend the immutable principles and virtues of America, which are distinct from but consistent with biblical truth (e.g. the Declaration of Independence), and on which our Constitution is built (e.g. the human condition requiring “*checks and balances*”). I will support and not contradict or confuse immutable and objective principles and virtues (e.g. “*In God We Trust*”) with changing popular politics, policies, people, and practices, but I will subordinate all subjective and mutable values.
- 2) I will faithfully support and defend the Constitution in keeping with the historically practiced and legally understood constitutional oath of office, for instance legally defined and understood as a religious oath or affirmation which is sworn or affirmed to God *before* the people and state.
- 3) I will faithfully support and defend the rule of law, sound reason, and respectful language and behavior. I will not confuse normal with abnormal and always remember: “*Hard cases make bad law.*”
- 4) I will faithfully support and defend a full understanding of chaplaincy that, while practicing ministry of presence and using psychological tools, will also incorporate American first principles including support and defense of the rule of law, integrity, ethics, morality, and patriotism, and will support and defend a historical and distinctive chaplaincy identity, function, and role, including religious identity and endorsement, and legal confidentiality.
- 5) I will faithfully support and defend the civil rights of all according to the Bill of Rights, including First Amendment freedoms, including a proper legal understanding that the First Amendment is a limitation on government rather than a limitation on individual freedom of speech or religious expression, including in a public or governmental context. Therefore, for instance, a chaplain is free to pray publicly according to religious conscience, without this being opposed as state sponsorship or endorsement of religion, but rather as the state supporting and defending a God-given individual right to exercise freedom of religion.
- 6) I will faithfully support and defend individual freedom but will transcend that which divides us to promote and defend positive principles and ideals that unite us — including but not limited to American principles here identified. It is not sufficient to believe and proclaim, “*Tolerance of diversity is what unites us.*” We must support and defend “*E Pluribus Unum.*”
- 7) I will faithfully support and defend properly endorsed chaplains of any faith who in turn will faithfully support and defend these principles, but I will oppose all who oppose these truths. The individual right to attack principle does not impose a duty on others to support the attack.
- 8) I will faithfully support and defend the role of proper law enforcement, as defined by the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, and I will support and defend law enforcement officers.
- 9) I will faithfully support and defend a chaplaincy practice consistent with these standards.
- 10) I will faithfully support and defend all best standards and practices for chaplains including but not necessarily limited to the principles identified in these ten duties.

10 Characteristics of a Competent Christian Chaplain

The officer was at the end of his rope. He was at his house — no longer a home — alone. He was alone because he had driven away those who loved him. He was alone because he had grown cynical and abusive toward family, friends and even life itself. He was alone because he had built a thick strong wall between himself and everyone else, including God. He was alone because he had tried to fill the stress-filled hole of his life with everything but what he really needed.

It was late one night when the noise of his life finally quieted down and left him with nothing but a choice between the phone on the wall or the gun in his lap. After consideration, he picked up the phone instead of the gun and called the departmental chaplain. He knew he had this final option. He would not have survived without it. I happened to be the chaplain on the other end of the phone that night. I lost some sleep but that was okay because my friend did not lose a whole lot more.

The Bible tells us that peace officers are God's servants and that we all should honor, support, and pray for them (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:2). This need provides a chaplain's call. What makes a good chaplain? In my experience, I have identified at least ten characteristics. These are qualities God wants all Christians to possess and practice but are especially important if a person is to serve as a competent Christian chaplain. They mirror the qualities of a good Christian peace officer:

1) Compassion

Compassion is a form of love, which in turn is the greatest of all human or divine characteristics (John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:7-21). To have compassion is to have the desire and ability to understand and empathize with another person's situation or predicament, and to also want to help and be able to help. Jesus had compassion for those around him (e.g. Matthew 9:36). As the compassionate Son of God, He took on the uniform of human flesh to become one of us. He understands us. He empathizes with us. He knows what we need. He wants to help, and he can help (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16). Following Jesus' example, a competent Christian chaplain understands people, empathizes with the problems and crises they face, and brings a desire and ability to help from a practical and Gospel-based biblical spiritual perspective (2 Corinthians 1:4).

2) Character

Peace Officers must have character — integrity — to function professionally. To be credible and effective, chaplains must also have character and integrity. They must model the faith, virtues and hope they champion, or those they serve will dismiss the message with the messenger. The first and sometimes only sermon preached by a chaplain is a personal example of faith and life (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3).

A huge part of character for a chaplain is honesty — honesty especially to admit failure and to honestly deal with that failure in a positive way through Jesus' forgiveness. Without honesty, integrity turns into hypocrisy, because no human is perfect but the God/man Jesus. Ask yourself if people are inspired or discouraged by an example of (apparent) human perfection, or by an example of human imperfection that receives Jesus' forgiveness and moves forward in faith? A big part of a chaplain's ministry is modeling forgiveness, which begins with a chaplain's honesty, self-forgiveness, and self-acceptance because of Jesus' kindness and love (1 John 1:5-9).

3) Common Sense

The world of law enforcement requires common sense. An officer without common sense is a tragedy waiting to happen. Officers respect those with common sense but dismiss those without it. Therefore, chaplains must demonstrate “street smarts.” Common sense for a chaplain consists of the following: basic intelligence, appropriately applied knowledge, and practical insight and wisdom (Psalm 1).

4) Communication

Chaplains must be skilled communicators. They must be situationally aware. They must know when to listen and when to speak, when to do nothing and when to act. They need specific communication skills, such as active listening skills, to be effective. Chaplains have a bully pulpit, but it is always a pulpit labeled *“By Invitation or Permission Only.”* This invitation and permission is won with a compassionate, competent ministry of presence. A chaplain only goes where invited or permitted and only speaks or prays when invited or permitted. A chaplain who is a skilled communicator will be able to discern the appropriate moment to either listen or speak and will be ready with words and actions seasoned with wisdom and grace, and by the Holy Spirit’s leading will bring help and healing to those in need (1 Peter 3:15).

5) Courage

“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.” (C. S. Lewis). Like officers need physical courage, chaplains need spiritual and moral courage (they sometimes need physical courage too!). Chaplains require courage because they confront evil and tragedy in a no-holds-barred battle. There is no room for cowardice in a chaplain. Remember the adage that courage is not the absence of fear but acting despite fear. A chaplain must be willing to sacrifice for the cause, no matter the cost (Psalm 91, John 15:13).

6) Conviction

A law enforcement chaplain once told me, *“It is not our job to dictate morality.”* Even on its face, this statement is ridiculous, if for no other reason than it dictates its own version of morality. It also reveals a post-modern denseness and lack of common sense — *“street sense”* — that officers themselves will not respect, because they know that in an evil world, we must be moral people to serve and protect, and to have meaning and survive as human beings. For a chaplain to claim to represent God, and then deny the right and duty to speak about God, morality, and faith, is to emasculate the chaplain’s very reason for being.

A chaplain must have basic beliefs that form a foundation of ministry. A chaplain needs convictions to be effective and must be willing to go to the mat for them. Just as a peace officer must have law enforcement command presence to control a situation, a Christian law enforcement chaplain must have spiritual command presence to influence a situation, be taken seriously by officers, and to properly represent the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A chaplain without conviction is a chaplain without conscience. Officers may disagree with your convictions, but they will respect the fact you have them. The standard or norm of conviction for a Christian chaplain is of course the Bible (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

7) Commitment

Chaplaincy requires that trust be established. Trust requires building relationships. Officers trust the chaplain because they know the chaplain. Officers, with good reason, are

suspicious and skeptical people. It takes time to overcome that suspicion and skepticism and develop trust. It takes time to demonstrate the qualities that will win their trust. Commitment of time is one of the biggest reasons for having full-time law enforcement chaplains. Effective chaplaincy takes time.

8) Congeniality

Officers love a good sense of humor. Humor serves to temper the horrors they witness and the stresses they feel. They typically enjoy what others might consider to be inappropriate or “*black*” humor. A good chaplain is congenial and has a good sense of perspective and humor without compromising integrity. Humor is a doorway to friendship and ministry.

9) Confidentiality

Officers are what I call “*trained paranoids*.” They must be to survive on the street. Typically, they also carry this attitude off the street. They will not talk with a chaplain if they are not comfortable about confidentiality. The legal definitions of and requirements for confidentiality vary from state to state, and even sometimes from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. A chaplain must have the courage to clearly articulate and practice appropriate confidentiality in this sea of confusion.

10) The Cross of Christ

Agencies need chaplains of various religious persuasions representative of the community they serve. Further, it is always both necessary and right for a Christian chaplain to assist folks without bias or prejudice whether they agree with that chaplain's beliefs or not, or whether a chaplain is invited or permitted to share the Gospel or not. Here there is no compromise with Christian principle. A Christian chaplain faithfully renders aid and comfort at the level invited or permitted as needed and able. This is in keeping with both legal and biblical principles (1 Peter 3:15). However, at the end of the day only the cross of Christ offers ultimate hope for everyone, peace officers included.

Officers regularly confront the tragedies and failures of the human condition. They are inundated in a sea of sin and overwhelmed by a litany of loss. The necessary remedy they bring to the gross outbreak of sin is enforcement of the law. But law has its limits and finally, personally, it cannot save us from the human condition that infects each of us. We need a Physician who can heal us. We need a Savior who can save us. We need a Peace Officer who can give us peace.

In my life I've met many people and asked many questions but found no better answer than the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25) and no better person than Christ (John 14:6). “*Indeed, we can be saved only by the power of the one named Jesus and not by any other person*” (Acts 4:12). Jesus is our Peace Officer (John 14:27) who came to protect and serve us all (John 10:7-11). Officers need to hear this message to have hope. That is ultimately why a Christian chaplain lives the love of Jesus and speaks the cross of Christ!