

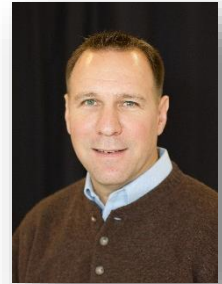
# County-Wide Chaplaincy

## Thanks you!

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In the book of Judges Chapter 6 is the story of Gideon. In Gideon's time the Israelites had endured several years of oppression from the Midianites and the Amalakites. Basically, they were stealing their crops and livestock to such an extent that the nation of Israel was impoverished. When the Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon to begin the deliverance of Israel, He finds him threshing wheat in a wine press, rather than out in the open, which would be more the custom. He is hiding from his enemies.



When the Angel of the Lord addresses Gideon, He said to him "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!" Of course Gideon is surprised by this title; after all he certainly didn't feel like a mighty man of valor. Then Gideon begins to question Him, asking why He allowed all of these bad things to happen to them.

Gideon couldn't get his thoughts off of his circumstances, and he began to explain to the Angel of the Lord, that his clan was the weakest in Manasseh, and that he was also the weakest in his own father's house. Surely there has been some sort of mistake, right? The Lord's response was "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

I've been involved with County-Wide Chaplaincy for about four years now, and yet still seem to consider myself a bit of a rookie. I feel I can relate to Gideon as I've certainly experienced thoughts of doubt, fear, and a nagging notion that maybe I'm not doing enough or should have done something different. I suppose most people can identify with Gideon at some level or another.

I've found that some of the calls we respond to can be pretty intense, especially if all I focus on are the circumstances. Auto accidents, suicides, infants that pass, all can be extremely painful not only for the family, but for the first responders and the Chaplains as well. The temptation for me when I first began serving was to focus on the why and how this has happened, and how in the world am I going to make a difference under these circumstances? After all, I didn't have much (or zero) experience in this; prior to my chaplaincy training, I didn't have any specialized knowledge or training. Maybe I really shouldn't be doing this in the first place. Must be some kind of mistake, right?

I suppose I should have learned by now that God doesn't really consider our own skill and abilities or specialized knowledge when it comes to His will in our lives. There have been many times over the last few decades when it seemed that all around was about to come crashing down; and yet now as I look back I wonder what the heck I was so worried about. I sometimes liken my own experience to that of Moses walking through the Red Sea with walls of water on both sides, literally walking through and in the midst of a miracle. Had it been me, I would have had to fight the temptation to be afraid of drowning.

Over time I've learned that it really isn't about me, or the circumstances. It's really about Him and the people on the scene. The more I rely on my own skill and knowledge, the less effective I am. I've come to understand I can be a mighty man of valor, but it has nothing to do with me. Just as the Lord was speaking to Gideon and replied with "Surely I will be with you..." He has given me this promise as well, to never leave me or forsake me.

They say that Chaplaincy is a ministry of presence. Honestly, I find this very encouraging. Basically it means that the ministry is not about me, my skill, knowledge or talents. It's about bringing the calming presence of the Lord to what sometimes is a very dark and chaotic scene.

It's still tempting for me to consider the circumstances and to try solve problems with words or wisdom. But I've learned that sometimes being quiet, listening and simply understanding can be a better approach. I'm reminded of the words of the prophet Zechariah as God spoke through him to Zerubbabel regarding the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

Though I'm certainly far from perfect I have discovered, mostly through trial and error, that I am capable of learning and growing in this ministry. I've become less inclined to be in a hurry and to try to fill the air with words. I just try to slow down, pay attention, understand and respond in a respectful and loving way that hopefully honors the Lord.

I'm so thankful to the County-Wide Chaplaincy team as they are men and women of God and they have been awesome mentors. I'm grateful for our first responders as I've been so blessed by seeing them work hard to serve our community. I'm also very thankful that we serve a loving God, who desires us to live out our potential and who leads us and sees the mighty person of valor in all of us, even when we don't.

Rob Pool

**There is a new mailing address for County-Wide Chaplaincy. We will still be checking the old mailing address for a while, but please update your records with our new address. We are so thankful for all the years Northside Baptist, now The Gathering Place, has given us sorting the mail and making the deposits. This new address will simplify the process as it will now go directly to their new location.**

***2500 NE 78<sup>th</sup> St. Vancouver, WA 98665***

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