

# COMMAND

Christian perspectives on life in the military

FALL 2020 Vol. 69 No. 2

COVER STORY

## WHO AM I?

*Understanding the characteristics of our new nature is an ongoing process in living a life that reveals Jesus to the world. 6*



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# COMMAND

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COMMAND strives to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in the U.S. Armed Forces by informing readers about His work through OCF to fulfill its mission "to engage military leaders in biblical fellowship and growth to equip them for Christlike service at the intersection of faith, family, and profession."



## IDENTITY AND UNITY IN CHRIST



**SCOTT FISHER**

Executive  
Director

**W**ho are you? Seems like a simple question. You may answer with what you do: I'm a...Marine, lieutenant or infantryman (or fill in your service, rank or specialty). Or you may answer with your citizenship, denomination, ethnicity, educational background, socioeconomic status or political party.

Why does it matter how we answer this question? Because our answer provides important insight into how we view ourselves at our core and what we believe to be our true identity. While the above categories may describe us to some degree, they do not define us.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1, Paul says, "This is how one should regard us, *as servants of Christ* and stewards of the mysteries of God" (emphasis added). In addition to being servants, Galatians 3:26-28 says, "...for in Christ Jesus you are all *sons of God*, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for *you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (emphasis added). Our identity must always be rooted in Christ alone!

While serving on active duty, it was clear to me that I was not a fighter pilot who happened to be a Christian but rather a Christian the Lord placed in the fighter pilot community for His purposes, His glory, and His timing, not my own.

Candidly, I had more of a struggle after retiring last year in remembering my identity was not in the uniform I had worn for three decades. The day after I retired, the Air Force moved on. It is one of the strengths of our military, and it will do the same to you the day after you hang up your uniform. I, on the other hand, had a more difficult time moving on.

Was I somehow less than my fellow service members who were promoted and continued to serve in uniform? Theologically, I knew the answer was no, but internally I struggled with comparison. Like Peter, I asked, "Lord,

what about this man?" and heard Jesus reply, "What is that to you? You follow me!" (John 21:21).

Like pilots battling the sensation of spatial disorientation and fighting to reorient their feelings to their instruments, I had to take my feelings and thoughts captive to the Word of God. It was neither easy nor a single action, but God graciously continued to remind me that my identity had not changed. Man's appraisal of me was immaterial, even my appraisal of myself. I was, and am, still a servant of Christ and son of the King of Kings. Nothing more and nothing less.

The earlier passage from Galatians speaks not only to our identity in Christ, but also to our unity in Christ. Paul declared that the walls the world uses to separate "us" from "them" crumble in Christ. One look at the media shows us the world is still seeking to divide us today.

So here is another question: If you are honest, when you think of us and them, who do you see as "them"? Think of two or three groups, even name them. It could be based upon someone speaking, thinking or dressing differently than you, what they wear on their shoulder or sleeve, who they vote for, what kind of music they listen to or what they look like. Are they from another service, another battalion, another church, another nation, another part of town?

If we neglect history, we may think intense divisions are a modern phenomenon, but the Scriptures clearly prove otherwise. They also teach us these divisions are not ultimately about flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), and they reveal the only solution to breaking down these divisions: "But now in Christ Jesus you

who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility" (Ephesians 2:13-16).

What unites us is far greater than what divides us: We are all made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), we have all sinned (Romans 3:23), and yet Christ died for all (2 Corinthians 5:15). We are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28) and Christ calls us all to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) and to be His witnesses to all peoples near and far (Acts 1:8).

We are one in Christ and Christ is above all (Ephesians 1:22). God is so much bigger than you and I. God has reconciled us to Himself and to one another through His death on the cross, and He entrusts us with His message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19). We should remember the words of Colonel Dick Toliver, USAF (Ret.), a second-generation Tuskegee Airman protégé and F-4 pilot in Vietnam: "Until we get in a right relationship with the Lord, we will never be able to be in a right relationship with one another."

Revelation 7 powerfully proclaims one day we will gather with a great multitude from all tribes, peoples, and tongues and together bow down before the Lord.

Therefore, my final question to you is this: In addition to praying His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, are you willing by His grace to engage in His mission of reconciliation and demonstrate His unconditional love not just to us, but to "them"? **Start where you are and start today.** 📖





COVER STORY

# “WHO AM I?”

This question is foundational for all believers, because when we are saved by Jesus, we become a new person. Understanding the characteristics of our new nature is an ongoing process in living a life that reveals Jesus to the world. The following stories are not just accounts of people who endured the process of rediscovering their identity in Christ, but they are also stories of a heavenly Father who loves his children enough to show them a far more abundant life.

BY JOSHUA SCHUMACHER, COMMUNICATIONS INTERN





MAJ Lynda Johnson, USA (Ret.)

## LYNDA'S STORY

LYNDA JOHNSON DOESN'T LOOK like the typical U.S. military officer. The retired Army major describes herself as a 4'10" woman, mom, minority, and someone who is "comfortable not having any aspirations to become a general. Retiring was no big deal. Just another day."

Johnson didn't find her identity in career success or in a military uniform. Instead, she identified herself with a beloved hobby: running.

"I didn't run marathon races or anything," Johnson said. "Running was a respectable excuse to not join in team sports. It was a place safe from unmet expectations, miscommunications, and callous rejections. Being a 'runner' made me, by default, better than the non-runners, and at minimum potentially useful according to the Army standard."

At her retirement physical, however, she learned that she had to stop running because of a degenerative disc disease, flat feet, and arthritis in her left knee. With no surgery or medication options available, Johnson had no choice but to quit.

"I was devastated," Johnson said. "How would I stay in shape? What would I do for recreation? I was convinced I was a 'runner' for so long! It was my default answer when people would ask what I did for fun."

This begs the question: Who are you? In other words, what is your identity?

As Christians, we often officially identify ourselves as followers of Christ. However, our identities are defined by any number of things—from military careers to being the hardest worker in the room, the most effective leader, or the fittest person in the unit.

While these things aren't inherently bad, allowing them to define us is dangerous. "The fact is, we have several identities in life. They all work together to help us answer the question 'Who am I?' They can also overpower or twist our spiritual identity," CH(LTC) Fred Robinson, USA (Ret.) explains. When this occurs, believers often find themselves in a "spiritual identity crisis," as Robinson puts it.

"The world has many tempting sources of identity other than Scripture," he says. "Some can deceptively last a lifetime. Most however, eventually lose their ability to help us find positive meaning in life."

While Johnson enjoyed running, Christ had different plans for her priorities. "God wanted me to focus on Him and who I was in Him," Johnson said. "He wanted me to literally stop running for my own peace and gain, and to spiritually start running the race He specifically set just for me."

Johnson has since replaced running with hiking. Still, her identity isn't caught up in it. God could remove that, too, and she says she'd be fine.

"What we do changes, and should change, but who we do it for should never change," Johnson said. "I have to focus on remembering that my full value is not determined by a job, an accomplishment, or a person's affirmation. I have to intentionally respond with faith in who I am in Christ."



## JIM'S STORY

"I HAD NO PLANS THAT DIDN'T involve retiring after at least 20 years. I had no fallback." That was his response when LTC Jim Harbridge, USA (Ret.), missed a promotion despite good reports on his performance.

Harbridge said he placed his identity in career success as a young major. After graduating from the Command and General Staff College, he found himself serving as both an infantry S3 and XO at the same time during his two-year Key and Developmental (KD) course. While challenging and rewarding, he found himself very internally focused.

After leaving that two-year program, he headed up a new organization, where, for the first few months, he was the only field grade officer. "I got to be king of the castle, which was great, but it was also very ego-building," Harbridge said. "I was very internally focused... the Army was my idol. My identity came to be what I was doing in my career."

Christ re-centered his life "traumatically," to use Harbridge's word.

"I went to this job that generally indicates that you're on the road, you've been successful in the first two or three years, and you're on the road," Harbridge said. "But I was not selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel on time."

Missing the promotion to lieutenant colonel led to a few weeks of crisis in

Harbridge's life.

"I didn't sleep at night," Harbridge said. "I was a history major in college, then an infantry officer. My whole plan was to stay in the Army as long as I could."

However, at around 3:35 one morning, Harbridge's life turned around once more. "It's the only time God has ever spoken directly to me, He said 'it is enough.' That's a pretty clear message. I wish He spoke that clearly a lot."

That moment released the anxiety and stress in Harbridge and helped him realize what his identity was, and why the Army wasn't necessarily what God wanted, although it was what Harbridge wanted.

"We probably give ourselves more credit for having our identity in Christ than we really have," CH(COL) Marc Gauthier, USA (Ret.) says. "I almost look at it as if you look at a pie chart. And most Christ followers have some slice of the pie, hopefully a large slice, based on their identity in Christ. And it's very likely there are other slices that are there. And the danger is when those other slices continue to increase in size. So I think sometimes God takes us through stages, or seasons of life, where he shows us where our identity really is. And that kind of blows us away."

On his last look, Harbridge received the promotion to lieutenant colonel. He could still retire after 20 years as he'd planned. However, the delayed promotion allowed Harbridge to retire at Fort Leavenworth, where he ended up teaching for the CGSC and growing more involved in the OCF ministry there. He currently serves as the OCF Field Staff rep at Leavenworth.

However, just because a military career is over doesn't mean the identity crises are over as well. Gauthier draws an analogy to when he was at his first summer camp at around the age of nine



LTC Jim Harbridge, USA (Ret.)



years old. At the camp, all the young boys would play a sort of water-rugby game with a watermelon greased in Vaseline. Every time one of the boys wrapped his arms around it, the watermelon would slip out of his grasp.

Our identity can be just as elusive: when we think we've got our identity in the right spot, we'll often find that it has slipped out of our grasp. Keeping our identity in Christ is a matter of personal discipline.

Nevertheless, we cannot provide this discipline for ourselves. "It's not a matter of your own personal willpower and just gritting your teeth," Gauthier says. "Rather, it requires a complete dependence upon God to help us find our identity in Christ."

Harbridge still struggles with placing his identity in Christ. Instead of placing his identity in the Army, Harbridge now feels the urge to place his identity in being "the Leavenworth OCF guy." Part of this is personality, but part of it is also spiritual warfare, according to Harbridge.

"The ways the Enemy attacks me are either, 'Hey, you're not good enough, I guess you're going to fail and you're going to let everybody down and, you know, people are going to know you're fraud.' Or 'Man, you are killing it! Yeah, OCF is really lucky to have you. Their whole Fellowship would probably collapse if you ever left'—which is nonsense. But, yeah, it's a struggle."

"Many of us allow lies to seep in about our identity," Gauthier says. "You know, 'you're not enough,' 'you're a failure,' 'to be acceptable, you have to produce this much, or achieve this level of success or, you know, accumulate this amount of possessions.' And they're lies that will only distract us and inhibit our ability to develop our identity in Christ."

## DEAN'S STORY

VADM WILLIAM DEAN LEE, USCG (Ret.) staked his identity in his rank and professional success throughout his career in the Coast Guard.

"When I was a younger man, I never paid much attention to the Ten Commandments, especially the first one: 'You shall have no other gods before Me,'" Lee said. "I felt pretty safe on this one. After all, I didn't possess any wooden statues, plastic Buddhas, or golden calves. There was nothing sitting on my mantel that I prayed to."

His perception of idolatry—and his own life—changed after his retirement, however.

"I recently read a book entitled *Idols of the Heart* by Elyse Fitzpatrick, and I was convicted on several levels," Lee said. "The gist of her message is centered around what she describes as 'one of the most chilling commands' in all of Scripture."

This command is articulated in Matthew 22:34-40, where the Pharisees confront Jesus, asking Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" His response is that "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment."



VADM Dean Lee, USCG (Ret.)

For Lee, this scene begged the question: Do I love the Lord with all my heart, soul, and mind? Is Christ the center of my identity, or is something else?

"[I] Never knew how guilty I was until I struggled with the original question: 'Where was your identity, Dean? Was it Christ-centered, or was it Dean-centered? Better yet, where is it now?'" Lee said. "Truth is, my idols were there

all along, always in plain view, and I never gave them a second thought. They were collar devices denoting my rank; they were medals, and they were gold uniform insignia signifying that I had acquired the ultimate god pursued by all military officers—that of command."

Lee achieved success, becoming a flag officer of nine ranks and seven commands. However, the signifiers of those



accomplishments are “now collecting dust in a wooden shadow box given to me by my staff on retirement day. Contained therein, sad to say, is my former identity.”

Chaplain Robinson says many believers face this temptation to place their identity in their career.

“My experience is that believers in the military, especially those not grounded in their spiritual identity, are deceived by the power of the professional identity found in the military,” Robinson says. “If they are successful with promotions and key positions, they can be fooled into thinking that these things have pleased God as well, and their spiritual life is a success.”

“I made it to admiral, checked the box, but ultimately failed,” Lee said. “I couldn’t even keep the first commandment. I now recognize the futility of chasing the idol of success, only to catch it and put it in a box. That god is dead, never to be resurrected. I am ashamed for chasing it, but forever grateful for the lesson learned.”

As he approaches 66 years of age, Lee feels like he understands the struggle of identity better. He still feels the temptation to stake his identity in having a nice patio, green lawn, and big house in a pleasant neighborhood. Yet now he’s more aware of the problem, as well as the solution.

“There is Jesus,” he explains. “To that end, we can be grateful for the grace of the one true God—who sent His only begotten son that we might live—despite ourselves.”



MAJ Alysa Angel, USA

## ALY'S STORY

“I’M SINGLE AND CONTENT,” said MAJ Aly Angel, USA, regarding her marital status.

However, Angel will admit that wasn’t always the case. Responding to pressure from fellow Christians, she read books on marriage, listened to sermons on dating, journaled to and prayed for her future husband, and even fasted for God to send him to her.

“It left me exhausted,” she said.

Ultimately, Angel said for a time she placed her identity in the goal of getting married.

One of her friends even gave her a 50% off coupon code for a three-month membership to a Christian dating website. “It did not work well,” she explained. “Trying to be everything for everyone does not work.”

Chaplain Gauthier says while we can benefit from the wisdom and the input of others, “ultimately, does it align with God’s invitation? And so, you know, trying to live up to others’ expectations can tie you in a knot.”

Nonetheless, Angel still found herself drenched in a marriage-based narrative by the Church. “The church placed a large emphasis on being a wife and mother as a high calling,” Angel said. “Married women were considered blessed, single women were treated like a disease that needed to be healed. One sermon I listened to on Christian radio said single women weren’t ‘whole’ because marriage completes them.”

When she attended Bible studies, Angel faced the question, “Have you found anyone yet?” When she answered, “No,” she only received more advice and exhortation to pray and try harder “because I was missing out,” she said.



"If we're trying to look at identity, we've always got to go back to Scripture as the controlling, grounding documents, and God's Spirit as it stirs us up as we read it," Gauthier says.

Angel did exactly that: she returned herself to the truth of Scripture. She also got rid of her television and social media, stopped spending money on marriage books, and asked people to stop praying for her to get a husband. "I quieted the noise around me so I could hear God's truth. The marriage and motherhood idol had to die," she said.

"When we're struggling with identity, we've got to create the white space inside our minds, our hearts, our souls to ask the Lord, 'Do I have this right?'" Gauthier says. "What's God's still small voice saying?"

Gauthier cautions that a desire to get married and have children certainly isn't negative, but it must be subordinate to our desire for God: "Marriage and motherhood certainly can become an idol, but it doesn't have to be if that desire is subordinate to the desire for God and to live in fellowship with Him."

Angel says she turns to truths in Scripture that tell her she is "fearfully and wonderfully made. God's Word tells me I am a child of God regardless of my marital status."

Gauthier emphasizes that this must remain at the core of our identity—the fact that Scripture tells us we are children of God, and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. This is crucial in the struggle "to combat the lies that [say], you know, 'You have to have God, plus this thing or this status.'"

Angel no longer finds her identity in the desire to get married. Instead, she finds her identity in being a child of God. "When others ask me why I'm not married yet, I respond with laughter and share about God's love for His children."

## GRANT'S STORY

LT GRANT JOHNSON, USN, wrapped his identity around his aspirations to become a Naval jet pilot, calling it his "little kid dream that I took to college and then on into flight school with me."

"To fly pointy nose aircraft, to be in the fight, take off and land on the carrier—that is what excited me going into this business."

This became his main identity, and it wasn't long before warning signs emerged. Johnson operated in the mentality that he needed to always push forward, try to outperform everyone, and remain aloof from the little distractions of life.

"I was a complete jerk at times," Johnson said. "I've had buddies tell me that."

He had friends and peers in OCF and another local ministry associated with Tun Tavern Fellowship asking him why he cared so much about becoming a jet pilot. "I never really had a good answer for that," Johnson said. "I mean I guess my answer was probably, 'This is who I am, you know?...Why are you questioning me about something that I think is who I am?' And I wasn't really seeing it in the loving light that they were actually saying it from."

Everything changed when he received his primary fixed-wing performance

score. He needed a 50 to move on to flying jets. He scored a 49.5.

"I can distinctly remember sitting there and the civilian guy that calculated your score at the end of the day comes up to me and, like he knew—those guys know what's what," Johnson said. "So, he comes up to me, and very quietly whispered in my ear, 'Hey man you got a 49.5.' And I'm just sitting there just like...My dream, or what I defined as my reality, had just been crushed."

This came after his on-wing instructor had reassured him that he was doing fine and that he had nothing to worry about. "This guy who's seeing behind the curtain, he didn't even have any control over it and so, obviously that was no man's doing, you know?" Johnson said. "That's

one of those few times in my life where I can clearly see God's hand."

Nonetheless, Johnson struggled with the adjustment. It wasn't until after receiving his first duty assignment as a helicopter pilot that he started to realize he'd incorrectly placed his identity. He also realized something else—his first helicopter ride was an unforgettable experience he calls "wholly unique."

"I enjoyed it more than any other flying I'd been doing before that," Johnson said. "So that was like one of those knocks from God, like, 'Hey, I put you there for a reason, and you're going to enjoy it.'"

"We've got these amazing components of our identity that we can rest in," Gauthier explains. "I mean, 'Man,



LT Grant Johnson, USN



I'm Abba's son, how cool is that? And my Abba is the creator of Heaven and Earth."

The same logic works the other way, however. Citing Jonah 2:8 ("Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love"), Gauthier explains that whenever we stake our identity in something that isn't Christ, our spiritual growth falters, and we find ourselves serving an unfulfilling idol.

Robinson also cautioned if our identity is coming from people, "we will ride a rollercoaster of ups and downs depending on the feedback we face. When it comes from God, we find peace, assurance, motivation to give and serve, and a shield of faith to protect us from the flaming arrow lies of Satan."

## RICO'S STORY

CAPT RICO LANE, USAF, FOUND HIS identity in his desire to succeed. "I grew up without a father, so I always looked to things around me for my identity. Actors, rappers, and mainly my accomplishments and talents," Lane said.

He cultivated a persona based on a mixture of comedian Martin Lawrence's witty personality and the toughness of the rapper DMX.

"I would also like to make my mom

proud, so when I would do good at football, school, or anything that I took the time to do, I would find my identity in my success," Lane said. "This traveled with me in the Air Force, and if I wasn't successful then I felt like there was a problem with me, so I worked extra hard to ensure I had a successful career. My identity was completely wrapped up into the fact that I was an airman, and it got worse when I transitioned from enlisted to commissioned officer."

Robinson says a person's family unit—whether we have parents or not—often has the strongest influence over us in terms of identity.

"Our parents...are the first to treat us like we are loved, nurtured, cared for, worth time and effort, or the many ways these can be withheld," he says. "Therefore, our childhood, especially our father, forms the roots of our spiritual identity and concept of God. Once becoming a Christian, we hopefully can learn how God, our 'Abba Father,' is a perfect parent, and can fill all the gaps our parents may have left."

God ultimately turned Lane's focus on accomplishing his goals against him. He did this through the motivational speaker Eric Thomas. Despite his history of consistently working out, Lane struggled with losing inches in his waist—especially in his 30s. It didn't help that waist measurement comprised a significant portion of the Air Force fitness test. Lane first began applying Thomas's teachings to losing inches on his waist.

"After about four months I lost like 30 pounds and my waist was at a 34," Lane said. "I couldn't believe it, but I was like, 'This guy knows what he is talking about.'"

This respect for Thomas's teaching eventually led to an additional respect for his Christian faith. "God knew I would not listen to anyone who tried to preach



Capt Rico Lane, USAF

to me," Lane said. "So, he allowed what Eric Thomas was teaching to work, then made me realize Eric Thomas believes in biblical principles. This is what led me back to God."

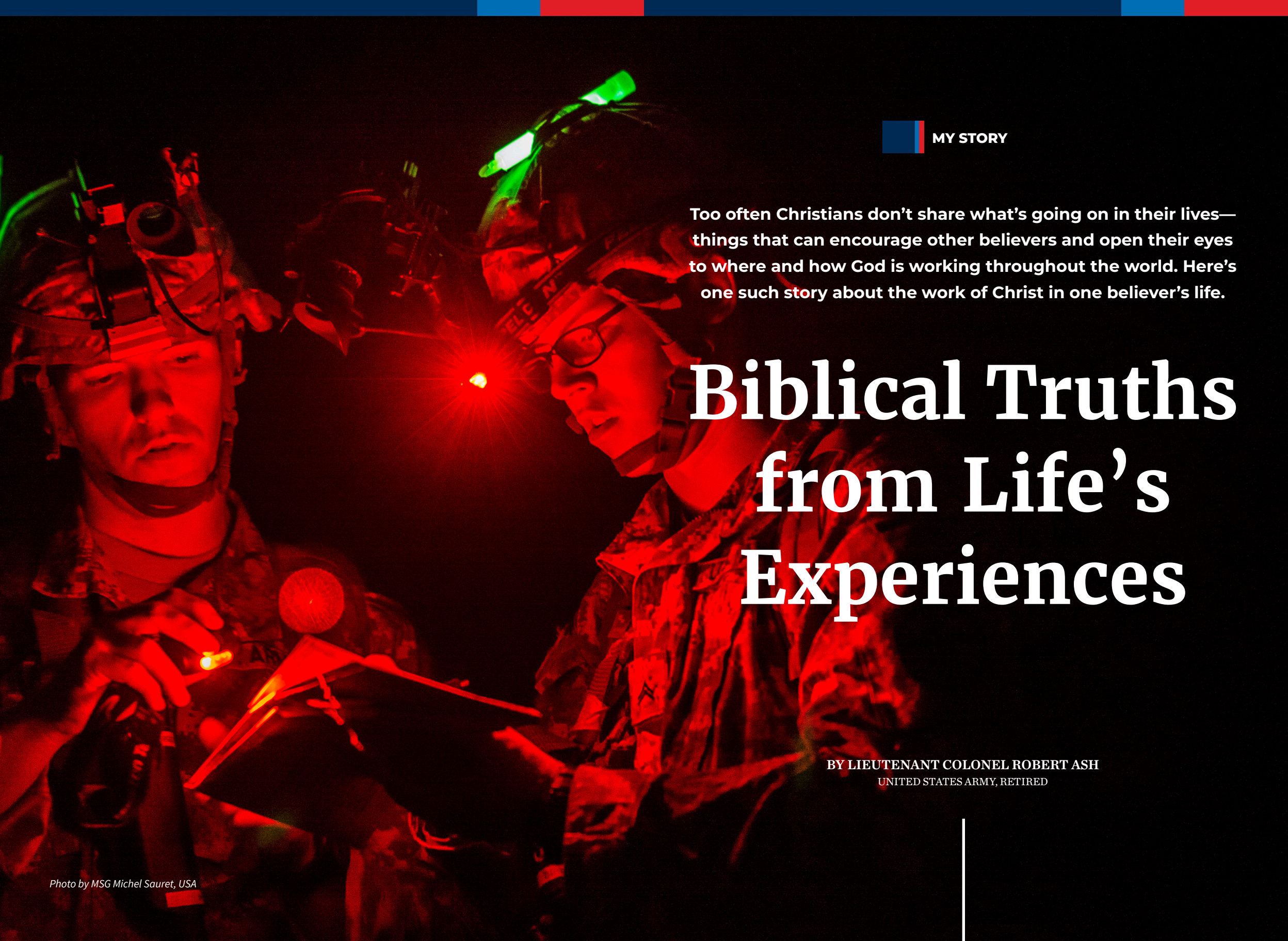
While transforming into a fledgling believer, however, Lane found himself in a difficult disagreement with his commander. "During this incident God showed me that I put my trust in my Air Force career and not Him," Lane said. "He showed me that all my talents and career success were a gift from Him and

without Him it can all be taken away."

After prayer and advice, Lane summoned the courage to address the issue with his commander. This ultimately led to their reconciliation. On his next performance review, that commander ranked Lane as his top CGO (company grade officer).

This incident taught Lane where to place his trust: not in the Air Force, but in Christ. "God will always be there for me," Lane said. "Now I know I am a Christian before I am anything else." 🙏





MY STORY

Too often Christians don't share what's going on in their lives—things that can encourage other believers and open their eyes to where and how God is working throughout the world. Here's one such story about the work of Christ in one believer's life.

# Biblical Truths from Life's Experiences

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT ASH  
UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED



# In 1972,

I graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and commissioned as an armor second lieutenant. My first assignment, following the Officer Basic Course at Fort Knox, Ky., was as an armored cavalry platoon leader in Troop C, 4th Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 2d Infantry Division, in the Republic of Korea.

Prior to deploying to Korea, I made the obligatory trek to the U.S. Cavalry Store in Radcliff, KY., to stock up on all the things that I was told a budding cavalry officer would need: all-weather plastic map case? Check. Grease pencils of various colors? Check. Flashlight with assorted filters? Check. Tanker's boots? Check. Cavalry brass? Check. Watch with luminous dial? Check. Camouflage cover for watch with luminous dial? Check. Many and sundry other junior officer necessities? Check, check, and check.

Having stocked up on everything a young cavalry officer could conceivably need, I felt ready to take on the world! I could hardly wait to get a platoon.

Once I arrived in Korea, I was assigned as the platoon leader of third platoon in "Charlie Troop." My platoon was awesome—inspiring even. It consisted of four gun jeeps for my scout section (plus a gun jeep for me as platoon leader), two Sheridans for my light armored section, one armored personnel carrier (APC) for my infantry squad, and one mortar carrier for my 4.2-inch mortar squad.

*I had my very own combined arms team! I could hardly wait to take my guys to the field.*

A couple weeks or so after I became platoon leader, the entire squadron went to the field for a week's tactical maneuver training. Charlie Troop was responsible for screening the right half of the division front. Charlie Troop's three-line platoons were deployed with first platoon on the left, second platoon

in the center, and third platoon on the right. Our mission was to seek out the enemy and report their positions and deployments to the troop command post.

I was so proud of my men. All day we carefully and covertly sought out the enemy, and I meticulously noted and reported the strength, activities, and locations of the opposing enemy force. I recorded and updated friendly force positions in black on my map case and enemy positions in red, grateful I had thought to stock up on everything I needed.

As I monitored the troop's radio net that first day, I noted that my platoon seemed to be finding and reporting considerably more than the other two platoons. As it should be, I thought!

Just after dark that first day, the troop commander put out a radio call for all platoon leaders to rally to his location to receive the updated operations order for that night and the following day. Because we were observing tactical sound and light discipline, my trip to meet the troop commander and other platoon leaders was especially slow; my driver had to drive in pitch black using only the jeep's blackout lights.

Since white light is visible at great distances at night, we platoon leaders—all inexperienced second lieutenants—had been reminded numerous times that we should only use red lenses on our flashlights.

Since we had the farthest to travel, my driver and I were the last to arrive at the troop commander's location. As soon as I had dismounted my jeep, the troop commander immediately informed me he was going to brief the next day's plan using my map case.

Yes! I knew for sure I had not missed anything that had transpired that day, and I felt honored that the troop commander had chosen to use my map case.

I stepped forward and quickly spread my map case on the hood of the troop commander's jeep—and my heart stopped! I could hardly breathe. Every last thing I had recorded that day regarding the enemy

situation was gone! I could almost see my budding career passing before my eyes. I knew my commander was going to jump all over me in front of everybody.

Before anyone could say a word to me, I brushed my hand over the map case where the enemy data should have been, and I could feel the grease marks. An instant later, though it seemed much longer to me, the first sergeant directed a green-lensed flashlight at my map case. The red marks literally jumped off the map case. All the marks that hadn't been visible an instant before were clearly there. It dawned on me then: passing light through the red lens had "covered" the red marks and blotted them from sight.

Every time I think about it, it reminds me of Isaiah 1:18: "...though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." I am reminded that when God the Father looks upon those of us who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (as the old hymn goes), He looks at us through the shed blood of Jesus.

Just as the red markings on my map case were blotted out when I looked at them

through the red light of my red-lensed flashlight, my sins of scarlet and crimson are blotted out when God looks at me through the shed Blood of His beloved Son, my Savior.

Amazing! I still get chills when I remember that moment. It's as fresh to me today as it was then. I am astounded by the truths God has and continues to teach me through the simple circumstances of life. God converted the panic I felt during that moment in Korea from those "missing" red markings on the map into a life's lesson that I share with others as one of the "parables" of my life God has given to me.

What parables has God given to you through the simple circumstances of your life that you can share with others? Too often Christians do

not share with others what God is teaching them and doing in their lives, things that can encourage other believers and make them sensitive to God's moving in the world—and even in their own lives.

Jesus is alive. He is dealing with us today. Share your story today. Remember Hebrews 3:13—"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." ❏

**"I am  
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## About Skip

Skip, a longtime OCF member who currently serves as legal advisor to the OCF Council, is a Senior Counsel at the American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ), where he heads the ACLJ's national security practice. He is a 1972 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and served 22 years on active duty, including as NATO desk officer in the War Plans division of the Army Staff and as a military strategist for the Secretary of Defense in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Plans in the Pentagon.





Leavenworth OCF photo

### Leavenworth OCF

(above) Fort Leavenworth's Pre-Command Course (PCC) is a monthly course where future battalion and brigade level commanders and command sergeant majors come to be trained. OCF members Bob and Pam Meier faithfully run the PCC Command Team Prayer Breakfast in conjunction with the Combined Arms Center chaplain. Jim Harbridge, OCF Field Staff rep at Leavenworth, calls the breakfast time of prayer and meaningful fellowship "a great event that involves PCC students, faculty, and volunteers."

### USMA

(opposite, top) USMA OCF's ministry season kickoff event on West Point's Trophy Point earlier this summer brought together over 300 cadets who celebrated just being able to gather together—all while meeting COVID-19 social distancing restrictions—to praise God and enjoy Chick-Fil-A meals.



USMA OCF photo



Photo by Rob Allen

### Clemson ROTC OCF

(left) While avoiding large gatherings is the norm right now, reports Rob Allen (left), leader of Clemson ROTC OCF, "we have been connecting with cadets around outdoor activities." The recreational activities have included whitewater kayaking on the Chattooga and waterskiing. "It is good to have the cadets back in town!"





Photo by Grace McLean

### Future leaders

OCF small group gatherings are often a mix of many generations in a military community coming together for fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ. These babies were born to parents who attend an OCF group in the Colorado Springs, CO, area. Meet this future generation of leaders (l-r): Madison, Sophia and Rebecca (twins), Maddie, Santiago, Natalie, Joy, Gabriel, and Joseph.

### USAFA OCF

Ministry ramped up mid-summer at USAFA OCF both virtually and in person with cadets as the team navigated through the multiple opportunities to adapt and overcome because of COVID-19 restrictions while also honoring the USAFA, Federal, State and local guidance for meeting. But with both the cadets and ministry team members “craving fellowship and the human element,” and to “be in the Word,” USAFA OCF Associate Field Staff rep PK Carlton reports that “in many ways, this means we are going back to the ministry model I knew as a cadet when the

Woodruffs and Stokkas hosted Saturday night studies and these were the main OCF event for the week.”

Ministry team leaders Paul and Cindy VanderWeide are going retro by using Saturday nights to teach cadets other skills—like cooking! This will get all four classes off base on a religious accommodation pass, plus allow fellowship and cross-class engagement that all four classes need to build their ministry skills across rank and age groups.

The girls’ nights and guys’ studies continue and hit their intended target. “The new women in the class of 2024 are enjoying the



Spring Canyon photo

### OCF leaders

Ministry is made possible by leaders, donors, volunteers, and friends of the ministry who steward their God-given gifts of time, talents, and treasures for God’s kingdom purposes. For OCF’s conference center directors, Spring Canyon’s Kim Hawthorne (far right), with right-hand man Todd Plotner next to him, and Paul Robyn (far left), with his right-hand man John Hoyman next to him, as well as OCF Director of Field Operations, Colin Wooten (center), their collaborative co-laboring for Christ is a win-win.

fellowship with other women; the guys are enjoying the depth of a men-only study,” said PK. “Our Monday night studies are starting well despite virtual-only meetings, with several classes continuing to see numbers of 15-20 cadets each night—a tremendous blessing considering most of their classes are virtual as well and they spend all day in front of their computer for class time.

“The overall number is about half to two-thirds of what we normally see, but these are reasonable numbers given more time in front of a computer for Bible study.”

### Pensacola OCF

One of the staff members for The Navigators in Pensacola, Florida, Bernie Vanosdall, received some point of contact information for the University of West Florida Army and Air Force ROTC units from Roy Garren, who oversees ROTC for the Navs. Bernie and Pensacola OCF Field Staff rep Chet Arnold then met to pray and discuss reaching out to the ROTC units.

Both men look forward to seeing what God will do through them in the lives of “some wannabe doggies and zoomies!”



### USMA OCF

More than 350 cadets and 50 staff and faculty members took part in USMA OCF's kickoff event for the ministry season earlier this summer at the scenic Trophy Point at West Point, NY. The program was simple and focused: to worship God, demonstrate the love of Christ throughout the Corps, and just celebrate that they could meet together.

The cadet staff introduced themselves and the vision for the year, and USMA OCF Field Staff rep couple Steve and Angela Kreh introduced their family. Cadet Zach Ellis, the club cadet-in-charge, worked with club officer-in-charge, MAJ Christina Fenstermaker, USA, to establish all the COVID risk mitigation requirements in order to separate the group into smaller cohorts and serve food safely.

Angela Kreh drove to the Chick-fil-A store to pick up the pre-packaged boxes. The Chick-fil-A staff from New Jersey went out of their way to deliver fresh, hot chicken later that night, and also helped the ministry team pack the boxes for the cadets.

"It was a spectacular evening to have the event," said Steve Kreh. "The cadets wanted to do this at the very beginning of this unusual academic year and to demonstrate that the light of Jesus cannot be contained."

### EXSEL program

The newest EXSEL class of interns at White Sulphur Springs started their year of experiences, service, and leadership earlier this summer. Activities such as Scripture study and devotionals, vocational training, serving guests, and working alongside the conference center's regular team of volunteers (a.k.a. "The Vols") have all served to help orient the interns toward becoming a vital part of the ongoing ministry at WSS.

"We've seen the Lord use some of the volunteer weeks to forge friendships and help

our interns discover their calling post-EXSEL," said Jim Marrs, Director of EXSEL. "We are grateful for the wisdom, experience, and expertise of these long-time friends of this ministry to repair, renovate, build, sew, clean, plant, and cultivate this beautiful place for God's glory."

### Council nomination period underway; voting starts in February

The nomination period to endorse candidates who will run on OCF Council's Class of 2024 ballot for the February 2021 election is now taking place through the end of November. OCF regular members (present/former officers, officer candidates, cadets and midshipmen) are eligible to participate in these Council activities.

For the nominations, each nominee must have an endorsement from at least three members. Endorsements can be submitted online. The OCF website will have comprehensive candidate information in preparation for the February 2021 election. Those elected to the Class of 2024 will serve a three-year term on the Council starting 1 June 2021.

For more information on the nominations and upcoming elections, contact [tori.mcdaniel@ocfusa.org](mailto:tori.mcdaniel@ocfusa.org) or call 800-424-1984.

### Send us your Ministry In Action photo

For consideration in COMMAND magazine or other OCF communications, send your high-resolution photo to Karen Fliedner: [karen.fliedner@ocfusa.org](mailto:karen.fliedner@ocfusa.org)

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEAVE A Legacy?

As Christ followers, we want our lives to make a difference for God's Kingdom, but what impact will we make as we pass our values, property, and other assets to the next generation?



DVIDS photo

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## SECOND LIEUTENANT CHIPU CHU

United States Air Force

### **Came to OCF:**

I joined OCF during my fourth-class year at the United States Air Force Academy. Several cadre members from my basic training flight were shepherds instrumental in introducing me to the Fellowship.

### **Why OCF:**

I actually started attending OCF gatherings before I became a follower of Christ. To this day, I am very thankful for the faithfulness of the many OCF members through whom Christ worked powerfully in reaching my softening heart. I have such fond memories of experiencing that unconditional Christlike love for the first time.

### **Why a military life:**

During high school, I had a strong desire to find a purposeful life and a strong sense of community. Little did I know then that I would not only find an Air Force family and identity, but that I would more importantly inherit an eternal purpose in Jesus and be a co-heir in His Kingdom! Even though I am a new officer, I have already tasted the sweetness of God's unique calling to serve in military ministry.

### **What's on your bucket list:**

I would love to walk in Jesus' shoes through Israel.

### **Best advice given you:**

"Your ministry is an overflow of your personal walk with God." —Lt Col Steve Wade, USAF (Ret.)

### **Most memorable places visited:**

Taiwan

### **The ah-ha moment of your identity in Christ:**

Understanding the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus (Philippians 3:8). Although we will spend our entire lives learning about God, finally recognizing that there is no greater journey in life was certainly the ah-ha moment.

### **Life Bible verse:**

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST,  
HE IS A NEW CREATION.





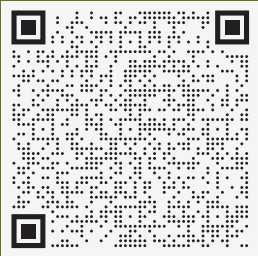
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