

COMMAND

Christian perspectives on life in the military

SPRING 2021 Vol. 70 No. 1

COVER STORY

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN MENTORING?

OCF is exploring new ways to integrate a culture of mentoring and community at every waypoint in one's military journey. 6



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“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”
— **Matthew 5:14**

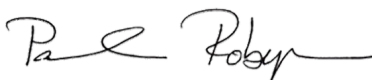
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In Hope,



Paul Robyn, LTC, USA (Ret.)
WSS Center Director

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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."



OVERCOMING FEAR



**SCOTT
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Throughout the Bible, the Lord says, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” It is not because we won’t have trouble. Indeed, God guarantees us the opposite. Yet, in the midst of anything you or I are going through, whether on the battlefield, in your unit, or at home within your own family, God offers us His peace that surpasses all understanding and reminds us that “for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

The Bible is clear that God’s people will be confronted with fear. The choice is not *whether* we will experience fear, but rather how we will deal with it. Fear, when not placed in the perspective of the truth revealed in Scripture, can cause us to be ineffective as leaders, having consequences not only for ourselves but also for others. To counter fear, we must intentionally and daily renew our mind with God’s Word (Romans 12:2).

Sometimes, the fear we must overcome is the fear of following God’s direction. That may sound odd, but we often know we have a choice and what the consequences of not following God’s direction could be. This fear does not pass until we choose to follow through in obedience.

Temptations to disobey are not new (1 Corinthians 10:13) and are often manifested by being afraid to be bold in our decisions in the face of potential ridicule from our comrades in arms.

When I arrived at my first operational duty station, my unit told me they were holding an event in my honor and were going to get me drunk. I calmly stated I would not get drunk because of my beliefs. Ultimately, they brought me before the unit and told me to down a 48-ounce glass of beer in a race against my colleagues—or wear it. As soon as we began, I poured the whole drink on my head.

My commander took me outside (dripping wet), cursed at me endlessly, and stated I would never make it as a fighter pilot. Not exactly what you want to hear from your first commander in your first weeks at your first unit.

“The choice is not *whether* we will experience fear, but rather how we will deal with it.”

The unit then took me to another location where there were half-dressed female dancers. I said I would wait outside for them. After more cursing, my commander said he would not make me drink this time. I replied I still would not go in because I did not think it would honor my wife (who was pregnant with our second child on the other side of the world), nor did I need the images in my head. My colleagues never forgot my actions that night. Some never befriended me, while others thanked me for demonstrating how to respectfully hold to what you believe.

Several of my friends went through almost identical events at their first units and by His grace chose to obey God rather than men. Later when we became commanders, we were able to influence the military communities where God placed us, so others did not have to make a false decision between professional excellence and blind acceptance of actions contrary to our beliefs.


So ask yourself:

- What is it that I truly fear today—an illness, an upcoming deployment, a promotion board, not being successful (however you define that), ridicule from those I lead or with whom I serve, a past sin, what God has next for me, or the consequences if I obey God today in what He is asking me?
- What is at the root of this fear?

- What does it reveal about my belief in God?
- What truth from God’s Word can help me overcome this fear?
- What has God led me through in the past that has prepared me for today?
- How can my OCF family help me, and will I let them?
- Where is God wanting to lead me?
- Where is He wanting to lead us?
- Will we allow ourselves to be paralyzed by fear, or step out in faith into obedience and the fullness of life He has prepared for us?

God’s admonition to Joshua more than three thousand years ago is the same to us today: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

We should not let the circumstances we see around us cause us to fear, nor should we use them as an excuse not to accomplish the ministry to which He has called us.

Paul, who suffered much for his faith, reminds us in 2 Timothy 1:7, “...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” and in Romans 8 that nothing can separate you from the love of God. You need not fear this world—you are more than conquerors through Christ who loves you! 



COVER STORY

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN MENTORING?

Photo by SDI Productions/Getty Images



Christian mentoring is a relationship that typically takes place within the context of God's Word and the Holy Spirit's direction as a younger believer pursuing spiritual maturity absorbs the experience of an older believer seeking to impart their wisdom and experience. OCF's new Mentoring Program is a fresh reminder that biblical community can be transformational at every waypoint in one's military journey.

BY JOSHUA SCHUMACHER, COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

SHORTLY AFTER HE

arrived at flight school in Pensacola, Fla., Rocky Ward's wife filed for divorce—a move he never saw coming.

"[It] kind of sent me for a tailspin, if you will," said Ward, a USCG lieutenant commander. "God used that to help me realize that I hadn't really been walking with the Lord."

Ward wanted to change that, so he attended a Tun Tavern Fellowship gathering in Pensacola, where Col Chet Arnold, USMC (Ret.), came to speak. Ward recalls that Arnold offered to meet with anyone who wanted to talk through questions about God or life.

So Ward took him up on the offer. In that initial meeting, he shared with Arnold what was going on in his life with one goal in mind: save his marriage. What ensued was a weekly mentoring relationship, with discussions about flight school, marriage, and God taking place over cups of coffee, bowls of soup, or sandwiches.

Ward and Arnold's mentoring relationship is an example of what OCF calls Christian mentoring, which is the trusting relationship between an often older, more spiritually mature believer and a younger believer, that focuses on fostering the spiritual maturity of both individuals. This relationship typically takes place within the context of God's Word and the Holy Spirit's direction as a younger believer pursuing spiritual maturity absorbs the experience of an older believer seeking to impart their wisdom and experience.

However, Ward and Arnold's weekly meetings at Starbucks and Panera appear to be the exception, not the norm, when it comes to mentoring among practicing Christians. According to the Barna Group, a market research firm

specializing in studying religious beliefs and behavior, as of 2015 only 17% of practicing Christians said they meet regularly with a spiritual mentor. That means that 83% of Christians either aren't imitating Arnold and helping out someone struggling through a difficult phase of life or aren't copying Ward and actively seeking wisdom and advice from an older and wiser believer.

It is this need—specifically as it appears within the Christian military community—that OCF has sought to address with the mentoring program it is developing. The intent is that this program will become a larger mainstay in the OCF ministry apparatus in the near future.

"OCF's new Mentoring Program is a fresh effort to remind ourselves that biblical community can be transformational at every waypoint in our military journey," says LTC Todd Plotner, USA (Ret.), Spring Canyon Conference Center's director of operations, who is involved with the team setting up the OCF Mentoring Program. "At the end of the day, our goal as a ministry is to help 'one another' grow in Christlikeness within our unique context as military and family members."

According to Plotner, the OCF Mentoring Program will focus on building relational connections among fellow officers that emphasize a mutual encouragement to be more like Christ. In addition to developing more helpful resources online for those seeking to start and develop mentoring relationships within the OCF community, Plotner says OCF plans to host several Christian Mentoring training



LCDR Rocky Ward, USCG



Photo by White Sulphur Springs

Participants at a recent OCF mentoring workshop at White Sulphur Springs discuss different tactics in Christian mentoring relationships.

programs at active-duty installations across the country and at its two conference centers throughout 2022.

A biblical basis for mentoring

LTC Ted Davis, USA (Ret.), who's also involved with the team setting up the OCF Mentoring Program, says Christians have two main resources they can utilize when they're trying to grow in wisdom and their ability to live out their faith practically—the Bible and the body of Christ.

“As a person grows, they can either go through, obviously, formal education in formal training such as on the job training—getting out there, doing it

themselves, learning through the school of hard knocks and so forth,” Davis explains. “But one way to learn not only knowledge, but some wisdom as well—in other words, wisdom being how to apply that knowledge—is by working with someone who's got great experience and who wants to share that knowledge.”

In other words: a mentor.

Davis says mentoring isn't new, and it's a tried-and-true formula for achieving spiritual growth. He explains that “mentoring” is just a contemporary term for a practice that has existed since biblical times.

“In the era of the Old Testament, New Testament time, someone is going to

learn from a rabbi—it included what we would now, in contemporary language, say is mentorship,” Davis explains. “We’re using a contemporary term to describe a pattern of behavior that we see in Scripture. We see evidence of mentoring-type relationships.”

But does the Bible explicitly command us to mentor others?

“We sometimes are resistant to mentoring because we think we’re called in the Bible to make disciples, where nowhere in the Bible does it say, ‘go and mentor,’” says LTC Jim Harbridge, USA (Ret.), the OCF Field Staff Rep at Leavenworth. “But inherent in discipling is also mentoring; they’re not different things and they’re not mutually exclusive.”

Davis adds that “we should only be doing it if there’s a biblical reason.”

“I think there’s one exhortation in the Scripture for an elder to provide wise counsel to the younger,” adding that, “there’s plenty of Scriptures throughout Proverbs and other places where we’re told to seek wisdom.”

CAPT James Baca, USNR, OCF Field Staff Rep at USNA, holds a different perspective. He points to Proverbs 27:17:

“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

“So is that mentoring or discipleship? What are we talking about here?” Baca asks. “Well, it can be both, and I think that verse is applicable to both.” He explains, “while I think there’s some overlap, I think that mentoring and discipling do work in tandem together, but they are distinct.”

Harbridge further elaborated the difference between mentoring and discipleship, saying that the difference lies in the focus of each. Discipling, he explains, is focused only on spiritual growth. Mentoring—in the secular sense—is focused only on professional development. Christian mentoring, at least as OCF defines it, is a blend of the two: a relationship that’s dedicated to crafting the mentor and mentee into more spiritually mature Christians who then apply that spiritual maturity throughout their daily lives.

“I think you see an extraordinary mentoring relationship between Paul and Timothy,” says Baca. “Paul is definitely discipling Timothy, but at the same time you get the impression through the

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letters that Paul wrote to Timothy that Timothy is asking the questions, and Timothy has set this chart before him and he's saying, 'Hey this is the path that I'm on, these are the goals I'm trying to achieve. How do I do that, Paul?' And so you can see, even though it's still in the spiritual domain, you could qualify those things as mentoring."

Col PK Carlton, USAF, OCF Field Staff Rep at USAFA, says that regardless of what we call it, we are certainly called as Christians to mentor younger believers. "Discipling, teaching, growing people are certainly concepts that come out in Scripture. Whether we call them explicitly 'mentorship' or simply 'development,' we're certainly called to mentor the younger [men and women]." Carlton explains, "That's how a synagogue works, all those different areas together, this is how that older generation pushes thoughts and ideas down to help them [the younger generation] grow and mature, again with the intent of keeping them from having to repeat the mistakes the older generation had made."

Davis says Christianity isn't supposed to be a solo endeavor. "I'm in the body of Christ. That means I've got to be working with others. So, you know, there's both a sense of independence—I've got to do my part—but my part is in conjunction with others, because Christianity definitely is a team sport."

One might ask, what is the objective of mentoring? Arnold says it is pursuing

God, and that "you do that in His Word, prayer, walking in obedience. And that God intends us to do those together, in the body of Christ."

So if the Bible commands us to mentor younger believers, how do we go about doing that?

According to CDR Carl Crabtree, USN (Ret.), OCF Field Staff Rep at USCGA, this involves sharing your life with someone. He points to 1 Thessalonians 2:8, which says, "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart

to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (NASB).

Arnold added that in biblical times, "One of the blessings someone would give to someone else is, 'May you be covered by the dust of your of your rabbi.' The idea is, as you're walking along, your rabbi—or your mentor—is leading the way. And as he kicks up the dust on the path,

you know, you're covered by it because you're close to him and spending time with him."

Davis explains that Christian mentoring is focused on helping an individual to grow both intellectually and practically in their faith. This idea of taking faith out into the real world undergirds the "spiritual maturity" that is the objective of Christian mentorship. "Spiritual maturity is the goal

**"God will use us,
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—Col Chet Arnold, USMC (Ret.)



1st Lt Bobby Ubelacker, USAF

of spiritual growth, and spiritual maturing is the process of learning to walk in obedience to God in all dimensions of life, spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional,” says Davis. He explains that this extends to “all our roles, whether it’s a professional role or a personal role... spiritual maturity is the fundamental basis upon which we want to have Christian mentorship.”

Practical applications for mentoring

Here in the 21st century, what might it look like to be “covered by the dust of your rabbi” as Arnold said? For LCDR Ward and himself, mentoring meant meeting regularly at a coffee shop where the mentor and mentee can talk about life issues.

For others, mentoring looks entirely different.

Tami Waring recalls her relationship with Jenny Woodruff, who served with her husband Rob as the OCF Staff Couple at USAFA during Waring’s time there. Woodruff mentored Waring throughout a large part of her time at the Air Force Academy and for several years afterwards. This mentoring relationship began with Waring coming over to the Woodruff residence once or twice a week for dinner and a Bible study and developed to where she was basically at the Woodruff residence whenever she could be. Throughout this time, Woodruff shared her life with Waring.



MAJ Liliane Delva, USA



“I didn’t just spend small segments of time, I spent a lot of time with Jenny,” Waring says. “So not just being able to see her when maybe she was at her best, I saw her in all different circumstances. And, to me, that was mentoring.”

MAJ Liliane Delva, USA, found a couple of married tactical officers, the Maddoxes, speaking into her life as she tried to navigate West Point after arriving there as a former enlisted soldier. Delva found herself struggling during her time at the academy—to the point where she considered quitting altogether. She found herself drowning in what felt like a pervasive negativity and hostility among her peers.

“When I joined the Army as an enlisted soldier, I was used to a very different way of people engaging with others,” Delva says. “At least for me, the enlisted community was one where a lot of people took care of each other and help[ed] each other.”

Delva says she found West Point to be the exact opposite: everyone viewed her as competition.

She recalls that at one point during plebe year she was running back to the locked door of her barracks, carrying a bunch of books in her arms while wearing a heavy backpack filled with even more books, in a rush to drop them all off in her room before she rushed off to get to lunch formation. There was a male, upperclassman cadet at the door, and she expected that the cadet would extend her the courtesy of holding open the door for her, seeing as she was loaded down with books and all.

“Thank you so much,” she said, preemptively expecting the courtesy of him holding open the door. He closed it in her face. “Did you think I was going to make it easy for you here?” he asked.

She was left to pry open the door with whatever digit or toe she had available and run up to drop off her books by herself.

"I think he interpreted this situation in a negative way and saw me as a threat," Delva explains. "But I wasn't. Plus, he was senior to me by two classes, so I really was not a threat to him at all. But that's his perception."

It was this attitude that made Delva want to leave West Point. The Maddoxes, however, reminded her that first, not every cadet was like that, and second, there would be no reason to persevere if it were just going to be a cakewalk. That, and the encouragement from her mother that whatever she did, she should "finish strong," encouraged Delva to stick it out at the academy.

For PK Carlton and 1st Lt Bobby Ubelacker, USAF, their relationship developed out of a more formal mentoring program. The two initially found themselves matched up as a mentor-mentee pair through a mentoring sign-up program the OCF team at USAFA employed in 2016. An e-mail went out to the cadets at the academy offering them the chance to find a mentor who'd done what they were hoping to do with their military career. Ubelacker wanted to be a pilot, and Carlton had spent time as a pilot, and they soon found themselves paired up.

"We would meet maybe one or two times a month for an hour or an hour and a half and just talk about different subjects," Ubelacker says. "It was all biblically founded, even if it was like, talking about finances."

The relationship developed to the point where Ubelacker ended up having Carlton commission him. The two then kept in touch during Ubelacker's time in flight school. Carlton and his wife are now providing some pre-engagement counseling to Ubelacker and his girlfriend.

At the same time, Ubelacker has found himself recently thrust into the position of being a mentor to someone else. His cousin lost his father, Ubelacker's uncle, early in 2020 and then his mother died only a few months later. At the funeral for his uncle, Ubelacker bonded with his cousin over the fact that he was in the military and his cousin one day wanted to be. They exchanged phone numbers, and a long-distance mentoring relationship developed in which Ubelacker and his cousin would talk on the phone from one to five times a week.

"It's not easy. It's not," Ubelacker says. "Many times, I feel like, 'Wow, Lord I'm not prepared for this,' or 'I don't have the right answers.' And a lot of times I just want to say, 'We need to pray, we need to go to the Word'.... For some reason, God put me in this position. God gave me the opportunity to be in a relationship with my cousin... and I don't have to know the answer to that. I just have to trust Him."

Nonetheless, Ubelacker has seen the work God's done in his cousin's life. During their weekly Bible studies, he's seen his cousin's engagement evolve. "We would just meet up and go through a chapter of John once a week or a couple times a month, and we introduced the practice of you read a paragraph then I'll read a paragraph... and then Adam came up with the idea of, 'How about whoever reads will then summarize what they just read?' So there's just a little bit of 'Oh, this is awesome! He wants a little bit more of a share in what we're talking about.'"

Pitfalls of mentoring

As Lt Col Kathryn Veseth Toms, USAF, learned, not every mentoring



Lt Col Kathryn Veseth Toms, USAF

relationship will succeed. As a cadet at USAFA, a colonel decided to take Toms under her wing.

“I said yes, because I was flattered and, given the power differential between us, it seemed to me the only proper answer,” Toms explains. “We met maybe a dozen times over 18 months. It became evident early on that she was not someone after whom I wanted to pattern my life—though I don’t think I could have articulated that at the time.”

These meetings devolved into her mentor complaining about bad behavior among cadets and expecting Toms to agree wholeheartedly with whatever she said. When her mentor did offer advice, it was exclusively instrumental

in focus—what worked best for getting what you wanted.

“There was never a mention of doing good for others, nor of doing good for its own sake—virtue is its own reward,” Toms explains. “Rather, motivations, it seemed, took an exclusively instrumental appeal to gain some self-interested end.”

At the end of her time at the academy, her mentor met Toms only to give her a manila envelope with a printed copy of the AFI that governs the promotional process. She assured Toms that she, too, could make O-6 and informed her that the way to achieve success in the military was to know what the criteria for promotions were. The focus, Toms

says, was on getting the promotion, not being the sort of officer the system strives to promote.

“I understand I was supposed to feel grateful. And I was grateful—she had, after all, amidst her busy schedule, taken a vested interest in my (mere) cadet life,” Toms said. “But nonetheless, even as a young cadet (somewhat mesmerized by her rank) I detected something woefully awry about her words of ‘wisdom.’ She consistently appealed to and advocated for self-aggrandizement. It seemed her only goal was self-interest, and she was all too eager to share with me ‘industry secrets’ on how to achieve it. In the end, this mentoring relationship did teach me something valuable: the kind of officer I did not want to become.”

Tami Waring recalls an experience when a woman she met with regularly as a mentor didn’t care to change. “She was not willing to do anything to change and she was not even trying,” Waring says. After circling through the same problems over and over, Waring explains that it “became really evident that she was in the relationship to see what she could get out of it, not to change herself.” Eventually, Waring had to call the woman on the carpet about her motives and explain that she couldn’t keep meeting with her if there wasn’t going to be a real change.

Arnold says another potentially big pitfall for mentoring relationships is mentoring across gender lines. “Mentoring across the sexes—men and women entering into that kind of a relationship—is pretty dangerous, I think because of the vulnerability needed in order to develop a good relationship,” Arnold says. “That can lead to a lot of temptation that, you know, you tend to

want to avoid. So, we encourage folks ‘If you’re looking for a mentor, and you’re a woman, look for a woman.’”

However, sometimes these situations can’t be avoided especially in the workplace. In those situations, Arnold encourages that accountability and reasonable boundaries be put in place.

MAJ Delva added that busyness and time restrictions shouldn’t be a reason to not be a mentor or have a mentor. “Despite our busy schedules, and all that we have going on, you can always take time to invest in one,” Delva says. “And if we focus on that, then we won’t feel so overwhelmed about mentorship.”

As Crabtree points out, “I’ve been doing this for more than 30 years: I probably have more examples of people who have failed than people who have succeeded, and more program examples of those that have failed to succeed. It’s not about personality. It is about ‘Am I being vulnerable?’ ‘Am I being safe?’ ‘Will I share about a real person, and a real Jesus?’ That’s the key, and where it [mentoring] fails is where people don’t do that.”

“To be able to be vulnerable and to share that may not come easily at first,” Crabtree adds.

Still, he insists: “You can be a mentor. If you just received Christ yesterday, you can be a mentor to somebody today. ‘What do you mean by that, Carl?’ Well, there’s somebody out there who doesn’t know Christ, and you can share, ‘Hey, look what Christ did for me.’”

It was that real testimony of a real person and a real Jesus that existed in Chet Arnold and Rocky Ward’s mentoring relationship. Arnold said he could resonate with Ward’s grief, since he had lost a child when she was just seven years old. He could also resonate with Ward’s

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SPIRITUAL MATURITY OF BOTH INDIVIDUALS.

marital struggles because he and his wife, Michelle, had nearly gone through a divorce themselves.

“God will use us, it seems, in ways that are connected to the experiences He has allowed in our lives,” Arnold says. “I would say, yes, that our [Chet and Michelle’s] experience, played a large part of my being able to understand, at least to some degree, what Rocky was going through.”

“Those two specific examples, I remember really sticking out to me and finding incredibly encouraging,” Ward says. “And also [Chet] sharing his testimony of God’s faithfulness through those, and getting them through those difficulties, I found just really, really encouraging through struggles I was going through at the time.”

Although Ward’s goal was to restore his marriage when he first started meeting with Arnold, the divorce ended up becoming finalized. About a year into flight school, Ward found himself single once again. Nonetheless, he continued to meet with Arnold and continued to grow in his faith.

This wasn’t necessarily a clear-cut process. Arnold explains that it could be difficult to be the one “to sit across from somebody who you can see is struggling and to be the one who

tells them they have to choose to stay centered on Christ and they have to choose what they’re going to do with their thoughts, and the words and their actions to bring every thought captive to Christ.... Rocky has to choose. I can’t make that happen.”

After about two more years of weekly meetings, Ward met a girl—the college roommate of his brother’s wife (“long, long story there,” he says)—and they started dating. Arnold and Ward picked up the book *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller and started working through that in an effort to prepare for Ward’s upcoming marriage.

Arnold and his wife, Michelle, ended up serving as the premarital counselors for Ward and his fiancé after they got engaged. The couple are happily married now.


“I don’t think I would have grown and healed nearly as much as I did had God not used Chet and a few other people to help develop and grow me in His Truth,” Ward says. “I suppose God could have used anyone to do that growth and development, and speaking His Truth into my life, but He definitely chose and used Chet to do it. Apart from Christ at work in our mentorship relationship I would not have grown as I have.” 



Photo by Elnora L. White



MY STORY

Are you a workaholic? Have you inventoried your life for balance? Perhaps the story of Billy Styles will help you understand the importance of building margin into your life.

Take Time to Sharpen Your Chain

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL DANNY WHITE
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS, RETIRED



DURING MY FORMATIVE

years as a young Marine Corps officer, I observed many leaders who were workaholics. Since they were successful, I assumed that I must do the same to be recognized with promotions and medals.

Along my journey, I had a few leaders who cared about me as an individual and challenged me to gain and maintain balance in my life. Unfortunately, I did not understand and embrace the importance of this principle.

When looking down into the caskets of my pregnant wife Jenny and five-year old son Danny, killed during a single-vehicle accident during a 1997 PCS move, I had waves of regret wash over me. I wished to have those days back of being at work with “busy work” in an attempt to impress my senior leaders. I could not hit “Rewind” then “Play” again on those days of working late at the office.

Let me be clear, I’m not advocating shirking your duties in this quest for gaining and maintaining balance. What I mean is after completing your duties for the day, you remain at work for a “good idea” project, then another and another—doing this again and again in order to make sure the boss knows you’re at work.

As a result of this excessive focus on work, you will fail to have margins in your life and may find yourself experiencing burn out. This point was reinforced during my assignments at the Pentagon. I saw other service members working 15 to 16 hours per day, week after week. Then, when a crisis would occur in the world, these same officers didn’t have any capacity to surge for the long hours of planning for the crisis and/or then standing watch for eight to twelve hours.

A way to combat being a workaholic during the time of “normal” operations is to establish margins in your life. This often means learning to say one powerful word: “No.” With only 24 hours per day or

168 hours per week, you can’t do everything. To realize balance, you can’t focus only on work. You must consider having some down time, perhaps taking up a hobby or continuing one from years past.

A story that helped me to grasp a picture of margins was one my dad told about a man he admired and who helped teach him how to use a chainsaw safely. My dad would remind my brother Jon and me, while we were helping him cut dead trees for firewood to heat our home, of Billy Styles when our youthful zeal would overwhelm our better judgment to work steadily.

Billy Styles would accept woodcutting jobs from various people in his rural Mountain View, SC, community. Each time before beginning his woodcutting job for a homeowner, Styles would explain that he could cut more wood if the client would allow him to stop every 20 minutes to refuel his chainsaw and sharpen the chain.

The wise homeowners would allow Styles to take this break. And he would work steadily between breaks and cut stacks and stacks of wood. However, the foolish homeowners would accuse Styles of being lazy and not allow him to stop except to refuel his chainsaw. As the chain became more and more dull, Styles was able to cut less and less wood. He had to work harder and harder with the dull chain to cut the wood.

The foolish homeowners failed to realize that this so-called “laziness” was actually a help to their bottom line. Styles still got paid the same rate per hour. These homeowners received less firewood while believing they had prevented Styles from being lazy while cutting wood for them.

Another point to remember is that even though you are a key member of your organization, you are not indispensable. If you were to become sick for an extended period of time, your team would very likely discover how to get things done in your absence.

After Jenny and Danny's deaths, the Marine Corps reassigned me to the Inspector-Instructor staff in Greenville, SC, to assess my new role as a single parent while exploring the feasibility of still serving as a combat engineer. For four months, I visited various duty stations and met with leaders for advice on whether to resign my commission and get out of the Marine Corps or continue serving.

It was an incredible slap of reality that the Marine Corps didn't stop functioning or grind to a halt with me not serving as part of a combat engineer unit. The Corps continued to march along without missing a beat without Captain Danny White on deck. I wish that I had written down this lesson learned and reviewed it consistently after deciding to continue serving on active duty.

This lesson learned aligns with an observation I made as a brand new second lieutenant while completing my initial officer training at The Basic School (TBS) at Quantico, Va. Our TBS class was tasked, as part of our drill and ceremonies training, to put on a sunset parade for retiring Marines. Selected to serve as a member of the parade staff, from my position out front of the formation in the center of the parade deck I could see all the retiring Marines and their families and the medals, certificates, and flags presented to them.


One scene that struck me and was forever burned into memory was seeing the last Marine standing by himself when it was his turn to be recognized. His retirement

orders were read. His retirement award citation was read. The senior officer pinned the medal on his chest and then handed him an American flag. Then the Marine stepped off smartly and returned to his assigned seat. Sunset of the day—sunset of his career.

It's possible this twenty-plus year career Marine may have been single. But I remember thinking, "That would be so lonely to be at your retirement ceremony and be standing there by yourself. I want my family to be there when I retire."

I failed to internalize this significant lesson learned/observation. I slowly turned into a workaholic after joining my first active duty unit. Years later as a senior officer, I almost destroyed my second marriage because of being a workaholic at the Pentagon. If I had not had a serious wake-up call, I would likely have received another promotion and/or another medal, but I would have been standing alone at my retirement ceremony—having lost my family in the process.

Having my wife and children by my side at my retirement ceremony will always far outweigh another promotion or another medal. The medals and rank insignia are packed up in a box in my closet. The relationships with my wife and children continue to grow stronger and stronger, for which I bless God.

Have you inventoried your life for balance? Have you taken time to sharpen your proverbial chain? If not, there will be second/third/fourth order effects of this decision. 

About Danny

Danny, a 1991 graduate of The Citadel, served over 21 years on active duty in the Marine Corps, including The Joint Staff J-3 and Headquarters Marine Corps. He is the founder of Lead with Liberty (leadwithliberty.org), which he switched to a ministry in 2020. He blesses God "for being 'Semper Fidelis' during life's tough times," for his second wife, Nora, and for his nine children on Earth and four children in Heaven. An author, Danny is finalizing the second printing of his 2014 book, *A Widower's Walk: From Desert to Destiny*, sharing lessons learned from his journey, which will be released this year.



Photo by White Sulphur Springs

Invest in and equip OCF members who desire to serve in local OCF leadership roles—those two objectives were at the core of two conferences held at both White Sulphur Springs and Spring Canyon Conference Centers. Workshop sessions were geared to encourage local leaders in their ministry efforts.

OCF Local Leader Conferences

Recently, OCF hosted two Local Leader Conferences at both White Sulphur Springs and Spring Canyon, highlighting what OCF Director of Field Operations Colin Wooten says is the ministry's focus "to invest in and equip OCF members who desire to serve in local OCF leadership roles."

"The local leader is critical for facilitating the gathering of a fellowship that is distinctly OCF in membership, training, and ministry context," said Wooten. "Our intent with the Local Leader Conferences is not only to have the incredibly rich experience that comes from being at an OCF conference center, but to deepen our relationship with and export content to local leaders who

could not be there in person."

Participants at the White Sulphur Springs conference heard OCF Executive Director Scott Fisher's heart for OCF to equip and strengthen the local leader.

Workshops facilitated practical, engaging conversations on topics such as supporting chaplains for dynamic community ministry and having a bold witness while in command. Strategic and tactical updates to OCF's direction as a ministry, and discussion on the progress of OCF Handbook, were among other activities.

The Spring Canyon event drew military ministry leaders ages 20 to 92—from active duty installations, ROTC detachments, 20 cadets from the Air Force Academy, the

Spring Canyon Advisory Committee (SCAC), and others. Interactive teaching and ministry-wide vision-casting by Fisher and several OCF Council and Field Staff members anchored the sessions. Discussion topics included military ministry challenges and opportunities, the temptation of career idolatry, and building effective partnerships.

ROTC Retreats

Earlier this year, OCF's White Sulphur Springs and Spring Canyon Conference Centers hosted two of three ROTC retreats—all within COVID-19 guidelines—where OCF partnered with other ministries to equip and encourage nearly 200 cadets and midshipmen from several dozen states and schools.

At the Eastern ROTC OCF/Valor/Navs Retreat at WSS, more than 60 Army, Navy,

Marine Corps, and Air Force ROTC cadets/mids from seven schools heard COL Kevin Bouren, USA, speak on *The Godly Officer in Action*, while four officers later provided insight for a junior panel session. The Cedarville University Army ROTC praise team provided worship.

Twenty-six Army and Air Force cadets attended the OCF-Valor Front Range ROTC Retreat at Spring Canyon, where LTC Colin Wooten, USA (Ret.), spoke on *Leading Like Jesus*. A praise team composed of members from several schools and breakout sessions facilitated by mentors were among the sessions' activities.

Free time included rock climbing in the Hemingway Operations Complex, sledding on the tubing run, and “stacking” — climbing on plastic milk crates as they were being stacked. “Fully belayed, of course,” said event organizer Lt Col Tom Falconer, USAF (Ret.).



Photo by Spring Canyon

Teaching sessions, a multi-school worship team, and activities including rock climbing in Hemingway Operations Complex were among the varied activities enjoyed by 26 Army and Air Force cadets at this annual Spring Canyon retreat.

The third ROTC event, the Navigator-Valor-OCF IMPACT 2021 virtual retreat, drew 100 cadets and midshipmen online from 31 schools and 21 states. Capt Terry Wichert, USN (Ret.), who heads the Navigators Military Ministry, was the main speaker. Hugh Willis, Navs ROTC Temple/Villanova/Drexel staff member, and Lucy Lane, OCF's ROTC Ministries Associate Field Staff with husband Greg Lane, gave morning devotionals to model what daily quiet time could look like.

Fort Huachuca OCF— Fred Robinson

Our OCF Bible study started up again earlier this year after not having met since the commander cancelled meetings after Thanksgiving. We had a farewell for our three most faithful BOLC students—Joy, Lia, and Joe—who were shown leadership resources on the OCF website and encouraged to quickly get into another study at their new duty stations. Chaplain Gilbertson, the student battalion chaplain, who had sponsored the OCF study for me until



Photo by White Sulphur Springs

WSS purchases skid steer thanks to Giving Tuesday donors

“The Lord provided above and beyond what any of us imagined possible,” said White Sulphur Springs director Paul Robyn (2nd from right) of the new skid steer that rolled into the conference center earlier this year. God provided the center with the labor-saving workhorse through generous donors who chipped in more than \$23,000 as part of the Giving Tuesday fundraiser.

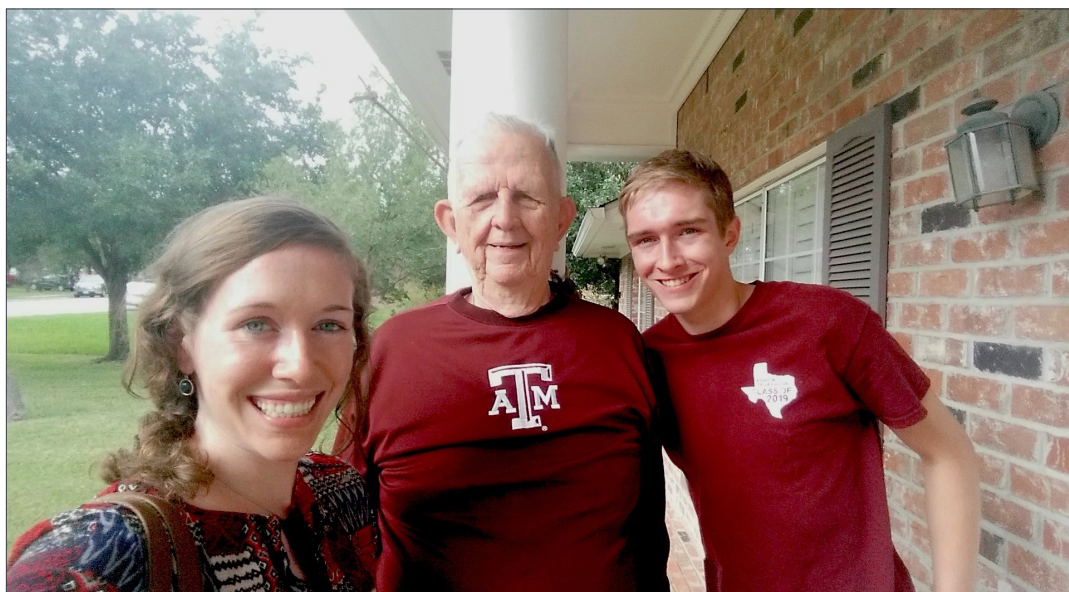


Photo by Heidi Martin

Dr. Bob Spoede, (center) author of *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the United States*, and long active in the OCF ministry, went home to be with Jesus on 16 March.

I was able to get my COVID-19 vaccination, helped advertise the OCF study to the classes at the Military Intelligence school last September. The study was held at the chapel, his wife enjoyed bringing a light supper, and the students shared leading the discussion each week as we studied the Book of Mark. We also had an off-site event, a hike to a cave in the nearby mountains where I shared a devotion. Some BOLC students continued to meet on their own during the Nov-Jan timeframe at my encouragement.

Dr. Bob Spoede passes

Dr. Bob Spoede, a longtime active OCF member who chronicled the first 50 years of the ministry of OCF in his book, *More Than Conquerors: A History of the Officers' Christian Fellowship of the United States*, went home to be with Jesus on 16 March.

Born in Texas on 1 October 1926, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1944. Discharged from active duty in 1946, in 1949 Bob graduated from Texas

A&M and commissioned into the United States Army. He married Nancy Alice Groves in 1954. She went home to be with the Lord in 2011.

After his military retirement, Bob earned a Ph.D. in early American history and taught history for 20 years. In addition to *More Than Conquerors*, Bob also wrote *We All Knew a Little Greek*, a biography of OCF teaching stalwart C.N. Tokatoglou. From 2017 until his death, Bob lived in Pennsylvania and continued to be involved in OCF at its White Sulphur Springs Conference Center.

"Dr. Spoede was a regular presence here during his final years. He participated in our weekly OCF Bible study and helped disciple the WSS staff and interns as part of that community group," said Paul Robyn, WSS director. "During several summers, he shared his extensive knowledge of OCF and WSS history by conducting a special OCF history talk down at Harrison House for guests to participate in while enjoying



Photo by Jen Cutler Cresswell

Kaiserslautern OCF

This OCF group in Germany that meets for Bible study on Thursday evenings is currently finishing up a study on the Book of Daniel. They also view videos from the RightNow Media library and later meet on Zoom to discuss the teaching. 1st Lt Jennifer Cutler Cresswell, USAF, (taking the photo) leads the group. Capt Jessica Rangoonwala, USAF, and her husband, Michael, are other points of contact.

a bowl of ice cream. He will be missed in many ways!”

Bob is survived by children David, Rebecca, and Paula; nine grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren. Memorial and funeral services were conducted at WSS and in Texas. 🇺🇸

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

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

NO MATTER WHAT STAGE OF LIFE YOU'RE IN...

It's never too soon to begin thinking about your legacy. Officers' Christian Fellowship can help you get started. Through OCF's ministry partnership with The Giving Crowd, we have made a tool available to you called My Legacy Planner. This is a secure, easy-to-use system that, in less than 15 minutes, will help you see how you can leave a lasting legacy and significantly reduce or eliminate taxes that you may not even be aware of. It costs nothing and it's completely confidential. While we will be notified that you used the system, which is important to us so that we can say "thank you" and get your feedback, all the information you supply is hidden from us.

Get started by visiting <https://ocfusa.mylegacyhq.com>

Need help or have questions? Email: OCFPlannedGiving@ocfusa.org

CAPTAIN RICO LANE

United States Air Force

Came to OCF:

While attending Squadron Officer School at Maxwell Air Force Base. On our school schedule, we had optional Bible studies, so I figured this would be a great opportunity to meet and fellowship with other Christians in the military, and it would keep me out of trouble during Professional Military Education (which is known for after-hours partying and drinking).

I met Tim Tormey, OCF Field Staff rep, who told me that there should be “OCFers” at my duty location and if not, I could start one. I checked for Los Angeles Air Force Base. There was no chapter, so I got with the chaplain and talked about starting one.

Why OCF:

Jesus told his disciples to go into the world and make more disciples. I am one of those disciples; therefore, I must do the same. This is difficult in the work environment, because we are not supposed to “push our religion on others,” but with OCF I can combine duty with discipleship. Honestly, I believe God allowed me to serve in the military so I could serve and point people to Him.

Why a military life:

A lot of people have patriotic answers, but for me, I honestly joined to ensure I could take care of my family. I had my first child when I was 19 years old. I was still a child myself, and to make matters worse I never knew my dad growing up. So not only did the military help me to take care of my family, the Air Force taught me how to be a man. I am truly grateful for all I learned in the military, and

as I look back on it, I realize it was God’s way of showing me that although I didn’t have an earthly father, I have a heavenly Father who is always looking out for me.

What’s on your bucket list:

My bucket list is pretty boring, I am a simple man and not too adventurous. I have two goals I must do before I spend eternity with God: 1) Ensure my ministry (blessedtimony.com) is a global community for Christians to fellowship and disciple each other. I truly believe a time is coming where Christians will be heavily censored on social media, but they will have Blessedtimony when that happens.

2) Open an indoor/outdoor bicycle park after I retire from the Air Force. I have a vision for a Christian-led business (think Chick-Fil-A but for bikes) where you can mountain bike or road bike inside, and ride outside on a bike trail as well. Athens, Ga., has a huge biking community, and people bike all times of the year. I can’t get out there in the rain and cold, so in addition to bicycling, I envision it being a community center where people can come and learn about the Lord, and attend adult education classes, camps for kids, etc.

Best advice given you:

The best advice given to me was from a Security Forces Flight chief: “If you have goals or don’t currently like the position/job you are in, the best thing you can do is to be really good at your current job. This will open more opportunities for you. If you suck at your job, no one will give you a chance.” This has helped me in my



career, as I have been blessed to hold four different jobs in the Air Force (security forces/cop, contracting office, AFROTC instructor, and program manager). It is also in line with my favorite Bible verse (Colossians 3:23).

The ah-ha moment of your identity in Christ:

When I realized that although the Bible was written so long ago, it still manifests in our lives today. I realized my entire life story was “backed-up” by the Bible, which is what resulted in me starting Blessedtimony. I share my entire Ah-ha moment/life story in my book *Blessedtimony*, where each chapter begins with a Bible verse, and then I share my testimony on that verse (from when I was a child, to my having my first child, serving in

Iraq and losing my faith, to my experiencing Romans 12:2 and giving my life to Christ).

Life Bible verse:

Romans 12:2 is probably my life (or transformational) verse, but my true life/birthday/favorite Bible is Colossians 3:23. I was born March 23 (3/23), so I find Bible verses that are chapter 3 verse 23. Colossians 3:23 fits me perfectly, because I always had a strong work ethic. It’s how I’ve had a successful military career with peers that were a lot smarter than me. However, during my entire life I worked hard for myself and man (my Mom, teachers, girls, the military), but God convicted me and said use your talent and work heartily for Me. 🙏



Experience genuine adventure

Come to Spring Canyon and enjoy Summer Celebration or one of three outdoor adventure programs designed to deepen your relationship with Christ and others:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH is a wilderness leadership program designed for cadets, midshipmen, and junior officers.

FATHER TEEN ADVENTURE is designed for fathers to re-establish biblical relationships with their teens.

CLIMB TOGETHER is an adventure program encouraging parents and youth to climb life's mountains together.



Get more info or register for events at bit.ly/welcomehome2021