



JOINT TASK FORCE CIVIL SUPPORT

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The Big Stick

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"Sir gotta ask...why do you carry the stick?" This question came from a Soldier yesterday as we were preparing to leave Ft. Pickett after drill.

Now, my walking stick and I have been in the Squadron since 2009 and it has been with in numerous training events, gone to mobilization station, and deployed to Iraq. My walking stick has opened doors to many conversations and been the "ice breaker", figuratively not literally, in tense situations. Matter of fact CH Sprouse, the 116th BCT Chaplain, called me one day and asked: "Why do you carry the stick?" Well, my intent with this note is to hopefully answer the question of "why" and encourage each of you.

While at FT Jackson attending CHBOLC we had to opportunity to have a brown bag lunch with the Commandant at the time CH (COL) Boone. CH Boone would pass on lessons he had learned during his time as a Chaplain. These lessons covered a variety of topics from the wear of the uniform to the role of the Chaplain. One day he brought to our lunch his walking stick and told us how the walking stick had been with him throughout his career but more importantly when Soldiers saw the stick they knew the Chaplain was there. That was it! I immediately knew that a walking stick was to be part of my personal equipment. Since that time I have been asked: "Hey Chaplain, if you throw the stick on the ground will it turn into a snake?" or "Can you part water with it?" My answer is always no and I will jokingly say that if I throw it on the ground and it turns into a snake you'll have to run pretty fast to catch me because I'm getting out of there.

What is the significance of the stick? Honestly, not much. The walking stick is for me a part of the bigger Chaplain "ministry of presence". It is certainly not necessary but what it does is remind Soldiers of the presence of not only the Chaplain but in the bigger context the presence of God in their world. As a Chaplain my mission is to serve the Command by serving and providing counsel to Soldiers and their families.

So, my question for you today is regardless of what faith group you belong to, what reminds you that God is present in your world? Do you pray each morning? Is daily scripture reading a priority in your life? The spiritual part of our lives is as vital as the physical. As part of Total Soldier Fitness the spiritual part of our lives gives us rest and comfort in our rushed and crazy world. So, bottom line, you don't need a stick to remind you of God but you do need God to remind you there is peace.