

Promoting Authentic Christianity

Jason Peters

Chaplain, Captain Jason Peters earned a Master of Divinity from Midwestern Seminary in 1998. He has served as a Chaplain in the United States Air force for 9 years and had been assigned to work in Missouri, California, Nebraska, Washington DC and Iraq. Currently he is working as Chaplain for 352nd Operations Group at World Air Force Station, England.



352nd Special Operations Group [352nd SOG]

The 352nd SOG is the Air Force component for Special Operations Command Europe, a sub-unified command of the US European Command. The 352nd SOG has three flying squadrons, a maintenance and tactical communications squadron and a special tactics squadron.



The mission of the 352nd SOG is to serve as the focal point for all U.S. Air Force special operations activities throughout the European theater, including Africa and the Middle East. The 352nd SOG is prepared to conduct a variety of high priority, low-visibility missions supporting U.S. and allied special operations forces throughout the European theater during peacetime, joint operations exercises and combat operations.

The 352nd develops and implements peacetime and wartime contingency plans to effectively use fixed wing, helicopter and personnel assets to conduct infiltration, ex-filtration and re-supply of U.S. and allied special operations forces.

“The blessing and protection of heaven are at all times necessary but especially serve in the times of public distress and danger.” George Washington, July 9th, 1776.

1. Spiritual Condition of present young generation Air force

A. 40% of the airmen today are young men who are less than 26 years of age.

B. Post modern culture.

C. A challenging mission field. Authentic Christian growth is organic not mechanical. Men and women must do their best to authentically follow Jesus Christ and invite others to join them in that journey.

2. Personal Testimony – Ministry as a Chaplain

A. Mission: to discover, experience and to promote authentic Christianity.

a. Need for authentic Christianity:

This generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guard long for spiritual leadership. When they look for a Chaplain they want an authentic one. They want to see the real deal. And that’s what I am trying to be as much as I can. We all know that we need to be the type

of ministers where our lives need to match our lips; behavior needs to match our beliefs and it is a challenge to find common ground with these young military members. It is possible and we have found the common ground in Iraq as we learned together to walk by faith and not by sight. It is hard to integrate my Christian faith into the rest of my life - in my play, in my school and my work. This is a constant struggle to be the real deal; we need to be honest about ourselves and to admit our shortcomings. In the military context this challenge is even more obvious because we live, work, play, eat, sleep, and walk with the same people for months together. After some days, as a Chaplain, I get to know them and they get to know me and my reputation becomes established either positively or negatively. They know who I am because they watch me closely.

b. Ministry in Iraq:

The operating base in Iraq is uniquely dynamic; it is just like a small town with a Mayor/Commander who is the boss, lawyers, ministers, physicians, cooks, pilots and every other type of career field. But in a combat zone there is always a persistent threat of an attack by the enemy; and this threat changes the way you look at life.

We see in Acts 14:27, Paul and Barnabas going on in a mission trip - “ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.” In Acts 15:3-4, we see Paul and Barnabas reporting all the people they came across, the works of God - how God enabled them to share the gospel with the Gentiles and opened the door of faith through them. They intentionally told the story to every one they came across with joy. Their focus was on what God did, but not on the apostles. God uses us as ambassadors but He deserves the glory. As Christ’s followers it does not matter what our nationality or education is, but what matters is whether we are following Him wholeheartedly or not, walking by faith and not by sight.

c. In Iraq, the first mission in the context of a war is to engage. We cannot have a ministry without a connection with the culture around us. Postmodern generations and churches are engaging but they are not equipping.

d. The second thing is to equip: Not only we engage people but we need to equip them with the word of God. And we need to acquire a balance between engaging and equipping; establishing a connection with someone and transmitting the Christian message with clarity. Wherever we are and whatever we do, our job is to make disciples and to equip them to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

e. Walking by faith and not by sight on a battle field.

3. Values in Focus:

When we see situations like this and when we are faced with imminent death, there comes clarity in our thinking – what we really value most. All these conditions created a rich ministry environment where the people there got bonded together. There were incredible groups of believers coming together to worship the Lord, and God in His sovereign plan had brought all of us together. Sunday church services, weekend Bible studies, journey groups and a deeper relationship with the Lord and the people were established. One of the greatest lessons we have learned is that we have been made part of the universal body of Christ. This is an incredible experience to know that we have brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world. We were able to baptize 27 soldiers in the Iraqi swimming pool.

4. Chaplain's work during a war:

- On the front lines with the troops.
- Encouraging them to walk by faith and not by sight.
- Empowering fellow ministry leaders (Key Men), ministering together as co-laborers.
- Meeting together with co-laborers for discipleship training and mentoring.
- Being an ambassador for Christ - spreading the message of Christ and drawing people toward Him.

Paul says, “therefore we are Christ’s ambassadors, as if God is making his appeal through us, we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God; God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

As Christian leaders we have to check our way point – are you walking authentically with Christ today?

If we are doing so, then we can lead others down that path. Jesus Christ is our model; we see Him, and we live it out in our lives and we invite others to join us in that journey as we teach them.

Ezra 7:10 says, “Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord (study it), and to do it (practice it), and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (teach it to others).”

Authentic Christianity. To seek, to do, to then teach others.

May God grant you all to be effective ambassadors for Christ who are able to engage and able to equip; and may we live to learn by faith and not by sight by His grace and for His glory.

