

FOLLOWING THE CALL TO SERVE THE SOLDIERS

He was a 17-year-old private in the U.S. Army who had enlisted to serve his country for the next four years. After completing those four years, he never wanted to dress in another green camouflage uniform for the rest of his life. As far as he was concerned, he was through with the Army. But God had other plans. More than 10 years later, Chaplain (Captain) Jeff Jay, an AGTS graduate, is still in the Army and currently serves as active-duty chaplain of the 35th Engineer-Battalion, 1st Engineer Brigade, the Army's only One Station Unit Training site for engineers at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo.

During the years Jay was first enlisted, he ran from God and turned toward alcohol to the point that it became his lifeline. One day a Christian coworker invited him to church. After feeling convicted by the pastor's sermon, Jay said, "The next week I drank myself into oblivion so I didn't have to think about it."

Two weeks later the same coworker came to Jay's home and dragged him to church. "I was still drunk," Jay said. "I didn't remember anything until the end of the service when the evangelist had an altar-call and everyone filed to the front. Because I didn't want to be the only one left sitting in the pews, I got up and walked to the front of the church. I was still mocking God as the preacher was praying for others. But by the time he got to me, I was instantly filled with the Holy Spirit and immediately healed from alcoholism."

That Sunday, April 22, 1989, Jay rededicated his life to the Lord. Four months later he went to Trinity Bible College in North Dakota where he met a young woman named Lisa. He married her in 1990, and over the next several years they youth pastored in Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, and Colorado.

"I had committed myself to being a youth pastor until the Lord returned," Jay said. "I am reminded that God's ways are not our ways. The godliest activity can become godless if the Lord is not in it." In 1998 his senior pastor resigned, and Jay

stepped in as the interim pastor. He said, "I felt an uneasiness and wondered if I was supposed to be a senior pastor instead of a youth pastor."

Sometimes God has entirely different plans for us, beyond our own understanding. "One night God spoke to my wife in a dream and told her that I was supposed to be a chaplain, but she never told me about the dream until God had revealed the same thing to me," Jay said. "I wrestled with the Lord and the Lord said, 'You do what you want to do, but my blessing is on the chaplaincy.' God gave me a peace about it and for the next three years, I attended the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. It took the turmoil of transition to awaken my heart to the Lord's call for me to go to Seminary and the chaplaincy."

"From the moment we made our decision to go to AGTS our resolve was frequently tested. One

of our greatest challenges came when our savings ran out, and we still had not found employment. Just when our hope was beginning to fade, the Lord provided jobs for both Lisa and me."

"Though I had been well acquainted with the call to be a youth minister, I was not familiar with the new purposes God had for my life in the ministry," Jay describes his first year at AGTS as being like the growth of a plant. "Eventually a plant needs to be replanted into a larger pot in order to avoid stunting its growth. A burning desire to do greater things for the kingdom of God led me to being dissatisfied with the successes of the past."

Jay began seeking new experiences with God. He did not consider himself to be a gifted student but pressed on to dig into the assigned readings, listen intently to lectures, and ask thousands of questions.

"Transition can be a crisis," Jay said. "Fear of change paralyzes some so that they cannot adapt to new environments. Anyplace any one of us goes is a pioneer work. We are pioneers. By maintaining an attitude of renewal and staying committed to the process of being equipped we allow the Lord to prepare us for planting.

He has prepared a field for each of us to be sown."

After graduating from AGTS in spring 2000, Jeff Jay said he felt he was prepared for God to take him through the launching phase into his chaplaincy call.

"I have found seminary to be much more than an educational exercise. It has been to its billing as a place where 'knowledge is on fire.' I appreciate the investment AGTS has made in me. The high level of skill in which I have been educated has

forced me to commit myself to being a lifetime learner," he said. "As I leave this place, I go prepared for replanting, refreshed with the food of the Word, and ready to bear much fruit. Thank you, AGTS, and thank you, Lord." **R**

