

**DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS
FOR POLICE OFFICERS**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doctor Voris was born in Springfield, Missouri and is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in 1983, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in 1987, and Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, with a Doctor of Ministry degree in Christian Spirituality in 1999. His dissertation was titled, "Teaching the Church How to Offer Intercessory Prayer for Enemies and Evildoers." He continues to be interested in verbal prayer, the role of parables in transformation, crisis ministry, and mysticism. Doctor Voris was ordained a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on July 22, 1987 and has previously served pastorates in Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Arkansas, and New Mexico. Reverend Doctor Steven Voris is a former Police Chaplain who remains a friend of law enforcement. He is currently serving the United States Navy as a Chaplain.

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Doctor Voris has a wide variety of interests which include fishing, tennis, chess, and creative writing. Articles he has written have appeared in *Purpose*, *Presbyterians Today*, *Pray!*, *Evangel*, *Monday Morning*, and *The Priest*.

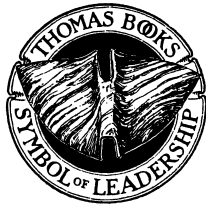
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Providing Meaningful Guidance
in a Variety of Situations

By

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This book is dedicated to the men and women of law enforcement, but especially to the memory of Officers Michael King and Richard Smith who were shot and killed in the line of duty on August 18, 2005 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



FOREWORD

American law enforcement can be an exciting and rewarding career. The ability to help people and whole communities, while practicing a line of work that is always stimulating and never stagnant, has enormous appeal. A career done right, one that follows the Law Enforcement Officers Code of Ethics and practiced with compassion and humility, can be a life well spent. However, every career is fraught with tragedy. Tragedy borne of circumstance and accident; tragedy borne of evil and hate. It all begins to take a toll on the emotional and spiritual health of those sworn to uphold the law. Because law enforcement is a very macho profession, it is inherent to the culture of officers to internalize the trauma and not let it show. And the trauma can be even more horrific than movies or television can portray. Law Enforcement officers experience events that most in society cannot begin to fathom.

Officers have had to watch their comrades and friends die in the line of duty. Between August, 2005 and March, 2006, the Albuquerque Police Department and its partner agency, the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department, have experienced the loss of three of their own by gunfire. Two of those officers, Albuquerque Police Officers Mike King and Richard Smith, both veterans of over twenty years of service, were cut down in cold blood, allegedly by a man with a history of mental illness. Officers King and Smith had been dispatched to handle a pickup order for a mental health examination on the suspect, who, unknown to anyone at the time, was the suspect in three other murders committed in the city earlier that day. Both officers were very popular and very well respected by the department and the community. Their loss is an overwhelming sadness that we will probably feel for the rest of our lives. The night they were killed, I responded, like

so many others, to help manage the event and take the offender into custody. Since I personally knew both of these officers, I can still recall trying to manage and lead in a professional way—to be an example to all the other officers there while fighting this overwhelming urge to cry. I was truly impressed with the ability for everyone, from the Chief on down to the street officers, to maintain their composure and professionally handle the traumatic event that personally hit each of us so hard. I still feel the scars of that night and I guess I always will. Shortly past midnight in late March, 2006, Deputy James McGrane of the Bernalillo County Sheriffs Department conducted a routine traffic stop on a dark country road. A few minutes later he lay mortally wounded with a gunshot to the head. The alleged gunman already had a warrant for a murder committed five months before. Deputy McGrane was a popular, hardworking law enforcement officer who voluntarily worked a midnight shift in one of the most difficult areas of the county. Again, I watched the men and women who knew him best and who would miss him the most work tirelessly and professionally to process the scene and strive for almost two weeks to find his alleged killer.

In both these instances, officers were forced to put aside their emotions, stifle their grief, and perform the way the public expects professionals to perform. While law enforcement officers are human, the public and the courts do not tolerate mistakes because of emotion. Officers and deputies look to their bosses for strength and decorum; and seeing the calm demeanor, they likewise stifle and internalize.

One of our most feared calls, knowing the possible psychological impact, are those that involve the harm or death of children, especially those harmed or killed by an adult. There are no more innocent of victims than young children. The hate or dementia that must exist within an adult who would do such a thing is beyond comprehension. Yet law enforcement officers are usually the first to see, the first to touch, and sometimes try to save these innocents. They then must suppress their emotions so they can professionally investigate the crime. If an offender is present or caught shortly after the offense, they must resist the urge take matters into their own hands.

I can still recall an incident from 1991 where we were called to the apartment of a young mother and her boyfriend because of an infant who was not breathing. By the time we got there, the child was dead. The mother was at work and her boyfriend was casually speaking to officers about how he found the child dead in his crib. To add to the horror of this case, both the mother and the boyfriend practiced devil

worship and the boyfriend had a Charles Manson look about him. The apartment was dark and ornamented with pentagrams, inverted crosses and other symbols of Satanic worship. After the first field investigator arrived, it became apparent that the child was sexually assaulted and murdered. The boyfriend was taken into custody and put in a police car pending the arrival of Crime Scene and Homicide Investigators. As the Sergeant in charge of the scene, I soon recognized that I needed to remove the offender from the location because many of the officers on scene were having trouble suppressing their anger towards this monster. Despite the protest from the Violent Crimes Lieutenant, I had the offender taken to a substation and sequestered in an interview room. Again, amidst the horror of what we witnessed, we simply had to internalize our anger and grief and move on to do as we were trained.

It has taken a good portion of my twenty-one years in law enforcement to recognize that I, like most police officers, have failed to see the importance of healing the internal wounds created by my experiences. Many law enforcement officers spend countless hours in the gym or running to keep fit. Many go through the extra effort to become not just proficient, but expert at using deadly force and engaging in hand-to-hand defensive tactics. The gun and the baton are necessary tools and ensuring skill with these tools is critical. But a strong mind, heart, and soul are also critical to an officer surviving in his or her career. Sadly, many officers neglect these critical elements of their lives. Unfortunately, not enough agencies have the needed resources to ensure the emotional and spiritual health of their officers. More tools are needed. *Devotions and Prayers for Police Officers* by Steven Voris is such a tool. This book of devotions is more than just a book with religious meaning. It smartly identifies situations that officers often find themselves in, the ones that try the soul the most, and helps them to make sense of it all. The author's logic provides meaningful guidance for officers in a variety of situations. He then links these situations with relevant biblical passages that provide clarity to help officers understand and deal with these situations. One does not need to be particularly religious to benefit from these daily devotions. You don't need to go to or belong to a church; you don't need to avow any religious doctrine. You don't even need a Bible, although owning one and referencing the daily Bible passages enriches the experience tenfold.

I provide this foreword with the sincere hope that law enforcement officers will become more conscientious about routinely taking the

pulse of their soul, if you will, to ensure they remain on the proper spiritual and moral path. The public expects nothing but ethical, responsible behavior and sound decision making based on a strong moral foundation. I would like to thank Doctor Voris for all the work he has done for the men and women of the Albuquerque Police Department and the citizens of our great city. He and his staff of volunteer chaplains have been a spiritual rock, shepherding us through some of our darkest moments in recent years. One of the greatest and least appreciated resources available to law enforcement officers is our chaplains. So many times we have taken for granted that they would be there for us in our hard times. They have done the difficult tasks of notifying family members of the tragic passing of their loved ones, or provided assistance to victims and their families so we can go about our business of investigating crime and accident scenes. So often we have forgotten to say thank you. So to Doctor Voris and every other police chaplain in our country, thank you for all you do and for being there for all of us.

As officers prepare for work or head off to the gym or shooting range, I hope they remember to pack up a copy of *Devotions and Prayers for Police Officers*. In these challenging times, ensuring the accuracy of their heart and mind is as important as ensuring the accuracy of their aim.

Paul Chavez

Deputy Chief of Police, Albuquerque Police Department

Paul Chavez is a 22-year veteran of the Albuquerque, New Mexico Police Department and currently serves as second in command of the Department as the Deputy Chief in charge of the Field Services Bureau. In addition to the over 600 sworn officers under his command, he also oversees the department's Chaplain Unit, which consists of 32 volunteer chaplains and one full-time sworn chaplain.

During his 22 years, he has served all major areas of the police department but did most of his work in the Field Services Bureau and Narcotics Division, serving an assignment as an undercover detective in the 1980s.

Deputy Chief Chavez has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and holds a Master's of Public Administration from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. He is also a graduate of the 201st Session of FBI's National Academy.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Devotional books are merely guides that help people approach the divine and find healing and spiritual health. Reading a devotional book will not automatically make a person right with God anymore than going to the practice range will automatically make an officer an excellent marksman. Officers who practice with their service weapons, and who get advice on proper technique, and who have the desire to improve, will eventually meet their goals of being good marksmen. Consider a devotional book to be similar to the shooting range. Just walking in the door won't meet the goal, but it is a good first step. A devotional book is a place to meet God on a regular basis, and coupled with the right attitude, is an opportunity to strengthen that relationship with the divine.

Each devotion in this book is freestanding. They don't have to be used in any particular order. They may be effectively used out of order. The devotions are arranged in categories: Justice, Dealing with People, Crime and Police Situations, Prevention, and Self-care. The categories are somewhat arbitrary and are not meant to be all-encompassing.

This book is designed to be used with a Bible. The actual Bible reading is not included with the devotion. Most people have an attachment to their own Bible (which is good!) and not including the text of the Bible reading keeps the length of this book down, and also its cost. This book was prepared using the New International Version (NIV) translation, and all Bible quotes will use the NIV version. All translations have certain advantages and disadvantages in their use over other translations. Feel free to use the Bible translation that is most comfortable for you. **BUT, DO READ THE BIBLE PASSAGE LISTED IN THE DEVOTION!** The starting point for any devotion is scripture. Without reading the scripture passage first, the devotion is robbed of its power. There is always the temptation to cut corners.

When you cut corners in your devotional life by skipping the scripture reading, you are only cheating yourself, and God. If you will be using these devotions away from home, you might want to pick up an inexpensive Bible to keep with this devotional book for the convenience of having them together.

Each devotion is designed to look at a particular passage of scripture from the perspective of law enforcement. Often the primary meaning of the passage is not discussed in detail. Rather, the law enforcement angle of the passage is explored. What does this passage teach law enforcement officers? Every scripture passage has many facets that glimmer and shine in the sun. The scope of each devotion is to explore the glimmers that excite law enforcement. Certainly, there is more that can be seen in each passage than what is explored in the devotion.

The questions for reflection are opportunities to take any academic lessons learned from the Bible reading or devotion and applying them to an officer's life. The questions are jumping off points where insight meets application. These certainly aren't the only questions to inspire officers to change their lives, but they are starting places. Spend some time reflecting upon the answers. Ask your own questions. The reflection time is a time to absorb the lessons. There is always a temptation to skip over the questions or give them only a glance. Officers only cheat themselves when they don't spend time in reflection.

A prayer accompanies each devotion. The prayer can be used just as it is printed. Read the prayer through once. Think about each of the petitions. Are these petitions that you want to lift up to God? If they are, read the prayer a second time lifting these petitions up to God as your own. The printed prayer is really designed to be a starting place. This is the first thought in your much longer conversation with God. The printed prayer is the ice-breaker or the prayer starter that helps get your conversation with God started. After reading the printed prayer, continue praying with your own words and concerns.

With devotional books, there is a temptation to read all of them in a single sitting as if one were reading a novel. Resist this temptation. Devotional books are meant to be read a page at a time. If you are hungry for more spiritual development after reading a single devotion, then continue reading the Bible. Continue the time of prayer. The ultimate goal of devotional literature is to help people come into the presence of the divine. Those officers who experience a renewed or strengthened presence of God after using a devotional guide should not move quickly on to the next devotion, but should enjoy standing in the presence of God!

These devotions can be used with a group of law enforcement officers. The Christian faith was meant to be experienced in community. Reading the Bible readings and devotions together strengthens the spiritual ties that bind us together as community. Each officer in the group can offer some reflections on the readings and take turns answering the questions for reflections. A prayer time can follow with the printed prayer being the introduction followed by sentence prayers from those officers who feel comfortable offering them aloud. When used in a group, a regular time to share together is important.

Some people find that some ritual is good when approaching God in devotion. A set time and place that is regular helps ritualize the process. The great thing about a devotional book and Bible is that they are portable. They can be used anywhere. A law enforcement officer can use them at home, in a police cruiser, at the station on lunch break, or in a police cruiser parked at the parking lot of a church during a slow time. While using candles has been popular in devotions to symbolize the presence of the divine, an open flame might not be safe in a police setting. Turn on a flashlight or dome light to remind yourself that God is present with you as you engage with the devotion.

However you use the devotion book, may it lead to a stronger and more active relationship with God.

S.J.V.

INTRODUCTION

As a profession, law enforcement can be rewarding and satisfying. Law enforcement officers get to protect the public, arrest criminals, and deter evildoers from preying on the weak. Nothing is more gratifying than pulling a hardened criminal off the streets and receiving the public's thanks. However, that satisfaction comes at a price. The obvious price is that law enforcement is dangerous. Hardened criminals rarely go to jail without a fight. A less obvious price is the spiritual stress that comes with continually being in contact with the worst elements of society. When good people are in constant contact with evildoers, their world view slowly becomes contaminated. They become more skeptical of strangers. They are less trusting. They are less compassionate and more likely to tolerate cruelty. The stories they hear in law enforcement are so horrible, nothing shocks them anymore. This taint eventually affects their relationships with family and friends. Law enforcement officers tainted by being around too much evil may not believe a family member's explanation for a minor household mishap. They assume the family member is lying just like the perpetrators they deal with on the job every day. They are prone to being more authoritarian than they used to be and may resort to violence to drive home their point. The long-term consequences of this taint is damaged relationships, divorce, and domestic violence. To try and cleanse themselves of this taint, officers might resort to alcohol and substance abuse in an attempt to forget the horrors they have seen in the field. Substance abuse can slide into addiction. The stress of law enforcement is real. The taint from being around evildoers is real.

God created humanity with the ability to choose between good and evil. Some people continually choose to do evil, to their own destruction. To protect themselves from evil, society has appointed law enforcement to protect them. God approves of this system on earth and sanctions law enforcement to protect the weak. God is also willing

to cleanse law enforcement officers of the taint that occurs when they are exposed to evildoers. But, law enforcement officers must be willing to approach God for cleansing. This cleansing is most often administered through an officer's devotional, prayer, and worship life. Officers who practice good spiritual health are able to approach God in prayer and worship and find healing from the horrors of their job. Consider the following parable:

TAINTED BY EVIL

The police officer poured another cup of coffee and sat down at the briefing table. "Drat!" he exclaimed, "Another stain. That one will be with me for a week."

The other officer laughed and said, "That one looks like an armed robbery stain. Here, you missed these two lighter stains: shoplifting, and maybe domestic violence?" He pointed to spots on the back of the first officer's left arm.

"Oh, those." He lifted his elbow to expose two dark smears. "Yeah shoplifting and the other is drunk driving. I almost hate the drunk driving stains more than the burglary ones. They don't last as long, but they are an ugly color of gray."

A young woman, a civilian, had overheard the two officers in conversation and pointed at the first officer's arm. "I used to work for a dry cleaners. If you have, like a coffee stain or ballpoint ink, I can get that out for you. However, I just don't see the stain to which you are referring."

The first officer lifted his elbow again and pointed to a place on the back of his arm. "The stain isn't on the uniform sleeve. It's on me. It's on my skin."

The second officer shook his head. "You can tell he skipped worship this weekend."

"Yeah, I went fishing instead," the first officer acknowledged, "Now it's going to cost me."

The young woman looked puzzled.

"I'm surprised you can't see the stains," the second officer replied, "Every time we have contact with an evildoer, it leaves a taint on us. The worse the offender, the bigger and blacker is the stain. It lasts

about a week, before the stain is fully absorbed into the body. Goes straight to the heart and taints our world view.”

“Scrubbing the spot with cleaner or soap won’t help. Only prayer and worship will take away the taint. Since I missed worship, these stains will soak in and make me more pessimistic, hyper-vigilant, and suspicious of strangers.”

The second officer shook his head. “Over time, the taint accumulates and leads to alcoholism, domestic abuse, and even suicide.”

The first officer nodded sadly.

The second officer continued, “Worst case I ever saw of the taint was an officer who ate his service pistol in the parking lot of police headquarters. His blood was black as pitch from the taint. Sad case that one. He’d arrested and interrogated hundreds of sex offenders in his career. He was just months away from retirement.”

“I still don’t see the stains!” the young woman exclaimed.

“Oh, they’re there alright. Not everyone can see them with the naked eye, but the taint is very real. Only contact with the divine through prayer or worship will cleanse the taint.”

* * * * *

If only law enforcement officers could see the spiritual stains on their souls, they might be more willing to take the stress of law enforcement more seriously. Continual contact with evil takes its toll. Unlike chemists who are able to protect themselves from exposure to deadly chemicals by wearing protective clothing, law enforcement officers have no such protective gear for contact with evildoers. Law enforcement officers must restore their spiritual health through divine cleansing, and cleansing their souls is possible if officers will take their spiritual health seriously by developing a devotional practice that includes Bible reading, reflection, and prayer. A healthy devotional life, along with participation in the worship of a community of faith, will go a long way toward spiritual health and preventing the taint of evil from contaminating their interpersonal relationships with family and friends.

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There are many people to thank in the development of this project. The men and women of the Albuquerque Police Department showed me that devotional materials developed especially for law enforcement was desperately needed. My supervisor, LT Paul Romero, was supportive and gave me the freedom to explore this avenue of police chaplaincy. Officer Gerald Fisk facilitated the testing of these devotions on the website of the Albuquerque Police Officers' Association. Thanks to the officers who read them and found them helpful. A special thanks to Michael Dye and the Christian Law Enforcement network, and to the New Mexico Sheriffs' and Police Association who also tested many of these devotions on their websites and newsletters. A special thanks to Paul Chavez who read the manuscript, made suggestions, and wrote the Foreword.

I want to thank my wife, Becky, who has been an ever-present support for me to write. Without her encouragement, this project would never have gotten off the ground.

The views expressed in this book are solely those of the author and not those of the Department of Defense or any of its components. Rev. Dr. Steven Voris is a former police chaplain who remains a friend of law enforcement. He is currently serving the United States Navy as a chaplain.

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**DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS
FOR POLICE OFFICERS**

I. DEVOTIONS ON JUSTICE

DEVOTION 01: “UTOPIA”

READ Isaiah 11:1–10

Both the Jewish and Christian traditions have treasured this passage as a prophecy of what the life to come will be like when the messiah rules the world. For law enforcement, this will be a glorious time because criminals will no longer get away with any crimes. The messiah will not have to rely on evidence collected and witnesses interviewed to punish crime because the messiah will judge by looking at the righteousness of the heart. In that day, the poor will no longer be oppressed by the rich. The needy will have plenty to eat. And, the wicked will be slain by “the breath of his lips.” In the creation story in Genesis 1:2, the “Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The Hebrew word for “spirit” is the same word used for “breath” and even for “wind.” God breathed life into the creation and God called the creation good. However, some have perverted the creation and harmed the environment and other people. On the day when the messiah comes to reclaim the creation and rule it directly, evildoers will experience the “breath, spirit, wind” of God and will be slain. With “breath,” God created, and with “breath,” God will cleanse the earth. And, all of creation will be changed and evil will never again be permitted. The nature of creation will be purified so that lions will not eat other animals, but will eat straw like the ox. Cobras and vipers will not bite children. The wolf will not chase and eat the lamb. Humanity will rejoice in God’s presence and will live in peace.

This also means that in this new world, there will not be a need for law enforcement officers! The messiah will protect the weak and innocent directly. What a glorious day that will be when former law enforcement officers can put aside their weapons, hang up their bullet-proof vests, and not have to look out for suspicious behavior! This is a day for which the righteous long and the wicked despise. May that day come quickly.

For Reflection:

If there were no evildoers nor crime and you were forced to choose a different occupation in a world of utopia, what would that occupa-