I almost missed my prayer today

By Chaplain William Stewart

Life is so wonderful. Each new day brings about both challenges and blessings alike, reminding us of God's infinite mercies and grace. With that in mind, it sometimes scares me how easily we can take for granted one of our most precious blessings... prayer. It is good to simply slow down once in a while and just spend time talking with God. To bring to him both praises and needs, while understanding his love and compassion for us as his creation.

A common challenge for me is keeping things in balance though. Life can become so busy that we easily forget to take time in sharing our thoughts and feelings with our heavenly father. That if we are not careful, we can easily let the blessing of prayer slip by while trying to keep pace with the multitude of daily tasks that life dishes out. Being a chaplain, you may think that I surely have this arena of my life well takeen care of. Hmm... let me tell you a story.

While I try so hard to pray often, at least several times a day, the many tasks of my work, family and life in general tend to consume me as well. Interestingly, as chaplains, we are also given the responsibility of giving formal public prayers; it's part of our "work." I was attending an event once where I was asked to give a public prayer. It was a prayer and situation that was to really impact my life, but I didn't know it at the time. Later, I wrote a poem that depicts what happened to me that morning. I call it, "I Almost Missed My Prayer Today" and I hope it is meaningful to you as well.

May we never become too busy for God... may we never become too busy for God's creation.

I Almost Missed My Prayer Today

I woke up early this morning, with the buzzing of my alarm,
Contemplating, surely five more minutes, would do me no harm
Today was very special, I would be giving a public prayer,
To many people I would speak, explaining how we should care
I would pray of God's perfect love, and how His grace revives,
How we should be His example, and live this through our lives
My prayer would inspire all, how God's true love can abound,
That we just have to be compassionate, when the opportunities are found
I then focused on my uniform, to make sure I looked quite fair,
Tweaking it very carefully, a quarter inch here, a half an inch there
This was not my normal audience, on collars and sleeves were their rank,
These were well-versed chaplains, and RPs who had seen many a plank
As I worked so diligently, the time passed quicker than me,
If I didn't really hurry up, I would miss my prayer you see
I scurried out the building, on prayerful words I would still dwell,
It was then I had noticed, the snow and ice that had fell
A steep hill stood before me, the slope was slippery with ice,
I would have to be quite careful, a fall would not be so nice
Looking to my side, I was not alone in this place,
There was a well seasoned man, but I didn't look him in the face
He needed help getting down that hill, but then I thought life just isn't fair,
If I didn't leave right then, surely I would miss my prayer
I started down the hill, but then couldn't help but look,
There he was still standing, as if a picture out of a book
My heart sunk just thinking, how at that time he must be feeling,
Only one person who could help him, and this one not quite willing
But I then walked back up the hill, my heart no longer weak,
It was then I looked him in the face, and I began to speak
I couldn't help but notice sir, I'm kind of short and you rather tall,
If you'll just hold on to my shoulder, maybe neither of us will fall
He then smiled broadly, and we began to walk,
Slowly down the icy hill, it gave us a chance to talk
He told me he was in the Army; many years ago did he retire,
That he served his country proudly, and with him there wasn't any ire
I couldn't help but notice, on his sweater was a special pin,
He was made an honorary Seabee; it reminded him of where he'd been
He then looked at me, and asked what it is I do,
I said I'm a Navy chaplain, and yes, I'm a Seabee too
It wasn't long at that point, he said I must talk to you,
Then came all of the stories, just like two ol' vets do
He told me how he served in Korea, and in the challenges of Vietnam,
Explaining how it was his chaplain, who had always kept him calm
That somehow his chaplain, would just always find him time,
And how in such difficult places, his words were just sublime
He then told me how life, had dealt him an incurable disease,
That it wouldn't be much longer now, his body would be put at ease
He explained how he is helping others, and now has come to believe,
How it is just so much better, to give, than it is to receive
Looking me in the eyes he said, I made his day much brighter,
I then told him it was he, who made my burden lighter
I helped him into his car, as for words there just weren't anymore,
Only a firm hand shake and smiles, that told us what life is for
I then walked away, with a tear rolling down my face,
I said O Lord please forgive me, and thank you for your grace
For then it had all hit me, so very hard I must say,
Life had just become too busy... I almost missed my prayer today

Scholarships available for officers Interested in law careers

By Ed Barker,
Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs

Active duty and full-time support officers interested in a challenging career change can apply for scholarships via the Law Education Program (LEP) announced June 10, in Navy Administrative Message NAVADMIN 198/10.

The program affords selected Department of the Navy officers the opportunity to earn Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degrees and to serve the Navy and Marine Corps as career members of the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps.

"The key to a successful future for the Navy JAG Corps begins with our people," said Judge Advocate General of the Navy Vice Adm. James Houck. "The Law Education Program allows the JAG Corps to select experienced naval officers to attend law school and become judge advocates. These officers bring valuable military knowledge and experience to our legal practice. As a graduate of LEP, I would recommend it to any officer who wants to pursue a career in law while continuing to serve in the Navy." A surface warfare officer early in his Navy career, Houck was selected for the LEP in 1982, graduating from the University of Michigan Law School in 1985.

"This is an excellent program for anyone who has the desire to go to law school and become a JAG," said Lt. Cmdr. Megan Smith, the JAG Corps accessions detailer at the Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tenn. "One of the things that make this program great is that the Navy completely funds the program, and the student remains on active duty and continues to draw a military paycheck while attending law school earning a professional degree. Once they've completed their degree, they'll get to serve in a challenging career field."

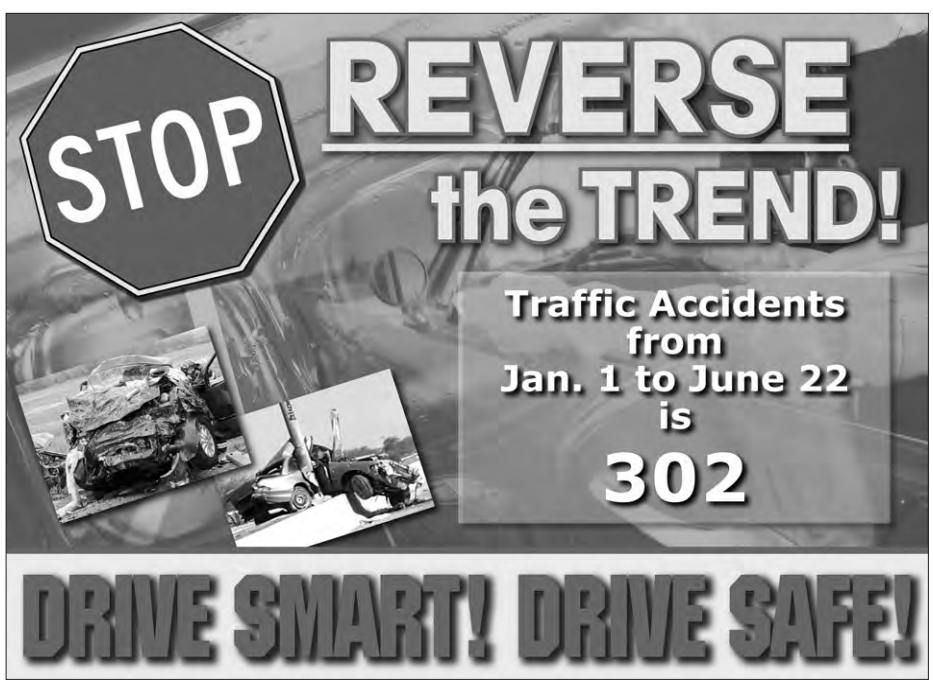
The Navy typically selects seven officers to attend law school each year. Candidates must be serving on active duty as a commissioned officer in pay grades O-1 to O-3 and have no more than six years of active duty service as of their law school class convening date. LEP students have up to 36 months to complete their degree program.

"I decided to apply to the LEP because I wanted to follow the footsteps of my father in practicing law, while at the same time, staying in the Navy," said Cmdr. Jason Baltimore, deputy special assistant for recruiting for the Navy office of the Judge Advocate General military personnel division. "My previous Navy experience as a supply officer definitely adds to my abilities as a JAG Corps officer. Since I was familiar with how the regular Navy fleet functions, I was comfortable handling issues and advising senior officers the appropriate course of action." Baltimore attended University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Law School from 1995-1998.

Upon graduation and admission to the practice of law, which in most jurisdictions includes passing the bar exam, Navy and Marine Corps officers will be designated as judge advocates. Upon completion of the Basic Lawyer Course at the Naval Justice School, they are certified as qualified and competent to perform duties as trial and defense counsel of general courts-martial. They will then be detailed to one of several large Naval Legal Service or Region Legal Service Offices where they will be exposed to the many legal areas found in today's Navy, including: criminal, international, administrative and tort law; legal assistance; maritime law and environmental law.

Eligible participants who desire to apply for the fiscal year 2011 program must submit a letter request and application package via their commanding officer to: Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD), Voluntary Education Detachment, Attn: Code N2A2LEP, 6490 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL, 32509-5204 prior to Dec. 1, 2010. Letters must include the applicant's current work mailing and e-mail addresses and contact numbers.

In addition, all applicants must ensure official college transcripts from each school attended are forwarded to CPPD. Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores must be received prior to the fiscal year 2011 selection board convening in February 2011 but may be submitted by separate correspondence.

For specific guidance on the Law Education Program and application requirements, see SECNAVINST 1520.7F and NAVADMIN 198/10. Questions about the application process should be directed to Billie Colonna, Center for Personal and Professional Development, by phone at 850-452-1807 (DSN 922-1807) or by e-mail at billie.colonna@navy.mil. All other program questions should be directed to Lt. Cmdr. Megan Smith, Naval Personnel Command, at 901-874-4084 (DSN 882-4084) or by e-mail at megan.k.smith@navy.mil.

For additional information about careers in the Judge Advocate General's Corps visit http://www.jag.navy.mil/.