



Many of you know that I am a US Marine Corps Veteran, and that I served our country for over ten years. When God called me to exit military service, He did it in a peculiar way, or at least, it seemed peculiar to me. I knew quite clearly that He was calling me to serve Him in a different way...full-time ministry. Months before I gave my resignation to my commission as an officer, my name appeared on the "eligible to promote" list. I was a senior captain, and the list was for the rank of major. When I saw the list, I thought I would just pass on sending in a promotion package, but God thought differently. The Lord instructed me quite clearly to send in my package, which took some work I might add. He then shared with me that I would be selected for the rank of major and I would still have to then give my resignation. I was being

called to carry out an act of faith, something I could not yet see, but God did. I was selected for major and had to give my resignation to the Corps as a major-select. Very few of my colleagues and superiors understood this decision. But I did it. I resigned my commission as a major-select, never to see the rank on my collar, so I thought. Then came late March of 1997, when the letter came out to announce who was to be promoted to Major in April. My name was on the list to be promoted, as well as a paragraph about those who had selected resignation. It said, "This promotion applies to those who have selected resignation, and if he/she is still serving, will be promoted to the rank of major." I was promoted to major on April 1st, 1997, April Fool's day! I'll never forget that feeling, that day, that gift that God gave me, even if for just a few months. It was incredible!

Fast forward to seven years ago. As a veteran, I receive my medical care at the local VA clinic and hospital. I found myself during a few of the visits assisting other veterans while I was there for my own appointments. I helped someone find the right office, pointed out the way to the right clipboard, advocated for a man who needed a ride to Miami, and even prayed for a nurse who saw my church nametag in the podiatrist's office. After one of these visits, I was here in my office. An email was in my inbox from USA Jobs, the US government hiring office that lists ALL of the jobs available. I thought it was odd, because I don't ever remember signing up for those announcements, but there it was. I opened up the search engine and searched for the job of chaplain. As the jobs populated, I sensed the presence of the Lord around me. My office became very quiet. His presence was heavy around me. He showed me His next assignment for me, to serve as a VA Chaplain. There were many requirements, including a Master of Divinity, Clinical Pastoral Education, endorsements, and experience as a hospital chaplain.

By the grace of God and a very understanding leadership here at COHSS, I was able to accomplish all those things. Even with a family, a full-time position here at COHSS, caring for my mom...God made a way.

Today I share with you that I have accepted a position at the Detroit VA hospital to be the chaplain for the long-term care residents, people who are unable to care for themselves and need caregivers around the clock. God is sending me there to minister to them, their families, and the staff, to show them hope, peace, compassion, a gentle touch, a smile, God's unconditional love. I report for orientation on May 24th, 2021. My last day here as your lead pastor will be Sunday, May 16th.

Let's take a moment and let that sink in.

I know that for many of you, this news may feel like a valley experience, and I want to validate that for you. Feel it, process it, cry. I have forged deep relationships here at this church, and I know how you feel. I recall the day when our senior pastor told us she and Jill were moving to New Jersey. It hurt...a lot. But just as we heard in our lesson today, we are not to take up residence in the valley. This may be a painful experience, but it is also a beautiful experience. Perhaps not right now, but in time we will all see the fruit that will come from my departure.

I want to thank my awesome wife, Sandee, for the years of strong support of me, our family, Mom, the ark, and for never doubting what God was telling us. I have a note here in my office from you, Sandee. You stuck it in my Bible on the day that I was installed as the lead pastor here. It says "God will lead you, and I will be right by your side." This I know, my love, and I'm putting that note in my new office in Detroit.

I also want to thank the superior leadership team here at SpiritSong Church, who have been preparing for this moment for years, and more specifically, every month since November of 2020. Team, you are prepared for such a time as this, to lead this church and take them into the next chapter. Stay strong, stand firm, keep your armor on, and know that God's discernment and wisdom leads and guides you every step of the way.

And I want to thank our beautiful God, our Savior Jesus, and our Holy Spirit, who are right now with us and taking us through this time of sharing. They are here with us, church, and they love us very much. They are not going to leave us in the valley, but they are meeting us here and walking through it with us. I will leave you with Proverbs 3:5:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight."

I love you, I'm in awe that you trust me so deeply with your lives, and I know with all my heart that you are serving the Lord so very well. Keep going, keep serving, keep working, keep striving, keep loving Jesus, for this is the will of God for you and this church.