

Stories & Testimonies

The next week, he conducted his friend's funeral. It was a difficult week. Gary's health had steadily gone down hill. Day after day, the chaplain, along with many other firefighters, had sat by Gary's hospital bed. They watched as liver failure slowly took his life. They sang together, prayed together, and told stories of past exploits.

For years, they had saved lives and protected property – TOGETHER. The chaplain helped the family all he could, as out-of-town relatives gathered during his friend's last days. He was with them right after their loved one's death to help comfort them. Preparing for a firefighter funeral, with all the ceremony that entailed, was also heavy on his mind. But in all the distress and difficulty, the chaplain saw a spiritual opportunity.

A young officer who was very touched by the passing of their friend was open to talk. As they traveled back and forth together making arrangements for the funeral, they talked about death, heaven, and salvation. Was it really not just a matter of asking Jesus to save you and then asking for forgiveness before you died? Was it essential that one surrender his whole life to Christ to be saved?

The day of the funeral, the chaplain was so emotionally affected, he was unsure if he could carry out his role. God provided another chaplain friend as a back-up. Even as he was delivering his sermon at the funeral service, his backup chaplain was ready to take over if the local chaplain could not continue.

As the service progressed, something unexpected happened. The young officer, in giving the eulogy, boldly shared with all his peers and guests how he had come to understand the true meaning of salvation, faith, and the Christian life! He compared living for Jesus to following the “Standard Operating Guidelines” given by the “Great Chief.” The Christian life had to be lived out day by day in submission to the Lordship of Christ. Though grieving the loss of a friend, the chaplain rejoiced that the seeds of truth he had been able to sow during this difficult time had taken root in a receptive heart.