

Alumni Spotlight: Dan Rice (MDiv '03)



Current Title & Military Branch: Command Chaplain, US Army

Family: Married with 2 children

Favorite professors: Dr. Pratico (He made Hebrew possible for me) and Dr. Beale (He opened to me the richness within the Book of Revelation)

Favorite class: Pastoral Ministry with Dr. Swetland—I had not been in full-time ministry before, and his class, experience and stories fed the flame of my calling to serve God.

Favorite memory: Meeting Kevin and Mike during our first week in seminary (we shared McDonalds French fries) and then studying, laughing, crying, and mowing lawns together for three years until we all graduated. The three of us still stay in touch to encourage and pray for one another.

What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and what are you doing now?

Immediately after graduation, I worked for a year as an associate pastor for an inner-city Hispanic church in Boston. Then God called me into the Army Chaplaincy. I was still in the Reserves, but I never imagined being a Chaplain. In fact, I thought I was clear with God that I was never going to be a Chaplain...but God has a sense of humor and knows what is best for us.

What do you love about your work as a military chaplain?

The variety—I do pastoral counseling, I have the privilege to walk into people's place of work at any time to see them, I deploy into harm's way with the greatest Service Members in the world, I lead planning to provide religious support in future combat operations, I coach junior chaplains, I jump out of perfectly good airplanes, and I get to minister to the family members of these selfless warriors through it all. Where else can you have such an impactful and relevant ministry than as a military chaplain? I love having the opportunity to serve God by loving the people who are serving our country.

What are the particular challenges of serving as a military chaplain in general and/or in your specific context?

Two unique challenges immediately come to mind: separation from family and walking with service members and their family members through a variety of life events. In my opinion, one of the ways that military chaplains bear their cross in service to God is through the time spent away from their own families. I have missed birthdays, anniversaries, Christmases, and a family funeral while being deployed in other

countries. I will never get back that time with my family. It brings me to tears every time I think about this. All of us in ministry must hold onto our calling when we suffer and then question what we are doing. As a military chaplain, you must be crystal clear on God's calling for you, because the personal cost is heavy. God is enough; I know and believe this. He walks with us through the suffering, but make no mistake there is painful suffering as a military chaplain.

The second challenge for military chaplains is that we serve service members and their families through every phase of life. I have felt the heartache of walking with families who have just lost their soldier. I have enjoyed the celebrating with service members as they promote to the next rank. I have also prayed at countless retirement ceremonies as soldiers prepare to start the next phase of their lives. As a military chaplain you never know who is going to walk through the door to your office and what burden they are carrying. You must always be prepared to laugh with someone and then an hour later to cry with someone else. I have the honor to daily work with the men and women of our armed services as they sacrifice for our freedom. Our jobs are never done because life goes rolling along.



How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now? How did you come to be doing your current work?

God was equipping me for this ministry even before I ever heard of chaplains. I was raised on the mission field in South America, so I grew up bilingual and keenly aware of different cultures. I served in the military before being a chaplain, so I had a great foundation of experience to build on once God called me to this ministry. As I will mention shortly, the denominational diversity at Gordon-Conwell further served to prepare me to work with others with differing theological perspectives. And finally, the educational rigor at Gordon-Conwell prepared me to study God's Word deeply, preach His Word authentically, and love His children thoroughly. God knew what He was doing as led me through life to this extraordinary ministry of military chaplaincy.

What has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence on the work you do now or the way you do your work?

The most important influence that Gordon-Conwell had on my current ministry as a chaplain is in preparing me to work across denominational lines. We have more in common with each other doctrinally than we have difference. As a military chaplain, I must be willing to lead a general protestant service wherever I am sent. My three years

in seminary helped to open my eyes and heart to God's Church. The brothers and sisters I learned with helped prepare me to do chaplaincy around the world with like-hearted, though denominationally different, chaplains. Together we can do more than apart.

What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are considering serving as a military chaplain?

As you continue in prayer, begin walking forward toward what you think God is calling you to. If you sincerely desire to serve Him wherever He leads, then God will direct your paths. As you walk towards military chaplaincy, get to know the military chaplains in your denomination. Most every denomination has a chaplaincy section that you can reach out to. Your denomination will have to endorse you for you to be a military chaplain, so start with them. I also highly recommend you make time to talk one-on-one with a military chaplain. Ask us all your questions. We love what we do and would enjoy talking to you about it. The sacrifices we make as military chaplains are worthy of the joy of serving people and building community.

Do you have any publications or links to share?

Learn more about [serving as an Army Chaplain](#). If I can answer any questions you may have, please do not hesitate to [email](#) me. Here to serve.