

Alumni Spotlight: Mark Thorne (MAR '21)



Current title & Military Branch: Army Chaplain

Favorite professors: Dr. Kenneth Barnes

Favorite class: Spiritual Formation

Favorite memory: All the discussions with the great minds in the student body, faculty, and staff.

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

I worked for one year as a mechanic and as a community pastor while processing my Army Chaplain application. I joined the army one year after my graduation date in May 2022. I completed the three-month Chaplaincy training at CHBOLC and was sent to Fort Drum, NY with my family where we are currently stationed.

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

Meeting people where they are at, and pointing people to Christ. I enjoy the diversity each day brings, with different challenges and success and building community and networks of resources for the brave soldiers I serve.

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

I am privileged to have a battalion of 568 people, and that is quite a large “parish” to serve. I often pray for wisdom and time. You can’t be efficient with people, only effective in this role.

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?

I would not be where I am today as an Army Chaplain without the rigorous education I received from Gordon-Conwell. I sensed the calling to go into ministry in my mid-twenties after my time in the Marine Corps and college where I met my wife. Despite that initial sense, God opened some doors for me in the private sector which just never felt like the right fit for me. I always sensed I had another purpose. After climbing the corporate ladder as a COO, I could not ignore the call to ministry anymore and applied to Gordon-Conwell and, thanks to the Partnership Program, started my masters in the fall of 2018 at the age of 34.

I can look back at each stage of my life and see how God was preparing me for my role as a Military Chaplain through the many experiences He gave me. As a former active-

duty Marine, I better identify with soldiers and could sense a calling to serve my brothers and sisters in arms.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work?

The rigorous academics and the mentorship at Gordon-Conwell support my ability to spiritually operationalize military concepts to build resilience and readiness.

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

Connect with a chaplain and try to get a sense of God's calling for this role in your life. Make sure your family (if applicable) is 100% onboard the adventure.