

# I WILL HEROIC DEEDS RESPONDERS IN FAITH RESPOND

I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD, SAYING: "WHOM SHALL I SEND,  
AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?" THEN I SAID, "HERE AM I! SEND ME."

"40 Days  
I WILL Respond"



## Devotional introduction

Welcome to "40 Days of **'I Will Respond'**" a journey of faith, courage, and action. In a world where cowardice is creeping into our culture, we are here to declare that we will not shrink back, but instead, we will respond. We will respond to the needs of our God, our families, and our communities. We will respond to the call of being a first responder in our jobs and missions. We will be the guardians that God has called us to be. This is a campaign of six weeks filled with daily devotions and small group discussions. The format is in person and through Zoom; with a final week of small group Heroic Deed events. We are here to develop ourselves to be equipped with the right mindset and to take action to respond in various aspects of our lives.

Throughout the next 42 days, we will embark on a journey of self-reflection, spiritual growth, and practical application. Each day, you will find a devotion or a training brief that will challenge you to respond in different areas of your life. While most of the material will focus on fundamental Christian doctrine, we will also explore other aspects of our lives. This will include our relationships, physical health, mental and emotional health, and our jobs, missions, and purposes. Each week has a specific theme and each day contains a prayer starter or an action point to help you take practical steps toward responding in that area of your life.

As we dive into this campaign, we encourage you to approach it with an open heart and mind. Be willing to be challenged, be ready to take action, and be prepared to see transformation in your life. Whether you are a seasoned believer, a new Christian, or someone seeking answers, this campaign is for you. We believe that by the end of these 40 days, you will be equipped with a renewed sense of purpose, courage, and determination to respond in a way that honors God and impacts the world around you.

A diverse group of individuals, including first responders and those closely connected to them, have collaborated to author these daily devotionals. Take a moment to identify the author of each devotional and learn more about them in the biography section. This section provides an opportunity to get to know them better.

Once you have finished all the weekly devotions, we encourage you to reflect on how God may be guiding you through this campaign and respond accordingly. This response could take various forms. Such as:

- Serving the community as a small group
- Developing an exercise plan
- Organizing a small group gathering
- Addressing a personal challenge...like overcoming addiction
- Initiating a peer support program at your workplace
- Pursue any other idea that may have been planted in your heart during this campaign. We encourage you to prayerfully consider how God is leading you and take action accordingly.

We are excited to have you join us on this journey of "**I Will Respond.**" Together, let us grow in faith, courage, and action as we strive to live out God's calling in our lives.

Are you ready to respond? Let's begin!

***I Will Respond***  
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**40 Days-I Will Respond  
Week 1**

## Week 1, Day 1: I WILL Respond to God

### First Things First

*“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”  
Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)*

About two years ago, I was having lunch with a local minister when he said, “if it is important that God is guiding your day, the first thing you need to do is communicate with Him through prayer and reading the Bible each morning.” I had two immediate common-sense revelations. First, what could be more important than the Creator of the universe guiding and blessing everything I do. Secondly, how can I possibly know what His plans are unless I was communicating with Him through prayer and reading His Word? Athletes prepare for games by stretching and warming up their bodies and musicians prepare for concerts by warming up their instruments. My wife and I have been blessed with 33 years of marriage because we communicate and we know each other. It just made sense. What we do as first responders is important, sometimes life or death important. Our relationships outside of work are equally critical. Also, they can dictate our joy and mental well-being. The stakes are high. How awesome is it that the all-powerful God wants to be a part of our lives. We just need to let Him in. Nothing in our day will be more important.

Two years ago, I committed to starting my day talking to God and I have recognized the powerful and positive impact on my life, my career, and my relationships. Whether it’s 10 minutes or an hour, your morning connection with God will pay big dividends. He will guide you and yes, as He promised the prophet Jeremiah, He “will tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

#### - Prayer -

“God, you are the almighty Creator, the beginning and the end, you control all that happens, and you want to invest in me. I will respond by talking to You each morning and reading Your Word. Lord guide me and may You receive the glory. Amen“

Tom Thompson  
Police Chief

## Week 1, Day 2: I WILL Respond to my Relationships

### Why do you not think like me?

*He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them “mankind” on the day they were created. Genesis 5:2. (NASB)*

When I speak to first responder groups, I jokingly tell the women that they may as well accept the fact that they are married to a weirdo. That always gets an understanding laugh because most people realize that men and women are very different in how they think, respond, and react. Recognizing this fact is the first step towards creating a good working marriage.

If you don't acknowledge that God wired the sexes differently, you will always be tempted to think that your spouse is wrong. You will waste time and energy trying to prove a point that may only make sense to you. Instead of criticizing the other we should appreciate each other's views and opinions. We have to learn to listen and learn. When God created Adam, he recognized that the man needed a helper. Eve was uniquely and wisely made to fulfill the design of mankind. God blessed the creation of man and woman. It is the perfect combination that works well when we accept it, instead of arguing against it.

Our differences are vast. One of them is that men are inclined to look for the facts. First responders are especially trained to be factual. Feelings are not so important when interacting with others. Women, however, are feelings oriented. We attach feelings to situations and facts. We care about feelings and if our men do not, we do not feel valued and loved. Recognizing this specific difference takes some practice, but in the end it greatly reduces frustration and fosters love.

Another major difference is how we process our thoughts and approach daily life. Men tend to single think and single task. They often do one thing at a time and focus on perfection. Women tend to multi-think and multi-task. It takes this skill to manage homes, husbands, children and jobs. We are wired to do things differently. It's important to understand the other person and then have discussions about how we need to work together. These traits come into play when men and women have arguments. The man usually wants to deal with “the “issue” and the woman sees how that issue affects other areas and wants to branch out. Neither are wrong, you are made to complement each other.

God is wise and perfect in all His ways. He did not make a mistake when He designed us. It is often hard to live and deal with the opposite sex. It is also interesting and exciting. We must choose to appreciate and enjoy each other. 1st Peter 3:7 even tells men to live with their wives in an understanding way. You guys have to try to figure us out! But, it's not so hard. We like our feelings.

I have counseled many first responder couples. The stress from your job is often carried home and negatively affects your marriage. The home should be your refuge from the world. It is crucial for your mental, emotional, and physical health to have a good relationship with your spouse. One of the first steps to strengthening your relationship is to understand and value each other. Take the time to research and discuss your God given differences. I just mentioned a fraction of our differences. Read a good book to learn about each other or find a counselor who can help you appreciate each other. God created marriage to fulfill each other's needs and wants. It is a great design and with a bit of work your marriage can be more amazing than you can imagine.

#### - Prayer -

“Father, we thank You for Your gift of marriage. It was perfectly designed to fulfill our needs and bring us joy. Thank you for my spouse who is uniquely different from me. Thank you for the wisdom, opinions, and effort that they bring into this relationship. Help me to recognize the value of him/her. I also understand that I need to show appreciation to my spouse and family. Give me the ability and desire to protect and serve them and to create a safe haven for all of us to come home to. In Jesus Name, Amen.”

Dr. Denise Molatch Naber, D.D.  
Former Police Officer, Counselor

**Week 1, Day 3: I WILL Respond to my Physical Health**

**Need a Tune Up?**

*“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”  
1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)*

The other day, as I was driving on the country road leading out to our forest home in the Panhandle of Northern Idaho, I became enamored with the beauty of the recent snowfall. I noticed my SUV wasn't performing well and needed a tune up. I thought, bummer, but knowing it's necessary to ensure its performance, I set an appointment with a local mechanic. Likewise, our physical bodies need attention, especially as first responders. Do you need a tune up, physically speaking? How's your eating habits? Are you sleeping well? Exercise, you know, cardio workouts, strength training - do you remember these? Is physical fitness a priority for you?

The Apostle Paul wrote to a younger Pastor named Timothy and encouraged him that being content with godliness is super wonderful. Yet, he started that note of encouragement with, “Bodily exercise is good” (1 Timothy 4:8). You see, being physically fit isn't just paramount for success as a first responder, being in shape affects our entire being. In fact, the 1st Century Christ follower used metaphors of physical training often to remind his readers that our Christian experience is a race and it's simply wise to engage, not just spiritually, but physically as well (See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Studies prove that those who are physically fit perform at a higher level of success than those who aren't in shape. From a biblical perspective, it makes sense to not only honor our bodies for our wellbeing, but also, perhaps more paramount, whatever we do, we are to do for the glory of God. And yes, this means our physical make up (See 1 Corinthians 6:19).

Check out Romans 12:1-2. Once again, Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, for that was their (ours too) reasonable act of service. One last thought, consider how you treat your body as an Act of Worship. In other words, will you commit to be physically fit so that you can perform in the manner God has meant for you too?

**- Prayer -**

“Lord, I ask for Your help to give attentiveness to my physical health. I desire to respond to Your call on my life and I understand that being in shape physically strengthens my level of success as a first responder and, as a follower of You. Amen.”

Randy Ponder  
Pastor, Chaplain

**Week 1, Day 4: I Will Respond to my Mental & Emotional Health**

**A Right Perspective**

*“When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;  
Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.”  
Psalms 73:16-17 (KJV)*

I have read that a skydiver falls at the approximate speed of 120 mph. As I understand it, when the skydiver jumps from the airplane, it doesn't seem to be that fast. Falling in the open sky makes it feel as if one is floating. The reason it doesn't seem to be 120 mph is there is nothing to compare it to. On the other hand, if one would jump from a building in NY City, alongside all the other buildings, the perspective would change. It would feel like 120 mph. Why? What is different? Perspective.

Here's a truth we need to grasp. What we are surrounded by affects our perspective. If we surround ourselves with negativity, ungodliness, sinful activities, etc., we will have a wrong perspective.

On the other hand, when we surround ourselves with the word of God and prayer, when we hang with godly men and women who are taller than us (spiritually speaking), when we attend a godly church, we gain a right perspective. If we are walking with Jesus – we will have a right perspective.

*In Psalms 73, the writer, Asaph, is troubled by what he sees until he goes into the sanctuary. In the sanctuary his perspective changed. When he went to church, he found God's presence, God's people, the truth of God's word, the power of prayer and praise. Going to church matters and it matters where you go to church. Be sure to go to a church that stands for truth. It will give you the right perspective.*

May God help us not to lose our perspective; otherwise, we might not think we're falling so fast when in reality, we are!

**- Prayer -**

“Lord, help me, like Asaph, to surround myself with the good things of God that I might gain a right perspective. In Jesus name, Amen.”

Duane Harney  
Pastor

**Care for the Caregiver**

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

*Romans 12:2 (NKJV)*

It's late Sunday night. You just parked your car in the yard, unlocked the side door of your house, and started taking off your uniform. The house is quiet and you're alone. What a difference 12 hours makes. You train all the time but nothing is like reality. Was it the time you were standing in the front yard of a home as people involved in a domestic dispute shouted at you? Was it the look on the mother's face as she explained not knowing where her daughter was for two hours? What is the one thing you just can't shake? The one sight, the one smell, the one sound?

A first responder experiences many unusual situations. We aren't immune to reactions that are so strong, they override our normal coping skills. How can we prepare for these reactions? We have all experienced times where our actions and reactions are automatic, with no time to think, only time to act. We instantly reverted to the way we were trained and relied on our known and demonstrated responses. We reacted based on how we are trained and before the incident occurred. Throughout our lives, we've had some form of pre-incident training. Some may remember air raid drills, fire drills, and bomb threat evacuations in school. We do this because we know that in the face of an incident where panic and chaos can ensue, knowledge and preparation can help us better respond.

As first responders, how can we prepare before we deploy? First, let's read 2 Timothy 2:20-21: “In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Are you gold and silver or wood and clay? Paul says we need to cleanse ourselves from wood and clay by fleeing from our evil desires and calling on the Lord. By doing so, you “will be instruments for special purposes.” We need first responders who are instruments for special purposes.

A first responder's pre-incident training should include rehearsing the best responses to a crisis, AKA “Crisis Rehearsal.” The five step concept of crisis rehearsal can be used to build and strengthen us as an instrument for God and prepare us for future events. Crisis rehearsal has five main elements:

1. **Expect** to have adverse emotional reactions from working in a disaster area.
2. **Use simple techniques** to minimize these reactions (prayer, reading Bible).
3. **Practice** these simple techniques often (daily).
4. **Picture** working with people in chaos. How can this impact you? How will you minimize any negative emotions by using your simple techniques?
5. **Believe** in your training and remind yourself of times when God helped you through an emotionally trying time.

By preparing our hearts and minds, we can greatly increase our resistance to stress and build resiliency that will help us get through our current situation and prepare us for the next time we are deployed as a chaplain.

Jeff Nabor  
Retired Police Officer



40 Days I Will Respond  
Small Group Discussion

***'I Will Respond to God'***

## I WILL Respond to God

I was reading the second book of the Torah, the Book of Exodus, and was reminded of a powerful statement. In short, God approached Moses and commissioned him to be the lead in the deliverance of the Israelites from the tyranny of the Egyptian government. In Moses' fashion, he asked God, "Who shall I say sent me?" God's response, "Tell them: I Am that I Am is sending you!" This is curious to me, check it out. In this statement, God is declaring to Moses a radical relationship was ensuing. Namely, in our vernacular, "Moses, I Am whatever you're going to need; just lean into Me and I will be there for you!" You see, the name of God, a verb, is "to be". In other words, "I Am and because I Am! And I will be for you whatever your particular need might be; yes, I will meet it!" In short, Moses trusted in the "I Am" during his ministry and the rest, they say, is history!

In the ancient Hebrew language, God is given the name **Jehovah Jireh**, which means in English, "The Lord will provide." We can put it this way, "The Lord will see to it!" See what you might ask? The Lord will see to it your needs are met. In fact, in Genesis 22:8 (read Genesis 22 on your own this week; it's powerful). The chapter depicts the incredible faith of Abraham and we read Abraham's response to Isaac's question. "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Notice Abraham's response to his son, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb..." Back to the ancient Hebrew this can be translated, "God will provide Himself as the Lamb." What was the need and how did God provide? Yes, this was a test of Abraham's faith and Isaac's obedience, however, there's a powerful truth contained in this story. In verse 11 of this chapter, God responds to Abraham, "I Am here." Namely, He was going to take care of the immediate need. God did provide a ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:13) and thereby saving Isaac so that through his seed, the Messiah would come forth. The future needs and the forgiveness of sin, and the offer of eternal salvation! Check it out...Jesus the Lamb the Great I Am of John 8:58 came into the world to solve the need for the forgiveness of sin and thereby, providing the salvation of mankind (read John 1:29; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10). Hence, the "I Am" is, was, and always will be **Jehovah Jireh**.

**First Responder**, the same is for you. This same God, the "I Am" who came alongside Moses, the "I Am" who came alongside Abraham, is the same "I Am" that desires to come alongside you. Whatever your need is today, let God say and come to you: "I Am your peace. I Am your strength. I Am your help. I Am your guide. I Am your hope. I Am your comfort." In fact, God will become your ever ready present help in time of need; and He will become to you whatever your need is! Isn't that wonderful? As Moses did, as Abraham did, I encourage you to lean into God and allow Him to be the Great "I Am" for you as you **respond to God!**

## Questions

- How does this relate to you, right now?
- What is the difference between a need and a want?
- Read Philippians 4:19
- What promise is contained in this verse and how does it apply to you?
- Read Proverbs 3:5-6
- How can you trust and obey the “I Am” of the Bible?
- Where does faith come into play as you **Respond to God** (read Hebrews 11:6)



**40 Days-I Will Respond  
Week 2**

## Week 2, Day 1: I WILL Respond To God

### Are You Feeling Anxious or Worried?

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4: 6-9 (NKJV)*

First responders and our spouses are exposed to abnormally high levels of stress. Constant trauma and the unknown keep us in a hyper vigilant state. Stress affects our spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health. Worry and anxiety are prevalent among first responders. How can we best cope with the effects of stress? Often our worry and anxiety can be controlled by our thoughts. Our thoughts control our feelings which control our actions. So, we must carefully choose where our mind dwells. It is not helpful to just tell someone not to think about the negative things. The Bible, Matthew 12:44-45, tells of an owner who swept his house clean of a demon and left the house empty. Because it was empty, it was available for even more demons to move in. This is true of our mind. If we don't replace the negative thoughts, we will end up with more negative thoughts. Philippians 6 tells us we are to think on the good things and we will enjoy the peace of God. We can't actively think about two things at the same time.

There are times when the anxiety and worry are so strong that we need a powerful defensive tool. That tool is “Thanksgiving”. I have used this tool many times in my life as an officer, officer's wife, and mother of two Navy Seals. I've had plenty of fertile ground for anxiety and worry. The following helps explain the supernatural power of Thanksgiving.

Imagine you are coming to visit my home in the late afternoon. I knew that you skipped breakfast and had no time for lunch. As you walk into my house, you smell the aroma of fresh baked bread, and fried chicken with all the fixings. There's even an apple pie cooling on the counter. I tell you that I made dinner just for you. What would you say? You would say “Thank You” because you realize this is my food and I have chosen to give it to you. You recognize me as being in control with the power to satisfy your hunger. You are thankful! When we thank God, we are teaching our souls that God is truly in control and is good and powerful. When we truly believe that God is in control, God is good, and He is all powerful, we have nothing to fear. The more we thank Him for everything in our life - the more we trust Him. The greater the trust, the less we fear.

Therefore, our greatest tool to combat anxiety and worry is thanksgiving. Practice it every time you feel those negative feelings. Even if you don't feel like thanking Him, do it anyway. It is supernatural. Also, it's God's commandment for us. The Bible is full of examples of His people thanking Him. The Bible says “In all things give thanks, for this is my will for you in Christ Jesus”. (1 Thessalonians 5:18). If you are having a strong anxiety attack, pull out a piece of paper and give thanks for 50 things. You will find the power of the Holy Spirit calms your soul as you dwell on God and His goodness.

#### - Prayer -

“Father God, I am in awe of your power and your goodness. Thank you for loving me and choosing me to be your child. I know that the more I trust in you, the less I fear. Thank you for all the blessings in my life. Thank you for my spouse, my home, my job, my health, my dog, and hundreds of other blessings I often take for granted. May I choose to dwell in Your care and goodness rather than on the negative. I pray that my joy and peace will be a witness of You to my family and coworkers. In Jesus Name, Amen.”

Dr. Denise Molatch Naber, D.D.  
Former Police Officer, Counselor

## Week 2, Day 2: I WILL Respond to my Relationships

### Better Together

*“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)*

A friend and I were having lunch and discussing our relationships with our wives when he told me, “my philosophy is to treat my wife better than anyone else in the world.” I knew it was important to love your wife, but I never thought about intentionally treating her better than anyone else. Common sense, probably. Common practice, certainly not.

First Responder professions can be very damaging to relationships, whether your spouse, family, or close friends. Lots of trauma on the job and unique dynamics of the job can make us feel like we are on an island. Many times, though our family and friends are there for us, we tend to isolate ourselves. The wonderful news is that God made us relational people, and those relationships make us stronger...better than we really are. People invest in us, and we have the opportunity to do the same.

I encourage you to invest in others, encourage them and build them up. You will see a relationship develop, or an existing relationship flourish as those you invest in will invest right back in you. You will become happier, stronger, more successful and more capable of living your calling of serving our communities. If you do happen to be married, take my friend’s advice, and treat that individual better than you treat anyone else. Great things happen when we take the initiative to invest in those God places in our path.

#### - Prayer -

“Lord, thank you for my family and friends. I pray you bless them and bless our relationships so that we can be all that you created us to be.”

Tom Thompson  
Police Chief

## Week 2, Day 3: I WILL Respond to my Physical Health

### Kinda Fit, Kinda Fat

I came across a T-shirt not long ago that caught my attention. It read, "kind of fit, kind of fat." As I read those words, I realized that it summed up my current situation. And to be honest, I have mixed feelings about it. Let me explain why.

There was a time in my life when I was in great shape. I had a job that I loved at the sheriff's office and I was making more money than ever before due to all the overtime. I felt successful and my ego was stroked by the level of fame and recognition that came with my job. I was also a worship pastor which added to my sense of importance and prestige. It was a period in my life where everything felt like it was falling into place. However, life took a turn and I found myself in a really tough spot. An accident on duty left me injured and miserable. As a result, my marriage was struggling and I was dealing with physical and emotional challenges. I felt like everything was falling apart and I didn't know how to cope with all the changes.

By the grace of God, things started to shift. My wife and I started dating again and we spent a lot of time just being together, watching movies, and eating. This led to some weight gain, but it also brought us closer together. I worked with doctors to manage my disability and this required me to take medication (that I didn't want to take) and accept exercise restrictions. This helped me become healthier in some ways, but it also contributed to my weight gain.

Therefore, I find myself in a strange place where I'm trying to be healthier but also feel unfit in some ways. I'm sure there were things I could have done differently to improve my physical health without putting on weight, however, this was the path I needed to take. I had to invest my time in my marriage and my health which I neglected for so long. Through my own personal journey with Christian mindfulness, I've learned to be patient with myself and not set unrealistic expectations for achieving a certain level of fitness. I've also learned to be patient with others who may be going through their own struggles.

As I reflect on everything, I'm reminded of a scripture that says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world [wealth, fame, success], but forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26 AMP) In a way, I feel like I lost everything and then found my soul. I reconnected with God, accepted my disability, and learned to manage it. My relationship with my wife and children have never been better. So while I may be "kind of fit and kind of fat"... I'm happy and blessed. I'm working on improving my physical health. Most importantly, I know that seeking God's kingdom and righteousness will guide my steps.. With His help, I'll take care of my physical body and strive to be the best version of myself.

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."  
(Matthew 6:33 AMP)

#### - Prayer -

"Dear God, I come before You seeking Your guidance in taking care of my physical body, which is a temple for You. However, I also pray that I don't lose sight of what's truly important, which is my relationship with You and with others. Please give me the patience and strength to strive towards becoming the best version of myself that I can be. I pray all of this in the powerful name of Jesus.  
Amen."

Toby DePew  
Retired Sheriff's Deputy & Pastor

## Week 2, Day 4: I WILL Respond to my Mental and Emotional Health

### Developing a Sound Mind

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”  
2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)*

It's 6:15 a.m. as I sit in my living room with my laptop, smartphone, and 125 channels on the TV. I'm connecting with my brother 400 miles away via e-mail. He tells me to call him tonight, but I will probably text him or connect with him on Facebook. We haven't talked by phone this year.

Technology allows us quicker access to friends, family, and information, but at what cost? Is it healthy to be in a world where we don't have to talk to or see someone? Information is power, but what happens when we get too much of it? The information flow from television, Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, texting, and social websites is akin to drinking water from a firehose!

The Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex (DPC) is a region in our brain that is responsible for decision making and emotions. DPC activities increase as the volume of information increases. When the information flow reaches extreme levels, DPC activity suddenly declines rapidly, as if a “circuit breaker popped.” Decision making also diminishes as information volume increases, leaving the person struggling to make simple decisions. We may have succumbed to making decisions based on the “latest and greatest” information. We don't want to miss the “Big News.”

Today's technology diverts us from one type of communication into another. Have you ever tried to talk to someone who is texting? Take notice the next time you are with a group at your workplace and everyone receives a company e-mail. Who can resist? You have to look. How about when you're sitting in training or at a conference? How many people are checking their e-mails and text messages?

“Information fatigue” and anxiety is caused by our inability to gather all of the information. Our brain has a limited capacity. Research indicates that we can immediately recall approximately seven items at one time. That is why phone numbers contain seven digits. When the count goes above seven, the brain has to shift gears to long-term memory, which takes more effort and time.

Do you know someone who is addicted to incoming phone calls, texts, and tweets? Are you looking at that person in the mirror? The key to overcoming information fatigue is moderation. Do you control information and technology, or does it control you?

**- Prayer -**

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.”

1 Peter 5:10

Jeff Naber  
Retired Police Officer

## Week 2, Day 5: I WILL Respond to my Purpose

### On Purpose, For Purpose!

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)*

This is one of the greatest truths of all time; chiefly, before time God created you (His workmanship) from the dust of the earth **on purpose** (created in Christ Jesus), **for purpose** (for good works). Let that sink in a bit. Psalm 139 teaches us that not only did God frame us in our mother’s womb, His thoughts for us outnumber the grains of sand on the seashores of the world. Seriously? Yes...in fact, this is amazing, the reason God created you **on purpose** was **for purpose**. Huh?

Hear me out, God created you in love so that you could have an out of this world relationship with Him; namely, **on purpose**. This is truly enough; we need nothing more than knowing God loves us and created us to be the recipient of His love. However, first responder, it gets even better. Are you ready? He created you **for purpose**. Let me put it this way: God created you for a purpose (good works...God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them) that will not only bring Him glory, but also provide a radical and extreme satisfaction and fulfillment in your life. Wow!

I’ve been around the block a few times as a Chaplain and Pastor. I’ve learned personally and working with others that when we find our purpose, our calling, not vocationally, but spiritually, our life becomes an amazing and exciting venture that pales in comparison.

Let me ask you a few questions. Can you accept the truth that God created you **on purpose** to be the recipient of His love? Why? Why not?

Have you found your **purpose**, your calling, in life, outside of your vocation? If you have, run your race with vigor, with determination, with commitment (See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

If you haven’t found your place, I encourage you to talk with a trusted friend, a Pastor/Chaplain. Find someone who knows you and can help you discover **your purpose**. Seriously, as you do, your life will soar to heights you never knew.

- Prayer -

“Lord, thank You for creating me **on purpose, for purpose**. I ask that you help me to understand and own the truth that you created me for love and for a reason. Allow me to live and exist in that place for Your glory and for my blessing. Amen.”

Randy Ponder  
Pastor, Chaplain



40 Days-I Will Respond  
Small Group Discussion

***'I Will Respond  
to my Relationships'***

## I WILL Respond to my Relationships

The motto of The Rotary Foundation is “Service above self.” Having been a Rotarian for several years, I’ve witnessed firsthand the commitment of 100’s to help others. As a Pastor and Missionary, I’ve witnessed 1,000’s of believers putting the needs of others above their own for the sole purpose of caring for one in need. With this backdrop and as we focus on, **I will respond to my relationships**, I’d like to address how your relationships are going. I’ve discovered as a Chaplain, many times the trauma and challenges you as a First Responder face on a daily basis, takes a massive hit on your relationships. The question begs to be asked then, how are your relationships going? Are they healthy? Why? Why not?

Let’s touch on the massive hit you as First Responders endure daily for a moment. It’s been documented that there’s a physiological change that takes place with First Responders while they are on the job resulting in being Hyper Vigilant; in other words, First Responders are always on. Once their shift is concluded, many First Responders will go below a line called normality and become unresponsive when it comes to relational health. For example, ever have your significant other ask you what you want for dinner and your response is, “I don’t know.” Or “I don’t care.” After a long shift, there isn’t much to offer and many First Responders go into a blah zone. This can and does have devastating effects on relational health. (BTW: a must read for any First Responder - *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Kevin Gilmartin*)

Ok, what’s next then? Albeit my input is brief, my encouragement is simply a matter of priority. For example, I’ve learned from my First Responder wife that after a long day at the office, sifting through evidence, getting the needed data to the courthouse on time, and processing photos from a crime scene, etc.; many times she just needs to be left alone for a while. You know, time to gather her thoughts and transition from being a First Responder to a wife, a mother, a grandmother, and a friend. For her, (thanks to her love for the Lord) she knows when she comes home her role as a believer is to put the needs of others above her own. Even when she doesn’t feel like it. To be candid, she’s quite impressive. Some advice: if you need time to unwind after a shift, go for it. Your life outside your job in regard to your relationships, is far too important to ignore.

So, First Responder, what do you think? It has been said that many a First Responder are married to their badge. Listen closely: your vocation doesn’t define you and you need not be a statistic known as “relationally challenged.” Rather, as a believer, you have the distinct honor of serving society, and you have the blessing of serving your family and friends. Truly, our willingness to consider the needs of others above our own is directly proportional to our relational health.

Remember our role model Jesus is the Ultimate First Responder. He came to this earth to serve and give His life away. Literally hours before He was to be murdered on a tree, He washed the dirty feet of His 12 disciples. Furthermore, He was in the midst of extreme and never heard of before pressure along with cruel pain. He endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now seated next to the Father. In the midst of the cross, Jesus was relationally spot on - “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!” (See Luke 23:34) “Today, you will be with me in Paradise.” (See Luke 23:43) Talk about relational health? What a great example to follow for you. You see, for Jesus Christ, it was a matter of priority. And the priority was and will always be others!

## Questions

- What does it mean to put the needs of others above your own?
- After a long shift, do you find it hard to engage at home? Are you present and available?
- When you're emotionally bankrupt, after a long day at work, how can you serve your family and friends?
- What tangible acts of kindness can you do to augment your relational health?
- Describe what life is like at home after a long shift?
- What measures can you take to ensure your accessibility?
- What hindrances do you have to tackle to be approachable at home?
- How do you get rid of these hindrances?
- Any relationships you need to shore up, seek forgiveness for and have a new start with?
- How do you go about this?
- Are you willing to be held accountable with this group?
- Will you give yourself a break and start over in those broken relationships? (See Romans 8:1)



**40 Days - Will Respond  
Week 3**

## Week 3, Day 1: I WILL Respond to God

### A Work in Progress

*“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Philippians 2:12-13 (KJV)*

Obedience is essential to the Christian life. Our conduct matters. Paul is urging believers to continual obedience saying, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Paul is not saying work as to earn your salvation, that would contradict the whole of the gospel message. We cannot work for it.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Paul’s not saying work for it, he’s saying work it out, which is very different.

You can’t work it out if you don’t have it in.

The idea is to progress in spiritual growth and maturity. A process the Bible calls “sanctification.” Paul is speaking to believers who have already obeyed, and now encourages them to continue.

There’s still work to do.

We are to work it out “with fear and trembling.” This is not slavish fear but a Godly fear. As one man put it, “a nervous and trembling anxiety to do right” (Lightfoot). It’s a fear of coming up short of the goal; a distrust of ourselves, knowing our weakness and the deceitfulness of the heart. It is not a fear of being lost, but a fear of falling short of what God wants us to be. It’s a good kind of fear that drives us to seek God knowing that without Him we surely fail which brings us to the very important 13<sup>th</sup> verse. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” If not for verse 13, we would have no hope of living a life of obedience.

God is working in you “both to will & to do.” He gives the desire (the will) and the power (to do) what pleases Him. The desire to obey comes from the Lord. Only God can give us the supernatural ability necessary to accomplish that Godly desire!

Thank God for His grace that works in our lives. We can’t clean ourselves up. We can’t sanctify ourselves. It’s the Lord’s enablement that allows us to fulfill our solemn responsibility.

**- Prayer -**

“Dear Lord, help me to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling by receiving Your grace that enables me to desire and accomplish obedience to You. In Jesus name, Amen. “

Duane Harney  
Pastor

### **A Position of Advantage**

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” 1 Peter 5:8-9 (NKJV)*

Most defensive tactics courses teach the importance of having a “position of advantage” over your opponent. This is usually where the officer is behind the opponent and to one-side. In this location, you can clearly see all actions of the adversary. It is a physical place where you can quickly and correctly re-act. If you are standing next to or in front of your opponent, you cannot see everything they are doing. You could miss something. By the time you realize the attack has begun, your reaction would be minimal. The longer it takes to re-act, the greater the risk of injury. Timing is a critical element when reacting to the threat.

Think about your position of advantage in a spiritual sense. You have been uniquely called for your first responder position by God, to do His work. Are you paying attention to the opponent or are you hap-hazardly stumbling through your career? I remember the times I wished I was more focused on my spiritual vantage point. It is easy for us to become distracted or develop a false sense of security.

The Apostle Peter wrote about being vigilant as we watch our opponent from a position of advantage. Peter reminds us, in the verse above, there is an ever-present adversary who wants to destroy us. What actions do you take to counter this threat? Reading devotions like this one and studying God’s word can give you the right spiritual perspectives for the fight. Throughout the Bible, God tells us to seek Him. We can easily do this by communicating with Him, praying to Him, and asking Him to protect us and give us the best vantage point from which to fight.

Jeff Naber  
Retired Police Officer

**Week 3, Day 3: I WILL Respond to my Physical Health**

**Built to Serve**

*“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?”  
I Cor. 3:16 (NIV)*

I love to eat everything and especially those things that doctors tell us to limit. Pizza, burgers, chips, ice cream, all of it. Unfortunately, as I’ve aged my body doesn’t seamlessly absorb the calories like it used to, my blood pressure suffers, and my blood chemistry gets wonky. One beautiful aspect of aging is that we have gained knowledge throughout the years. This enables us to serve more effectively and live out our mission as first responders to the best of our ability. If we don’t take care of ourselves, we limit our ability to fully experience God’s calling. First responders are some of the most vulnerable to poor diets and addiction and we tend to die young.

It is inspiring to know that we ARE God’s temple and we were built in His image. Wow! Not only...but also as first responders, He has placed us in a position where each day we can significantly impact the lives of others for His glory. We are special and we are blessed! Now that is motivation to take better care of our physical health so we can experience the joy of empowering God’s people.

I encourage you to eat more fruits/veggies, limit fatty foods and sugars, put away alcohol, and find yourself a good exercise routine. You are special, treat yourself accordingly. You may never be Mr. or Ms. Olympia, but you will think more clearly, feel better, live longer, and enjoy life more. Most importantly, you’ll be better prepared to live out God’s amazing calling on your life.

**- Prayer -**

“God, thank you for allowing Your Spirit to live in me, and thank you for the opportunities to serve You each and every day. You made me unique and powerful, please give me the strength to treat my body for what it is...Your temple. Amen”

Tom Thompson  
Police Chief

## **Week 3, Day 4: I WILL Respond to my Mental and Emotional Health**

### **A Secret Place**

*“One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.” Psalm 27:4 (NKJV)*

Ever been stressed out and felt like you couldn't get out of bed? When was the last episode of anxiety that invaded your space? How has your irritability been lately? If we asked those close to you, how would they answer this? Working with Law Enforcement for almost 15 years as a Chaplain, I've discovered that those who prioritize their mental and emotional health are not only pleasant to be around, their job performance is greatly enhanced.

As first responders, you deal with the most tragic events of life on a daily basis. It's no wonder the national statistics for your respective professions show an increased level of mental and emotional turmoil and brokenness. It makes sense. Accordingly, may I suggest to you to find a place, your place. Call it a secret place where you can be alone with God to sort out life. (See Psalm 46:10) The Rabbi from Nazareth, Jesus, said one day, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27<sup>NKJV</sup>). What a great promise from the Inventor of peace. It's a peace that passes understanding and it's a peace that will settle, balance, and bless your soul. (See Ephesians 2:14a; and Philippians 4:6-7) Also, I suggest this is fostered in a secret place with just you and your God.

How does this happen? Let me offer a little hint: find a place that works for you. Personally, I have a red chair that is over 75 years old. It was my grandfather's chair. Yes, I've had it reupholstered and it's comfy. The best part, it is placed in a spot in our home that is void of noise, void of social media and it is just quiet. When I'm cranky, my wife will say, "Please, go to the chair!" When I'm at my secret place, no cell phone is allowed, no laptop, iPad, or post-it-notes. It's just me and God. It's super cool and I encourage you to try this. You'll be glad you did.

#### **- Prayer -**

"Lord, I ask for Your help as I learn to get alone with You. Help me find a secret place away from the noise/chatter of life, the to-do lists, responding to emails, texts, and voicemails. Help me to simply bask in Your presence and help me to recharge along with balancing the plethora of obligations so that my mental and emotional health is solid. Amen. "

Randy Ponder  
Pastor, Chaplain

**Finding Strength in Your Purpose**

*"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 (NKJV)*

As a First Responder, you probably started your career with high expectations and ideals. But after a time, you have probably experienced tragedies and traumatic events that are evidence that we live in a fallen world. There may be times when you become disillusioned with people and feel that maybe God is focusing His time and attention in other places. You may find yourself discouraged and even ask yourself if your hard work is worth all of the heartache.

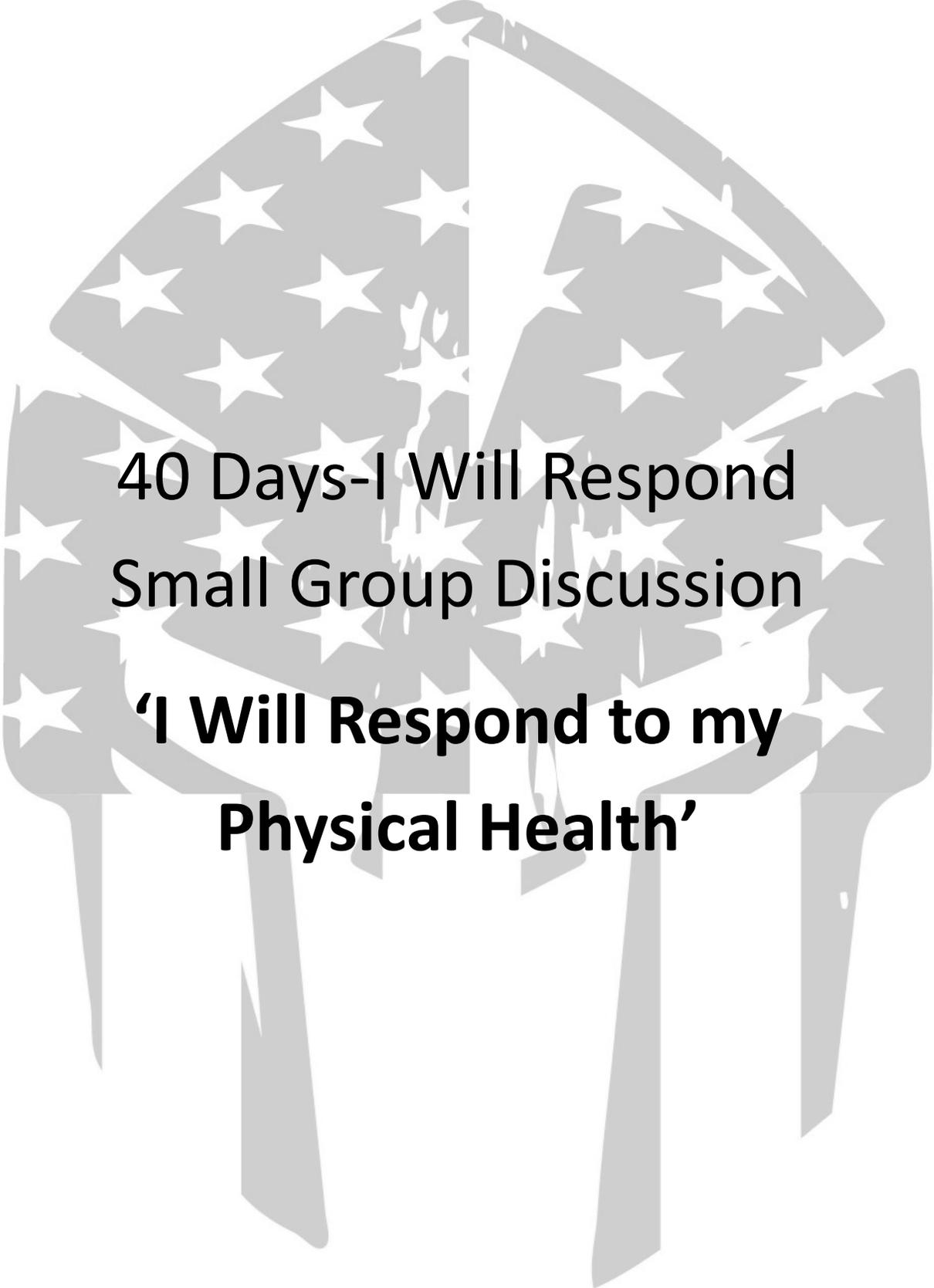
In situations like these, we need to realize that if we feel that God is not as close to us as He once was or that He should be, it is us that has moved away and not Him. God is always with you in every minute of every day. He's sitting in the seat next to you as you ride toward your next call in the fire truck, police car, or ambulance. He is standing right next to you as you answer the 911 caller screaming for help. God has His arm around your shoulder as you tell someone that their loved one will not be coming home.

God says in Matthew 28:20 *"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

**- Prayer -**

"Lord, as your word says, You give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak. We ask that You help us to realize that You are always with us, no matter where we are or what the situation might be. Lord, help us to find our strength in You and to know that we are doing Your work and that You will give us exactly what we need to finish it. Amen!"

Doug Woodward  
Police Chief



40 Days-I Will Respond  
Small Group Discussion

**'I Will Respond to my  
Physical Health'**

## I WILL Respond to my Physical Health

I made the lamest commitment on the planet, at least as far as I'm concerned. It all started with challenging my great friend, a retired 83-year-old Captain with LA Fire and an ex-Reserve Special Ops guy (Yes, Jack is a stud), to read the Bible every day in 2023. We both agreed to this and have been holding each other accountable. That's a great commitment. Well, the lame commitment, since Jack is concerned about my eating habits, is, are you ready? Here goes - I agreed to NO sugar for all of 2023, ONLY good carbs (no chips, cheeseburgers with lusty bread, etc.), ONLY 2 cups of coffee before lunchtime and a concerted workout regimen at least 5 days a week. I know, dumb, right?

Why would I commit to such a ridiculous thing? Well, Jack is big on treating your body with respect, with honor and well, you know, treating one's body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (See 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). You see, when one is physically fit, not only does one's endurance increase dramatically, the body delivers high levels of dopamine, serotonin, oxygen, etc. Furthermore, this mindset not only makes you physically healthy, but these spill over into our mental, our emotional, and our relational health. In turn, makes us much more usable for serving our God.

As a First Responder, how are you treating your body, on a physical level? What's your go-to snack when you've had a rough day? How is your exercise program going (If you have one)? On a scale of 1 to 10, (1 being super poor and 10 being super great), where do you fall on the continuum of physical health, both on eating habits and exercise? Take a minute, assess, and share where you land.

Notice, there were two components to the lame promises I made this year when it comes to physical health (tongue in cheek - I know this is best for this old soul); namely, eating and exercise. Let's briefly touch on these. **Eating** - it's been said that you are what you eat. I'm confident I don't need to speak too much on the importance of healthy eating habits; you get it, the question is are you eating right? **Exercise** - back to our text in 1 Timothy. Paul places the higher priority on spiritual health, however, he in no way negates the need for exercise. Paul also mentions physical training in the 1 Corinthians passage in that the Christian life is likened unto a race that we run in order to win. Physically speaking, we must put in the time to be fit, either by walking, sit ups, planks, running, hiking, etc., to get the result we want. Bottom line, our goal with ***I will respond to my physical health, both eating and exercise, should not be so that others admire us by how good we look (this is vanity); rather, we prioritize our physical fitness so that we will possess more physical energy so that we can do that which we are put on this earth to do - Specifically, to glorify our God (See 1 Corinthians 10:31).***

Take some time together and with candor, answer the following questions. Once completed, make a commitment to one another to either continue prioritizing your physical health; or, to get into a program that will propel you to feel, physically, the way you were designed to feel. Plainly: vibrant, and alive for the spread of the Gospel. BTW: both Jack and I are killing it when it comes to reading the Bible every day; however, I got a late start on the eating thing... but, I am TOTALLY on track now (the coffee...forget it, man)!

## Questions

- Can you articulate the importance of physical health for a Christ follower?
- Why is healthy eating important?
- Why is physical exercise important?
- How does Paul's exhortation to present our bodies so we can be a living sacrifice relate to physical health (See Romans 12:1-2)?
- What are your eating habits?
- Do you binge on junk food when crabby, depressed, angry?
- Why?
- What measures have you or can you set up to protect against bad eating habits?
- What does your exercise habits consist of?
- What is your favorite physical activity?
- Share one Ah-Ha moment you've had during an exercise.
- When was the last time you engaged, physically?
- Is exercise too time consuming? Do you need to prioritize some things in your schedule so that you can ensure a fitness program?



**40 Days-I Will Respond  
Week 4**

## Week 4, Day 1: I WILL Respond to God

### Hineni

The life of a first responder is one of commitment. This involves sacrificing all of our personal resources and talents to answer the specific calling by God to do His work. Before I became committed, I had to understand and answer the calling. I had to respond. There is a very powerful Hebrew word that explains this call to answer. The word is **Hineni** (which means “Here I am!” It is an offer of total availability. It makes me think about the oath I recited as a new police officer.

In Genesis 22:1, God called out to Abraham and he answered “Hineni” or “Here I am.”

In Exodus 3:4, God called out to Moses from the burning bush and he answered “Hineni.”

Hineni is more than a simple indication of being physically present in a location. It means I’m not only here, but I’m physically, emotionally and spiritually all in. I’m prepared to do God’s work and I am equipped and ready, “Let’s Go!”

I reminisce about my experiences as a first responder, especially the times when I was “running lights and siren” to a call. I did everything I could to prepare myself for service. I studied the law, I went to the gym, and I stayed on my knees in prayer. I was equipped and ready.

God also answers, “Hineni” when we call on Him, as written in Isaiah 58:9 (NIV); “Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say: Here am I.”

He desires that we respond to Him, draw near to Him, and live in fellowship with Him. His heart’s desire is to have an intimate relationship with us. What an amazing God! Our Heavenly Father longs for us to be ready. In our occupation, it’s not a matter of “if” we will be called, but, “when” we will be called. Are you ready?

Jeff Naber  
Retired Police Officer

**Week 4, Day 2: I WILL Respond to my Relationships**

**An Outward Focus**

*“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

*Philippians 2:3-5 (NKJV)*

I applaud you, first responder, for choosing a career that is dedicated to serving others - this is admirable, awesome, and appreciated. Well done and thank you. I wonder, though, how are your relationships outside of work? You know, behind the closed doors of your home - how is that going?

Being a Chaplain for a while, I’ve learned and witnessed many first responders who are super successful at work, yet at times at home, they’re bankrupt in cultivating the most important relationships they have; namely, their family. I get it, I have been a pastor for over 3 decades and sometimes (often) when I came home, I had nothing to offer my wife, my kids, or even my dog (LOL).  
It’s real...

Let me encourage you a bit with things that have helped me over the years. Often on my way home from the office, I’d remind myself of what Jesus said. “He came NOT to be served, but to serve” (See Mark 10:45). Hence, our greatest blessing is serving our family. I also memorized a passage that teaches us to give preference to others (See Romans 12:10). Therefore, knowing you will get your rest and rejuvenation time eventually, make a conscious effort to put your family’s needs above your own. Consequently, to the extent that we can develop and keep a mindset that has an outward focus, a focus that prioritizes their needs above our own, this is proportionate to our being available, present and involved.

When it comes down to it, to create an environment at home that thrives and moves past just surviving. It takes a heart of humility, you know, where we leave self at the curb of our property! C.S. Lewis wrote, “Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself, that’s self-deprecation. Humility is thinking of yourself less whereas you consider the needs of others (your family) as more important.”

I encourage you to put on some virtual glasses. I know this sounds weird. However, give it a try. Put on some glasses and ask Jesus to allow you to see your family through His lens. What does He see? An irritation at the end of a shift? Or, a radical blessing that you are privileged to love and serve?  
You know the answer...

**- Prayer -**

“Lord, thank You for allowing me to be a first responder. I pray that the stresses, the challenges, and the issues at work won’t impede on serving my family. Strengthen and enable me to love them with the love You love me with. Amen.”

Randy Ponder  
Pastor, Chaplain

## **Week 4, Day 3: I WILL Respond to my Physical Health**

### **The Crucial Role of Physical Health in Fulfilling God's Purpose**

As someone who desires to live out God's purpose for my life, I have come to realize that physical health plays a crucial role in achieving that goal. The Bible tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and it is our responsibility to take care of them (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Neglecting our physical health can prevent us from finishing the race that God has set before us and fulfilling our obligations to our families.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the apostle Paul uses the metaphor of running a race to describe the Christian life. To win the prize, we must exercise self-control and discipline our bodies. This implies that our physical health is essential in enabling us to reach the finish line and accomplish our goals. Moreover, Ecclesiastes 9:10a reminds us to give our best effort in everything we do. However, if our physical health is not optimal, we may not be able to give our all and complete tasks to the best of our abilities.

As a believer, I also recognize that it is my responsibility to provide for my family, not just financially, but also in terms of physical health. 1 Timothy 5:8 reminds us that we have a duty to provide for our families, and neglecting our physical health could hinder our ability to fulfill this responsibility and protect our families.

#### **- Prayer -**

“Dear God, I come to you acknowledging that taking care of my physical health is crucial in fulfilling your purpose for my life. I understand that neglecting my body can hinder me from completing my tasks, finishing my race, and providing for my family. Therefore, I pray that you help me in my pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. I commit to taking care of my body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, as I seek to serve and honor you. Please give me the discipline and motivation to exercise regularly, eat well, and get adequate rest. Help me to prioritize my physical health so that I can be better equipped to serve you and others. Thank you for the reminder that physical health is an essential component of fulfilling your purpose for my life. I pray that you give me the strength to take care of my body as I run the race set before me. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Toby DePew  
Retired Sheriff's Deputy & Pastor

**Week 4, Day 4: I WILL Respond to my Mental and Emotional Health.**

**Let God**

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6,7 (NIV)*

There are times, more often than I'd like, I wake up in the middle of the night with my head spinning. My mind is thinking about the million things I need to do and maybe some unpleasant things that I have experienced. I feel pressure, anxious, and sometimes fearful. Many of my friends and acquaintances have experienced the same. As first responders, our world is unique. We are witness to things no person should witness. The bar is set pretty high for our performance and people's lives and liberties depend on us. Nothing to worry about, right?

God gives us direction throughout His Word that is so simple. It could be summed up as easily as don't worry, give it to God, He is in control. The reality is we aren't really in control of much. There are way too many balls in the air, too many people, personalities, events, and various other matters for us to control. We worry about things we can do nothing about. God holds everything in His hands. He knows what needs to be done, He knows what's going to happen, and His will is going to be accomplished. I realize that I need to step back, breathe and let God do His thing. If we give our anxiety and worries over to God, He promises to give us peace and will guard our hearts. Once I accepted this promise, when I awake in the middle of the night I pray, (breathe in) let go and (breath out) let God.

It works!

**- Prayer -**

“Heavenly Father, I am your creation and you are God. You control everything. I give my worries, my trauma, and my future to You. Thank you, God, for giving me your peace. Amen”

Tom Thompson  
Police Chief

### Finding Peace with the Job

*“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
Isaiah 55:8-9. (NASB)*

I spent a few years as a police officer and thirty years as a police spouse. Like you, I saw a great deal of pain and trauma that often seemed unfair. It’s normal to question why a young father was taken from his family or why a young child was kidnapped and murdered. Everyone is abhorred with these situations, but as a first responder, you are overloaded with the horrendous. It is easy for memories and flashbacks to pile up and overwhelm us. First responders usually try to make sense out of the senseless, but when your cup is too full, you and your job may be at risk. You are healthiest and able to do your best job when you can release some of the frustration. It helps to talk about your feelings but we still are troubled by the whys.

We will never easily accept those events that seem so unfair. As a Christian, you can find solace in the fact that God is good, never makes a mistake, and is always in control. We must trust His character even when we don’t understand His ways. We probably will never know the answer to most of our questions, but we can trust that God does have a purpose for all things. As a sovereign God, He allows things we do not like or understand. There is no way to see future effects of today’s tragedies. To have peace with all that we see on the job, we must believe in God’s wisdom and goodness. If that is difficult for you, it is probably a good time for you to get spiritual help and grow in your understanding of God. A.W. Tozer said “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...”.

We are spiritual beings. If you are a Christian you understand that we cannot make sense of this world without a faith in Christ. If all we have is this life on earth, then we will never have peace with all the pain that we see. We must be able to see this life as temporal and know that eternal life is our destination. Growing in your spiritual walk will help you stay healthy on the job. You will not only have a greater peace with the difficult situations, but you will have a greater compassion for those that will frustrate you.

My late husband was the first responder to a murder suicide that involved a father and his five year old twin girls. Andy held the lifeless little girl in his arms and refused to accept that she did not have a pulse. It was a traumatic event and it took a while for him to recover. I watched him struggle with the evil of the killings and turn to his faith in God for peace. He could not make sense of things, but he chose to dwell on God’s goodness instead of man’s evil. It’s not denial, it is replacing our thoughts with the truth of our faith. As a Christian, God gives us the supernatural ability to accept the senseless by reminding our hearts and minds that our ways are not God’s ways.

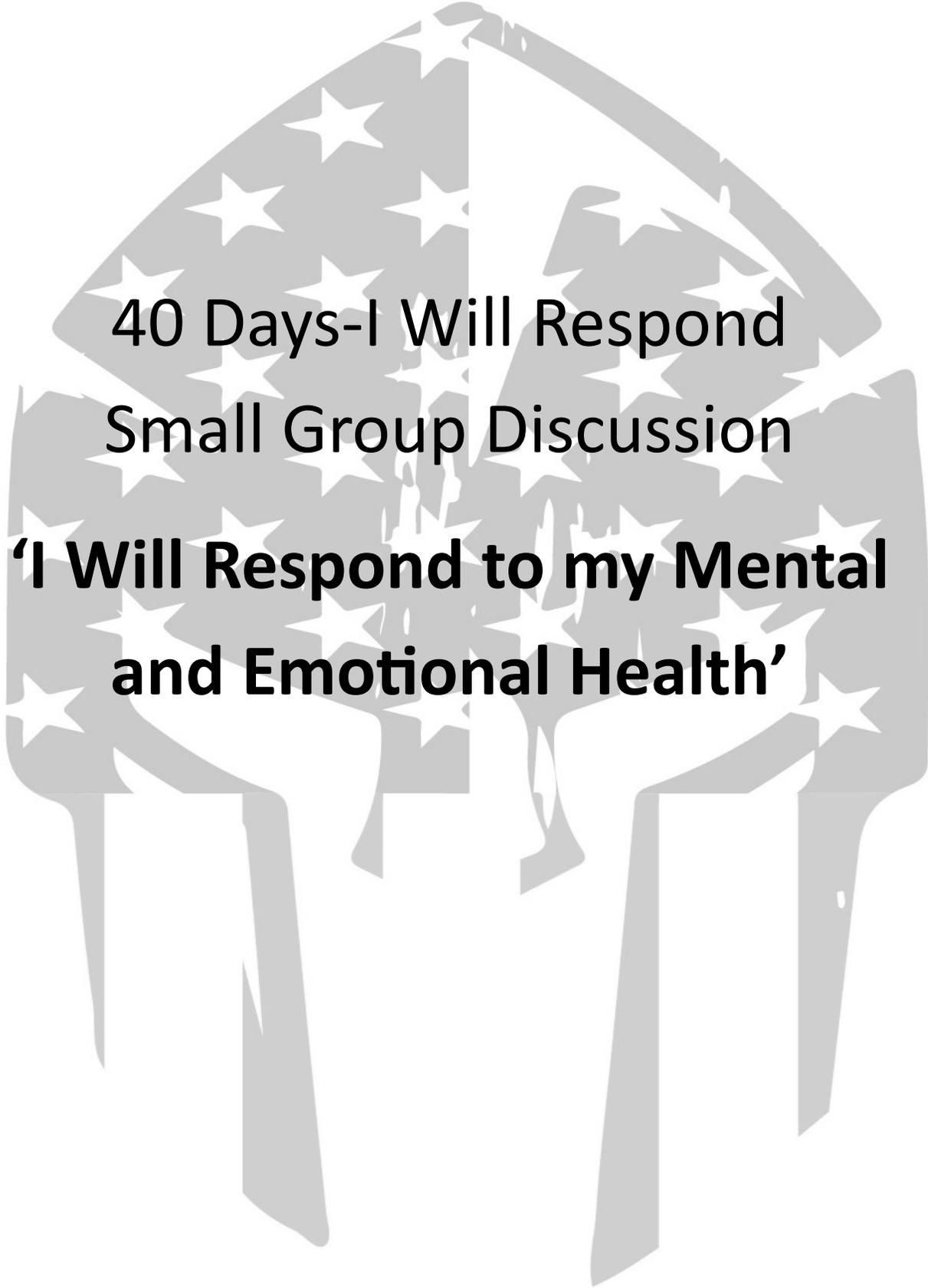
Your goal should be to survive your first responder career with an intact faith. Know that you are chosen to help others and even if you can’t verbally attest to your faith at work, you can show compassion and love. Rather than struggling with the whys, you can gain your peace from reminding yourself daily God is good, never makes a mistake, and is in control. Reinforce these beliefs by actively growing in your faith through Bible Study and fellowship with other Christians.

#### - Prayer -

“Father, I thank you that you are good and that I can trust you even when the world does not make sense. Plant within me the desire to seek and know you better. Seeking You will increase my faith and trust. Please give me the ability to serve others and yet not be overwhelmed by the pain and tragedy that I see everyday.  
May I be a witness of your love and goodness to my fellow workers.

In Jesus Name, Amen”

Denise Molatch Naber D.D.  
Former Police Officer/Counselor



40 Days-I Will Respond  
Small Group Discussion  
**'I Will Respond to my Mental  
and Emotional Health'**

## I WILL Respond to my Mental and Emotional Health

You've no doubt heard the phrase, "... misery loves company ..." and at times have leaned on the plight of others to augment an internal struggle. Well, great news today, First Responder. One of the greatest of the greats is a man named Elijah. This guy performed miracle after miracle and yet, on at least one occasion, in his frustration, he let his mouth run and said some things he probably didn't mean. Namely, he stated that he wanted his life to end.

Here's some context. One of the vilest women that ever lived was a woman named Jezebel; truly unholy and demonic. Well, after Elijah slaughtered 450 of her prophets of Baal with the sword on Mt. Carmel in Israel (not to mention another 400 of her prophets of Asherah, see 1 Kings 18), Jezebel was so enraged that she issued a death notice on Elijah. Once Elijah heard of this impending death sentence, he ran some 85 miles away to hide, bemoan his life, and no doubt was so bushed he didn't want to go on any further. You see, Elijah was emptied, drained, and totally bankrupt, both mentally and physically, which led to his mental, emotional breakdown.

Before we continue, let me ask a question: what do you do when you're empty, mentally, emotionally? You know, when you're in a distraught condition, after a long shift that no human being should have to witness. Perhaps, like Elijah, you might say, in your frustration, "Lord, I'm done. Slay me. Take me home. I can't go on and I don't want to!" Hold on, great news ahead.

Obviously, if Elijah wanted to die, he didn't have to run and could have stayed behind. The fact that he did run was proof he did want to live. All the same, he was worn down and worn out, mentally/emotionally. As a result, he went to sleep. For the sake of time, let me cut to the chase. The Lord in His compassion, understanding and love, ministers to Elijah with food and with encouragement, "... behold, the Word of the Lord came to him ..." I draw your attention to verses 11-12 (someone read these aloud again). Notice, the Lord wasn't in the windstorm, the earthquake, the fire; rather, the Lord ministered to him in a still small voice. And, I submit to you that the voice was a gentle, affirming, kindhearted voice that said something like, "Elijah, it's going to be okay. I'm in this situation. You hold on to Me and I'll perform once again for you!"

The same still small voice that touched Elijah's heart and propelled him to continue, is the same still small voice that is privy to you as a follower of Christ and as a First Responder. It's important to note that Elijah was in the quiet cave when God spoke to him. In other words, the noise, the chaos, the chatter of life was absent. Yes, there was wind, an earthquake and fire; however, it was in the quietness of Elijah's heart that the still small voice lifted him out of his mental and emotional quagmire.

**First Responder**, when you're in a state of mental and emotional duress, get away to a quiet place and let the "word of the Lord" and "the still small voice" of the Spirit minister to you. Truly, this will lift you out of that place of mental and emotional pressure we all experience.

## Questions

- Can you share a time when you've been mentally and emotionally bankrupt?
- What did you do? How did it go?
- How did you get out of that proverbial pit of despondency?
- Are you there now? What should you do?
- Read Psalm 46:10
- What does this say to you in light of the story of Elijah?
- Do you have a place you can go during these times? Why? Why not?
- Read Psalm 27:4
- What was David's main goal in life?
- How can you incorporate a heart like David's, a man that struggled with mental and emotional challenges throughout his life?
- How can you in this small group help one another in these times of need?
- Ideas:
- A coffee date?



**40 Days-I Will Respond  
Week 5**

## Week 5, Day 1: I WILL Respond to God

### It's Life Changing!

*"The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save you. He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, and He will rejoice over you with singing."*

*Zephaniah 3:17 (NKJV)*

God's love, a supernatural out of this world passion of Almighty God to love humanity (that's you and me). A love that is beyond measure, beyond understanding, and beyond reason. It's a love the Intelligent Designer initiated before His miraculous creation; called the birth of the world. In fact, His love for us isn't based on our performance, our goodness, or coolness. His love for us is saturated in His Son's love for all humanity. A love that was proved and validated on a hill called Calvary.

(See Romans 5:8)

Take a minute and think about this life changing truth. God loves you! The prophet of old said it so well; "namely, our God, the Mighty One, saves, rejoices, quiets, and sings over **you!**" What? That's right. And not only that, the object of His affection is **you** and He loves **you** so much that He can't take His eyes off of **you!**

Check it out, the repetitive thread of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures is peppered with the truth that God loves you right where you are and irrespective of what you've done or where you've been.

He loves you and desires to have an intimate relationship with you. It's been said that God loves us not because of us, rather, He loves us in spite of us. Truly, His love for you and for me was and always will be secured because of that incredible sacrifice of His Son on Calvary's Hill.

Today, can you accept this life changing truth of God's love for you? Can you embrace the truth that God is for you and not against you (See Romans 8:31)? Will you rejoice that "nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:38-39). And will you commit to love our God more today than yesterday, but not as much as tomorrow? Truly, it's a journey that will change your life now and for all of eternity.

### - Challenge -

Today, ensure your life trajectory is a radical pursuit of God's love for you. How? A healthy diet of reading the Bible, a fervent prayer life, a habitual meditation on His love, and a desire to grow daily in the knowledge of His love for you. You see, knowing and believing God loves you will radically help you navigate through the ups and downs of your life's calling, specifically, that of a **First Responder**.

Randy Ponder  
Pastor, Chaplain

## Week 5, Day 2: I WILL Respond to my Relationships

### Your Greatest Source of Emotional Support

*Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18. (NASB)*

Several years ago, one of my closest friends lost her husband to cancer. She shared with me that the most difficult part of being a widow was realizing she was no longer first on someone's list. Five years later when my husband died, I fully grasped how she felt.

We are not made to live our life alone. We were created for a relationship. In the very beginning, God observed Adam in the garden and did not have an issue with his job performance. However, He did recognize that Adam was lacking something. He needed a companion to support, encourage, and love him. God designed a most unique creature to meet specific needs. Spouses help each other achieve their potential.

As first responders, we experience stress from traumatic circumstances on a daily basis. When this stress builds up and is unresolved we often turn to unhealthy coping skills. High divorce, suicide, and addiction rates seem to indicate there is very little help for the first responder. However, I believe that there is effective support. It is a 24/7 support system tailored just for you by a God who knows you intimately. Your most valuable support system is your marriage partner. This support system is often ignored or neglected. Perhaps we think it is too simple to think of our marriage as our greatest help. It helps to remember that marriage was God's first institution and His love for us is simple, not complicated. He loves to bless us. We have to choose to accept His blessings.

As a marriage counselor, I have discovered that the emotionally healthy first responder is usually part of a caring, involved, and encouraging relationship. When we come home to a safe environment where we are accepted and loved, we are able to recharge. We feel valuable when another person listens and gives us their time. Our spouse feels valuable when we listen to them and recognize their importance in our life. Mutual respect and trust creates a safe haven within the home. It becomes a refuge from an angry and often dangerous world.

It is never too late to create your safe haven. Take time and be intentional in your marriage. Develop your friendship and look for ways to encourage each other. Learn to truly listen and seek to understand each other. Knowing that someone puts you first and values you above everyone else in the world is powerful. It brings you joy and a reason to look forward to coming home everyday.

#### - Prayer -

"Father, I thank you for the 24/7 support system of my marriage. You created us as unique individuals and gave us each other to help us become who you have called us to be. Teach me to love, honor, and respect my spouse so that they may feel confident and emotionally healthy. May we always see the best in each other and intentionally build each other up. Help us to create a safe haven in our home where we can recharge, relax and prepare for tomorrow. In Jesus Name, Amen."

Dr. Denise Molatch Naber, D.D.  
Former Police Officer, Counselor

## Week 5, Day 3: I WILL Respond to my Physical Health

### The Importance of Nurturing the Body, Soul, and Spirit for Achieving Optimal Health.

I firmly believe achieving optimal health involves not just taking care of our physical body but also nurturing our mind and soul. It's something I value deeply and I've learned that certain practices are necessary to achieve overall well-being.

One of the things I prioritize in my life is studying the Bible. The guidance and wisdom I receive from the scriptures have helped me to grow in my relationship with God. Truly made a positive impact on my mental health. Reading and meditating on the scriptures bring me calmness and a sense of inner peace.

Prayer is another essential part of my daily routine. It helps me to connect with God, express gratitude, and seek guidance and strength. It also helps me reduce anxiety and promote emotional well-being.

My Christian version of mindfulness is a practice that has been particularly beneficial in managing stress and improving my mental health. By focusing on the present moment and accepting it without judgment, I've learned to appreciate the simple things in life and reduce my anxiety.

Maintaining a balanced and nutritious diet is also crucial for my physical health. I've learned to prioritize nutrient-dense foods that help my body function correctly and maintain optimal health. A healthy diet has also positively impacted my mental health by reducing the risk of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. I'm also committed to regular physical activity, which includes exercise and lifting weights. It has improved my cardiovascular health, strengthened my muscles and bones, and reduced the risk of chronic diseases. Additionally, exercise has improved my mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.

Finally, in thinking about this scripture from Psalms 119:37 AMP *“Turn my eyes away from vanity [all those worldly, meaningless things that distract—let Your priorities be mine], And restore me [with renewed energy] in Your ways.”*

I've found that limiting my screen time has been a game-changer for me. I used to spend hours on my phone and laptop which negatively impacted my physical and mental health. By reducing my screen time and engaging in more physical and social activities, I've experienced improved sleep quality, less eye strain, and a reduction in anxiety.

- Prayer -

“Dear God, I believe that taking care of my physical, psychological, and spiritual health is essential for optimal well-being. Help me to prioritize studying the Bible, prayer, mindfulness, maintaining a healthy diet, exercising, lifting weights, and limiting screen time in my daily routine. Guide me towards a life of overall health and wellness. Amen.”

Toby DePew  
Retired Sheriff's Deputy & Pastor

## Week 5, Day 4: I WILL Respond to my Mental and Emotional Health

### Prosperity

The definition of prosperity is: "A successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, good fortune." Our world is surrounded by examples of prosperity or what people think is prosperous. Prosperity often implies success in terms of wealth, health, and happiness. You are prosperous if you have a good job. You are prosperous if you own a house, drive a nice car, and have a great family.

Although it's been years ago, I remember the day I became a police officer. I took an oath in front of friends and family. I was so proud of my accomplishment. I worked hard, studied hard, and now, I had the opportunity of a lifetime. Like the aforementioned definition, I felt successful. I had good fortune.

However, as I found out, the life of a first responder is not always thriving or of good fortune. There was no prosperity the night my co-worker was killed. It was not present the day I did CPR on a six year old boy. The domestic violence calls, the serious auto accidents, the fatalities. They suck the feeling of prosperity out of first responders.

I tried for years to find my success and fortune from my job. My position as a law enforcement officer became my identity. As my identity with my job increased, my identity as a husband and father decreased. I became more dependent on my own strengths. Life is full of adversities and disappointments, and trials. I have faced times in my life where I could not succeed and I did not have good fortune. These times became deep struggles for someone like me. A first responder who became self-dependent.

During these adverse seasons of life, one thing never changed. God never left me. Although I drifted from my relationship with Him, He is always there waiting for me. In the Book of Deuteronomy 31:6 it is written " Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be afraid of them, for the Lord your God, He is one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

What is true prosperity? For me the definition of prosperity is understanding that my success is not based on my accomplishments or what I can do. My prosperity is based on my relationship with God and my dependence on Him to guide and carry me.

**- Prayer -**

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Jeff Naber  
Retired Police Officer

## Week 5, Day 5: I WILL Respond to my Job/Mission/Purpose

### Our Sacred Calling

*“The King will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40 (NIV)*

I had the opportunity to investigate several homicides and other other violent crimes. However, the worst has been child pornography cases. On the surface, it’s just plain horrible what human beings can do to each other. As first responders, we see the worst of the worst. People in our community don’t even know they exist. Without the right perspective of our mission, we carry a dark heavy load. As my career progressed and my relationship with God grew, I came to see what we do as a sacred calling.

First responders are continually dealing with those who are facing trauma, poverty, hurt, and oppression. These are the exact people that God compels us to serve throughout the Bible; the poor, the children, the widows, the sick, the foreigner, and the incarcerated. He tells us whatever we do to them, we do to Him. Now that is an awesome mission! Whether you are a fireman, medic, police officer, corrections officer or dispatcher, God is hand delivering to you on a daily basis the exact population he wants you to serve. I would describe Sacred Calling as a blessing and a special gift from God. Once I came to grasp that concept, the view of my mission and the associated darkness started to lift. That doesn’t mean we don’t work with ugly situations, but it does mean those ugly situations are God given opportunities to serve Him by serving those at the center of His heart.

#### - Prayer -

“Thank you Lord for giving me this **sacred calling** as a first responder. Thank You for giving me the opportunity to be Your hands and feet. I pray that You will surround me with Your wisdom and power. Amen.”

Tom Thompson  
Police Chief



40 Days I Will Respond  
Small Group Discussion

***'I Will Respond to my  
Job/Mission/Purpose'***

## I WILL Respond to my Purpose

Have you ever wondered why on the earth am I here? You know, what is my purpose kind of thoughts? I'm sure we all had these questions and thoughts from time to time about our existence, especially as a First Responder. Well, I have great news for you and yes, I have the answer. Here we go: God knows, and God created you on purpose for a purpose. Allow me to do a bit of preaching for a moment to add context.

First, God created you on purpose. In the passages you've read, the first two (Psalm 139:13-18; Isaiah 43:7), among others, have to do with the why question. Namely, you were created on purpose to be loved on, cared for, always being thought of, and in a kind grand way so that you could bring glory to our God: **whom I created for My glory**. *Consider this for a moment, God loved you enough to send His Son into the world not only to forgive your sins, but to also give you an out of this world relationship with Him. An intimate spiritual relationship that is beyond words. In fact, the first century Christian icon named Peter wrote, "Who having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). John Piper wrote, "God is most glorified when I am most satisfied in Him." You see, when we are totally satisfied and fulfilled in that vertical relationship, we can't help but desire to please Him in all we do on a horizontal level. Hence, these principles work together to ensure we live a God glorifying life. Further, as I delight in Him, glorifying Him becomes a "get to" and a "want to" instead of an arduous "have to." Does that make sense?*

Secondly, God created you for purpose. The third passage above speaks to the because question (Ephesians 2:10); namely, you were birthed in Christ Jesus for good works. Back to the "get to" vs. the "have to" truth. When I'm in love with my Creator, living by the Spirit's power to glorify Him (See Galatians 5:16 and 5:25), I begin to live life as life was intended to be lived. Chiefly, in that wonderful communion with my Lord every day of my life and existing while fulfilling my purpose. In a nutshell, due to time, Paul wrote that we are His workmanship (His masterwork of art) birthed and created in Christ Jesus (for good works). Listen closely, every believer in Christ was created for a purpose (Reference Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11) and was given the exhortation that purpose, specifically you, was known by God before the world began. His heart for you is to discover, walk in, and thrive in that purpose.

As a First Responder, you have a distinct privilege to own the blessing that our God ordained to you which is to serve, care for, and protect others. How amazing is that? And, not only your vocation as a First Responder, I surmise and am convinced that you have a calling and a role outside of the badge, no question.

Spend some time reflecting on the questions on the following page.

## Questions

- Read 1 Corinthians 10:31
- What does this mean to you?
- How can you glorify God in all of that you do, even on the job (See 1 Peter 4:10-11)?
- Share examples
- Read John 10:10
- What does the first part of this verse mean to you?
- Read 1 Peter 5:8 and expound on the implications of this verse
- What did Jesus mean when He said, "I came to give life and life more..."
- Are you living that abundant life? Why? Why not?
- What do you need to do to experience the day in day out intimate relationship with Almighty God to ensure an abundant life.
- God created you for a purpose. Do you know what that is?
- What is your spiritual gift(s)? Teaching? Administration? Compassionate care?
- How are you using that gift?
- Have you ever taken a Spiritual Gift Assessment to determine your purpose, your gifting?
- Are you willing to take a test, even right now?
- <https://giftstest.com> (NOTE: there are several assessments online you can check out; in my experience, this is a solid one. Also, these assessments aren't always 100% accurate, they're intended to give insight into you and foster a diligent path to not only discover your purpose, but to grow and thrive in that purpose) How can you grow in your gifting?
- What opportunities do you know of?

## About the Authors



### Toby DePew

Toby is the co-founder of Heroic Deeds and is a retired Sheriff's Deputy from San Luis Obispo, CA. He holds a degree in pastoral ministry and has served as a pastor for more than 15 years. As a sheriff's deputy, Toby created a county-wide Chaplain program and specialized in Peer Support training and Crisis Intervention training.

### Duane Harney

Pastor Duane Harney is the founder and Senior Pastor of Community Harvest Church in Germantown, Ohio, and holds a Doctoral Degree in Philosophy in Bible Teaching. Many servant leaders have been cultivated in his 30-year ministry. His support and dedication to honoring First Responders has a continuous impact as he actively serves on the Heroic Deeds Nonprofit board.



### Denise Molatch Naber

Denise is a biblical counselor for First Responders, a former police officer, and a widow of a veteran police officer. She holds a degree in Criminal Justice and Counseling, and she and her husband Jeff, host First Responder marriage retreats at their farm in No. Carolina. Denise passionately believes in marriage as the greatest emotional topic at the Responders in Faith Conference: Building a Refuge in the Home; a Place to Recharge.

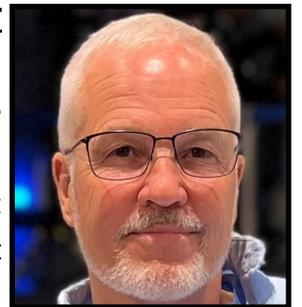
### Jeff Naber

Jeff began his LE career in the US Air Force, Security Forces. He continued in LE as a police officer, deputy sheriff and U.S. Probation Officer. His federal service included work as an instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

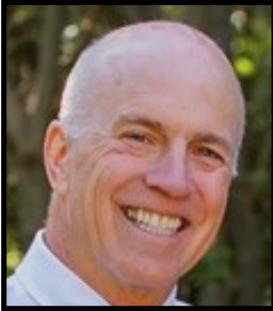
He retired from LE in 2012 and served as the Manager of Law Enforcement Ministry for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc. from 2013-2019. Jeff has taught crisis intervention and spiritual fitness courses throughout the U.S., as well as,

in Europe, South America, and Asia. Jeff and his wife, Denise, are facilitators for Wilderness Scout Ministries, a ministry that offers marriage counseling and marriage retreats to LE couples.

They live on a small farm in rural NC and support their 5 children and 11 grandkids.



## About the Authors-cont.



### Randy Ponder

Pastor Randy Ponder has been serving in ministry for over 30 yrs. First, as a Youth/ Missions pastor, and for the last 22 years as a senior pastor in Temecula and Morro Bay, CA. He has been a Chaplain for 15 yrs. serving the Morro Bay Police Dept, San Luis Obispo Co. Sheriff's Office, and most recently, the Bonner Co. Sheriff's Office in Sandpoint, ID. Pastor Randy has a heart for service and understands the toll that it takes on those in the First Responder profession. His passion is to share Jesus, not only to the lost but also to the found, as the only source that will provide true contentment.

### Tom Thompson



Chief of Police/Director of Public Safety, Sinclair Community College  
Tom serves as the Chief of Police/Director of Public Safety at Sinclair Community College. Previously he served as the Network Executive Director of Police for the Kettering Health Network, Assistant City Manager in Miamisburg, Ohio and retired as the Assistant Chief of Police of the Miamisburg Police Department. Chief Thompson founded Valens Solutions, a non-profit organization which focuses on connecting immigrants to quality-of-life resources and provides scholarships for persons entering Law Enforcement and Health Care professions. He is a speaker and consultant with Law Enforcement Action Partnerships, a workplace violence consultant with KLA Risk Management, is on the Welcome Dayton Committee, the Advisory Board of the Dayton Equity Center, the Board of Heroic Deeds, the Macedonia Community Development Corporation Board and is a Silver lifetime member of the NAACP. He is a veteran of the United States Air Force and has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Chapman University and a Master's in Public Administration from Wright State University. He has been married to his wife Tiffany for almost 33 years. They have three children and eight grandchildren.



### Doug Woodward

Chief Woodward began his law enforcement career in 1984 with the Madison Township Police Department, Montgomery County, Ohio. In 1988, he joined the West Carrollton Police Department as a patrol officer. After a few years as a patrol officer, he became a K-9 handler and an instructor. In 1995, Chief Woodward was promoted to the rank of sergeant and assumed the responsibilities as the third shift supervisor as well as becoming the departments training coordinator. In 2005, he was promoted to Deputy Chief of Police, and was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the police department. In 2013, he was appointed as the Chief of Police where he continues to serve today. Chief Woodward has obtained an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice, a Bachelor's Degree in the Administration of Criminal Justice, and a Master's Degree in Strategic Leadership. He has graduated from Police Executive Leadership College (PELC) and Certified Law Enforcement Executive (CLEE). In 2016, Chief Woodward graduated from the FBI National Academy, Session 263. Chief Woodward has served as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Tactical Crime Suppression Unit. He currently serves as a member of both the Ohio Chiefs of Police Publication Committee and Advisory Services Committee. Chief Woodward is also the coordinator for the Greater Montgomery County Critical Incident Stress Management Team, and currently sits on the Board of Directors of Battle Tested and Big Brothers, Big Sisters of the Greater Miami Valley.

## Introduction

### **After Campaign Action Plan: I Will Respond: Embracing God's Guidance**

As you engage in the weekly devotions, we encourage you to reflect on how God may be directing you during this campaign. Listen to your heart and be attentive to any promptings or ideas from Him. It's time to create an action plan for after the campaign, whether it's for your personal life or for your small group.

Your plan could be as simple as serving your community through a small group project, prioritizing your health with an exercise routine, conquering a personal challenge like addiction, initiating a peer support program at work, or organizing a gathering with friends. Pursuing any other idea that resonates with you will not only benefit you but others.

As you prayerfully consider God's guidance, take intentional action. Set specific and achievable goals that align with His will, and develop a plan to attain them. Break your goals into smaller steps, and commit to consistent progress. Embrace a proactive, resilient, and feedback-oriented approach.

Remember to stay flexible and adaptable, as God's guidance may evolve along the way. Surround yourself with a supportive community that can provide encouragement, accountability, and celebration. Express gratitude for the opportunities and growth that arise from following God's lead.

After the campaign, it's crucial to share your after-action plan with us for your small group or personal development. Whether through an email, a social media post, or by tagging us in order to join in celebrating and collaborating with you. As a leader, taking ownership and executing with precision will set the tone for your success. Thus, brief us on your plan and let's work together to drive a positive momentum forward!

With God's wisdom, grace, and strength, you can make a meaningful impact during and beyond this campaign. Trust in His guidance, take action with faith and obedience, and know that you are capable of success!

## **Steps to create an effective After Campaign Action Plan: I Will Respond: Embracing God's Guidance**

As you reflect on how God may be guiding you during this campaign, it's time to create an after-action plan for your personal life or small group. As a leader, taking ownership and executing with precision is crucial, knowing that responding to God equals freedom.

Here are the steps to create an effective after-action plan:

- 1. Prayerfully Consider God's Guidance:** *Take time to listen to your heart and pay attention to any ideas or nudges from God. Reflect on how He may be leading you to make a meaningful impact. Seek His wisdom, grace, and strength in discerning your next steps.*
- 2. Set Specific, Achievable Goals:** *Based on God's guidance, set specific, achievable goals for your personal life or small group. These goals should align with His will and be challenging enough to stretch you but also realistic enough to be achievable. Write them down and make them measurable.*
- 3. Set a Plan with Smaller Steps:** *Break down your goals into smaller, actionable steps. Create a plan that outlines the steps you need to take to achieve each goal. This will help you stay organized and focused on making progress. Be intentional and disciplined in your approach.*
- 4. Be Proactive, Resilient, and Open to Feedback:** *Take consistent action toward your goals. Be proactive in overcoming challenges and resilient in the face of setbacks. Stay open to feedback from God, trusted mentors, and from your supportive community. Learn from failures and use them as opportunities for growth.*
- 5. Stay Flexible and Adaptable:** *Recognize that God's guidance may change along the way. Stay flexible and adaptable in your approach. Be willing to adjust your plan as needed, while staying aligned with His will.*
- 6. Surround Yourself with a Supportive Community:** *Surround yourself with a supportive community that can cheer you on, provide accountability, and offer encouragement. Share your after-action plan with them and seek their support. Celebrate your progress together and offer gratitude for the opportunities and growth that come from following God's lead.*
- 7. Share Your Plan and Collaborate:** *After this campaign, share your after-action plan with us. Whether through an email, a social media post, or tagging us, we want to celebrate and collaborate with you. Your proactive approach in planning your next steps will set the tone for your success. Let's lock arms and drive positive momentum forward together!*

With God's wisdom, grace, and strength, you can make a meaningful impact during this campaign and beyond. Trust in His guidance, take action with faith and obedience, and remember that you've got this!

**THEN I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD  
SAYING, “WHOM SHALL I SEND? AND  
WHO WILL GO FOR US?” AND I SAID,  
“HERE AM I. SEND ME!”**

**ISAIAH 6:8**

