

Sample



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The
HEART
of a
CHAPLAIN

Instructor Guide

— SECOND EDITION —

EXPLORING ESSENTIALS FOR MINISTRY

How to Use the Heart of a Chaplain

Instructor Guide

This Instructor Guide is a 107-page resource, designed to accompany *The Heart of a Chaplain*. It includes lesson summaries, additional guided discussion questions, reflection prompts, and personal exercises for each chapter. The instructor should use this guide in conjunction with each student having their own Student Workbook. Used together, students will engage deeply with the text, record insights, and apply lessons to their personal and professional development.

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CHAPTER ONE -- “SO YOU WANT TO BE A CHAPLAIN?”

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces chaplaincy through the story of Bob and the author’s transition from ‘clown’ and ‘detective’ ministry to ‘sojourner’ ministry. Students will explore the meaning of being a ‘visible reminder of the Holy,’ consider motivations for chaplaincy, and examine the growing demand.

Learning Objectives

- Define chaplaincy as ‘sojourning’ with others.
- Explain what it means to be a ‘visible reminder of the Holy.’
- Reflect on personal motivations for chaplaincy.
- Recognize the societal growth of chaplaincy.

Instructor Teaching Notes

Begin with Bob’s story and ask learners what makes his ministry so compelling. Use this narrative to surface their assumptions about chaplaincy and to introduce the idea of the chaplain as a “visible reminder of the Holy.” Briefly highlight the chapter’s data about chaplaincy’s growth across sectors to show that this is a serious and expanding vocation, not a niche role. Throughout, keep tying the discussion back to students’ own sense of calling and whether their gifts and temperament align with this picture of chaplaincy.

Reflection Questions from The Heart of a Chaplain

1. Is a recognition or representation of the Holy in the life and ministry of a chaplain important? Why or why not?
2. In the simplest of terms, this chapter defines a chaplain as “a visible reminder of the Holy.” Is this definition adequate? How does this definition shape or influence the ministry of a chaplain?
3. Which elements are most important to you in the more comprehensive definition of chaplains used in this resource? Why?
4. Some organizations are substituting the title “Spiritual Care Provider” for “Chaplain.” Do you believe “chaplain” is outdated and should be changed? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions

- A. Why was the image of Bob walking with the patient transformative for Dr. Browning?
- B. How does ‘sojourning’ change your understanding of chaplaincy compared to ‘clown’ or ‘detective’ ministry?

C. Is 'visible reminder of the Holy' an adequate definition of chaplain? Why or why not?

D. What motivates people to become chaplains, and how do you discern pure versus mixed motives?

E. Why is chaplaincy growing across so many sectors today?

Case Study Activity

Scenario: A patient tells you, 'I don't want to talk about God, I just need someone to listen.' Role-play this encounter. Discuss how to provide purposeful presence without imposing belief.

Activity Extension

Have students create a Chaplain Word Map with terms from this chapter (e.g., sojourner, visible reminder of the Holy, advocate). Discuss how these words shape identity.

Key Takeaway

Chaplains are sojourners—embodying the presence of the Holy, listening deeply, and walking alongside others in secular institutions.

Chaplains fulfill a sacred calling to accompany and provide professional support and spiritual nurture for everyone in their distinctive secular communities, which authorize and hold them accountable.

CHAPTER TWO -- SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND THE CALL

Lesson Overview

This lesson explores spiritual formation and the chaplain's call. Students will examine how identity, calling, and formation shape chaplain ministry, including questions of vocational discernment and case studies on chaplain identity.

Learning Objectives

- Identify key questions in discerning a call to chaplaincy.**
- Explain how spiritual formation undergirds chaplain ministry.**
- Reflect on personal experiences of calling and formation.**
- Evaluate how identity shapes chaplain presence and care.**

Instructor Teaching Notes

Launch the session by letting students discuss the chapter's "Essential Questions" in pairs before you teach. Clarify the difference between a generalized desire to help people and a biblically grounded call that is tested, affirmed, and nurtured by the church. Use the case study to explore how calling is discerned in community—who asks the hard questions, who encourages, and what red flags may emerge. Invite learners to identify specific next steps in their own discernment (e.g., conversation with a pastor, mentor, or spiritual director) rather than keeping the idea of "call" abstract.

*Reflection Questions from *The Heart of a Chaplain**

- 1. Too often, we begin our journey in ministry by asking this question: What does God want me to do? Given your reading, is this a good or misdirected question? Why?**
- 2. What compels you to consider becoming a chaplain?**
- 3. Why is it important to know what you believe and why before entering a ministry where you are pastor to some but chaplain to all?**
- 4. Can you describe a situation where your work in secular settings could create a challenge to your personal integrity and religious fidelity?**

Discussion Questions

- A. What does spiritual formation mean in the life of a chaplain?**
- B. How do you discern between a broad versus a narrow calling?**
- C. What role does identity play in shaping how you minister as a chaplain?**
- D. How does the case study in this chapter illuminate the challenges of calling and formation?**
- E. What does it mean to 'work out our identity' as chaplains?**

Case Study Activity

Scenario: Analyze the case study included in the chapter (student exercise). What identity struggles are present? How should a chaplain respond?

Activity Extension

Have students write a short spiritual autobiography describing how their experiences have shaped their sense of calling.

Key Takeaway

A chaplain's ministry flows from spiritual formation and calling. Identity, discernment, and preparation shape both presence and practice.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN -- HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces healthcare chaplaincy, including hospital, long-term care, dementia, hospice, and VA chaplaincy.

Learning Objectives

Describe the scope of healthcare chaplaincy.

Identify the unique needs of patients and families in healthcare settings.

Reflect on the chaplain's role in providing holistic care.

Instructor Teaching Notes

Highlight the intensity of healthcare settings, where chaplains encounter suffering, uncertainty, and grief daily. Use the chapter to illustrate different aspects of the role: bedside ministry, family support, collaboration with clinical teams, and participation in ethics consultations. Ask students to consider how their own experiences with illness and loss might shape their ministry, positively or negatively. A short role-play of a bedside encounter can help them practice presence, listening, and prayer in a medically complex and emotionally charged environment.

Reflection Questions from The Heart of a Chaplain

1. How do misconceptions about chaplains' roles impact their ability to interact with healthcare staff, patients, and families? How might a chaplain help counter these misconceptions to clarify their role and build rapport?
2. Healthcare chaplains typically face the emotional burden of working with suffering and the fulfillment of offering support. How might a healthcare chaplain build resilience while maintaining one's sense of purpose amid suffering or tragedy?
3. As a multidisciplinary team member, how might a chaplain advocate effectively for patients' and staff's spiritual and emotional needs?
4. Significant connections in life that bring about a sense of meaning and purpose are often stored mentally in the form of salient life narratives or stories. How can the chaplain use the initiation and structuring of conversations with the patient?
5. Several assessment instruments have been developed and used in the healthcare setting for identifying and quantitatively scoring a specific patient's spiritual distress level. These instruments are intended to support an empirical, evidence-based approach to health care, much like the physiological assessment instruments used by physicians and nurses. What are the practical limitations of using these instruments with terminally ill patients? Is it meaningful to reduce the idiosyncratic nature of spirituality across different patients down to a common set of factors? To what degree can these instruments support differential diagnosis and development of an individual care plan?

Discussion Questions

- A. What makes healthcare chaplaincy unique among chaplain roles?**
- B. How do chaplains support families in crisis or grief?**
- C. What special skills are needed in hospice and dementia chaplaincy?**

Case Study Activity

Discuss a hospice chaplain's role when a family disagrees on treatment decisions.

Activity Extension

Have students draft a care plan for a patient in a hospital or long-term care setting.

Key Takeaway

Healthcare chaplains provide compassionate, holistic care in moments of crisis, illness, and transition.

MEMORABLE MOMENT ONE – CHANGE HIS CIRCUMSTANCES

Instructor Synopsis

While in Kampala, Uganda, Chaplain R. Michael Warner encounters a double-amputee beggar, Sekerena. Initially, he gives him money and feels satisfied, but the Holy Spirit presses him that God wants to “change his circumstances,” not just provide a handout. With the help of his Ugandan colleague Godfrey and a crowd that gathers, they learn Sekerena’s story: a genocide survivor who lost his family, his legs, and his livelihood. As the crowd responds—offering a business opportunity, housing, and a wheelchair—Sekerena’s life is transformed in a single day. The chaplain realizes that true obedience meant becoming a catalyst for long-term change, not just offering a moment of charity.

Key Lessons for Instructors

- **Listening to the Holy Spirit can reveal more profound ways to serve.** This story shows the difference between obeying the first impulse to help and listening long enough to hear God’s fuller instruction. Instructors can help students examine how the Spirit might move them beyond easy, low-risk responses into deeper engagement with people’s real needs.
- **True compassion addresses long-term change, not just immediate relief.** Giving money was kind but incomplete. Chaplains are often positioned to think about employment, housing, safety, and community support. Instructors can stress that chaplaincy includes advocacy and collaboration that aim at sustainable change.
- **Community involvement can multiply the impact of one act of obedience.** Warner’s obedience opened the door for multiple people to contribute: a business owner, a landlord, someone with access to a wheelchair, and a parish member. Use this to show students how chaplains can serve as catalysts—inviting others to participate in God’s work rather than trying to do everything themselves.
- **Chaplains are called to discern God’s purpose in every encounter.** What began as “a beggar at a corner” became a profound moment of transformation because the chaplain stayed curious and obedient. Instructors can invite students to consider: “What if this interruption is actually an assignment from God?”

Discussion Questions

1. **How did the chaplain discern between giving money and addressing deeper needs?**
2. **What role did the Holy Spirit play in guiding this encounter?**
3. **How did the community come together to transform one man’s life?**
4. **What does this story teach us about moving beyond temporary charity?**

CASE STUDIES

See Appendix Two

HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY

CASE 1 – SPLIT CALLING: ETHICS COMMITTEE OR CPE EXAM? (HEALTHCARE)

INSTRUCTOR SYNOPSIS

The chaplain serves in two critical institutional roles: a voting member of the hospital ethics committee and the sole CPE supervisor responsible for a high-stakes midterm exam. A life-and-death ethics crisis triggers an emergency committee meeting at the exact time of the scheduled oral exam. Both responsibilities are time-bound, non-delegable (or at least not easily so), and laden with relational and institutional expectations. The chaplain must discern which obligation to prioritize, how to communicate with affected parties (students, ethics committee, hospital leadership), and how to preserve trust, integrity, and pastoral presence in the midst of conflicting calls. This case presses students to wrestle with vocation, limits, triage, and collaborative leadership in complex institutions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify competing vocational, pastoral, and institutional obligations in a crisis.
- Evaluate options for triaging responsibilities under time pressure.
- Practice communicating transparently and pastorally with multiple stakeholders.
- Discern how Chapters 3, 9, 14, and 16 (*professional competencies, institutional life, professional chaplain, healthcare chaplaincy*) shape this decision.

KEY THEMES AND LINKS TO *THE HEART OF A CHAPLAIN*

- Role conflict and vocational boundaries in complex institutions (Ch. 3, 9, 14).
- The chaplain as a “visible reminder of the Holy” in ethics consultations (Ch. 4, 15, 16).
- Professional reliability and stewardship of learners in CPE supervision.
- Teamwork, delegation, and collaboration with other leaders (Ch. 8, 13).
- Discernment under pressure: prayer, consultation, and wise communication.

INSTRUCTOR TEACHING NOTES

- Invite students to map the stakeholders: patients/family, ethics committee, CPE students, hospital and education leadership, accrediting bodies.
- Name the key decision: Which commitment must be honored in person, and what can be postponed or partially delegated?
- Have students consider institutional policies: Are there backup ethics consultants? Is there an associate CPE supervisor or a way to reschedule?
- Highlight dangers: trying to “be everywhere,” being vague or evasive, making unilateral decisions without consulting leadership.

- Encourage students to think about preparation: How should chaplains structure their roles so crises like this are less likely to be catastrophic?

GUIDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. What are the chaplain's primary callings and obligations in this scenario? Which ones are urgent, and which are important but more flexible?
- B. How might you discern which responsibility to prioritize? What criteria would you use—ethical, pastoral, institutional, legal?
- C. How could the chaplain involve hospital leadership (e.g., CNO, medical director, spiritual care director) in the decision?
- D. What are potential consequences of missing the ethics meeting? Of cancelling or delaying the exam?
- E. How might you communicate compassionately and clearly with the CPE students if you must adjust their exam schedule?
- F. What practices could you put in place ahead of time (backup coverage, policies, cross-training) to avoid this type of dilemma?

PRACTICE / ROLE-PLAY OR ACTIVITY OPTION

Have students work in triads. One plays the chaplain, one a CPE student, and one the ethics committee chair. Give them five minutes to prepare and then role-play the chaplain's phone call to: (1) the ethics chair and (2) the students, explaining the decision and next steps. Afterward, debrief: What language communicated respect and pastoral care? Where did communication sound defensive or unclear?

DEBRIEF AND KEY TAKEAWAY

This case underlines that chaplains cannot be in two places at once; faithful ministry requires triage, transparency, and collaboration. Spiritually, students should recognize that limits are part of vocation, not a failure; professionally, they should learn to plan for coverage, communicate clearly, and involve leadership when roles collide.

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

CASE 13 – CHUCK'S MORAL INJURY AND SEXUAL TRAUMA (MILITARY VETERAN)

INSTRUCTOR SYNOPSIS

Chuck, a veteran, has an explosive outburst at work. With the chaplain, he reveals traumatic combat experiences, deep guilt over killing, and a hidden history of sexual assault by another man during deployment. He feels ashamed, emasculated, and convinced he is destined for hell. The chaplain must connect with him in his pain,

name moral injury and trauma, and offer a path toward grace, healing, and professional help without minimizing the gravity of his experiences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand concepts of moral injury, PTSD, and sexual trauma in veterans (at a pastoral level).
- Practice listening and response that address both shame and guilt.
- Articulate a gospel-centered message of grace and healing sensitive to trauma.
- Collaborate with mental-health professionals while maintaining spiritual care.

KEY THEMES AND LINKS TO *The Heart of a Chaplain*

- Moral and spiritual injury (chapters on Moral Guidance, Military Chaplaincy).
- Sexual assault, shame, and masculinity.
- Confession, forgiveness, and healing in Christian theology.
- Boundaries of chaplaincy vs. clinical counseling.

INSTRUCTOR TEACHING NOTES

- Emphasize the need for a non-shocked, non-judgmental stance, especially regarding sexual assault.
- Talk about language that differentiates between *culpable actions* (combat decisions) and *victimization* (assault done to him).
- Explore how to speak about forgiveness and grace without trivializing moral complexity.
- Encourage referral and collaboration with trauma-informed mental-health care, possibly including specialized groups for moral injury/sexual trauma.
- Discuss the chaplain's own need for supervision and support when hearing such heavy stories.

GUIDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. What do you hear in Chuck's repeated statement, "I know I'm going to hell for what I did"?
- B. How might you help him separate guilt for actions from shame about what was done to him?
- C. What Scriptures or images of Christ might be particularly meaningful here (e.g., bearing shame, forgiving enemies, lament)?
- D. How would you introduce the idea of counseling or group support respectfully?
- E. How might you pray with Chuck in a way that honors his pain and invites hope?

PRACTICE / ROLE-PLAY OR ACTIVITY OPTION

Ask students to draft a short pastoral response (5–7 sentences) to Chuck that includes: (1) empathy, (2) naming moral injury and victimization, (3) a pointer to God's grace, and (4) an invitation to ongoing support. Then share and refine responses in small groups.

DEBRIEF AND KEY TAKEAWAY

This case highlights that some wounds are both moral and traumatic. Spiritually, it emphasizes that Christ meets people in deep guilt and shame; professionally, it underlines the need for trauma-informed pastoral care and strong referral networks.

- Explore planning a vigil: who to involve, how to ensure multiple voices, what prayers or readings, how to handle security concerns.
- Address self-care: chaplain's need for mentors, time away from social media, spiritual direction.

GUIDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. What must a campus chaplain consider before issuing any public statement on such a conflict?
- B. How could you write a statement that expresses grief and solidarity without erasing the suffering of any group?
- C. What factors would influence your decision to participate—or not—in a protest?
- D. How might you structure a vigil or gathering so that it is genuinely open and safe for diverse participants?
- E. How will you care for your own heart and mind as criticism comes from multiple directions?

PRACTICE / ROLE-PLAY OR ACTIVITY OPTION

Have students draft a 2–3 paragraph chaplain's message to the campus about the conflict, then in small groups critique for balance, clarity, and pastoral tone. Next, outline a vigil plan (location, participants, readings, prayers). Optionally, role-play a meeting with university leadership to gain approval and coordinate security.

DEBRIEF AND KEY TAKEAWAY

This case reminds students that chaplains sometimes stand at the epicenter of global conflict made local. Spiritually, it calls them to embody the Holy One of peace; professionally, it requires wise communication, courage, fairness, and boundaries for self-care.