

Sample



EDITED BY
DR. JIM BROWNING *and* DR. JIM SPIVEY

The
HEART
of a
CHAPLAIN

Student Workbook

— SECOND EDITION —

EXPLORING ESSENTIALS FOR MINISTRY

How to Use the Heart of a Chaplain

Student Workbook

This student Workbook is a 131-page additional 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.

Format, Pricing, and Licensing

To keep costs low and make these resources accessible worldwide, the Marsh Institute for Chaplains offers *The Heart of a Chaplain Student Workbook* and *Instructor Guide* as downloadable PDF editions. Information and download link at <https://marshinstitute.org/book/>

Single Use -- When you purchase a PDF, we grant you a single-user license to download it for a single printed copy. Obviously, we trust your integrity to remain in compliance with this agreement. Thank you in advance.

Group Use -- For groups, organizations, institutions, denominations, or chaplain training programs, the Marsh Institute also offers a class or site license. A class/site license allows you to print one copy per licensed participant from a single PDF file and is priced separately from individual licenses. Discounts are available.

For information about license pricing or international use, please contact us at contact@marshinstitute.org or see <https://marshinstitute.org/book/>

Copyright owners used *The Heart of a Chaplain, 2nd Edition*, with ChatGPT 5.1 to assist in creating this resource. Each page was reviewed by the editor for completeness;
December 5, 2025, OpenAI <https://chatgpt.com>

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

Session Overview

In this chapter, you will be introduced to chaplaincy through the story of Bob and the author’s own journey from “clown” and “detective” styles of ministry toward a “sojourner” ministry. You will reflect on what it means to be a “visible reminder of the Holy,” explore your motivations for chaplaincy, and consider why chaplaincy is growing across many sectors of society.

Learning Objectives

After engaging this chapter and completing the activities in this workbook, you will be able to:

- 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.

Guided Reading Questions

As you read Chapter One, use the following questions to guide your reflection. Write your responses in the spaces provided.

1. Recognition of the Holy
Is a recognition or representation of the Holy in the life and ministry of a chaplain important? Why or why not?

Response:

2. Defining “Visible Reminder of the Holy”
This chapter defines a chaplain in simple terms as “a visible reminder of the Holy.” Is this definition adequate for you? How does this definition shape or influence the ministry of a chaplain?

Response:

3. Comprehensive Definition of Chaplains

The chapter presents a more comprehensive definition of chaplains. Which elements of that broader definition are most important to you, and why?

Response:

4. “Spiritual Care Provider” vs. “Chaplain”

Some organizations use the title “Spiritual Care Provider” instead of “Chaplain.” Do you believe “chaplain” is outdated and should be changed? Why or why not?

Response:

Reflection & Application

Use this section to connect the chapter’s ideas to your own story, calling, and context.

1. Journal Prompt – Your Image of a Chaplain

Before reading this chapter, what picture came to your mind when you heard the word *chaplain*? After reading, how has that picture changed or expanded?

Journal Response:

2. Personal Application – Being a Sojourner

The chapter contrasts “clown” or “detective” ministry with “sojourner” ministry. In your current life or ministry context, where do you need to move away from performing or “solving” people and move toward walking with them over time?

Personal Application:

3. Calling Check – Your Motivations

List 2–3 reasons you are considering chaplaincy (or interested in learning more). Next to each one, briefly note whether you think it reflects a pure motivation, a mixed motivation, or something you need to examine more closely.

My motivations for chaplaincy:

Reason 1: _____

Reason 2: _____

Group Discussion Questions

Prepare your thoughts on these questions so you can contribute meaningfully to group discussion.

A. Bob's Story

Why was the image of Bob walking with the patient transformative for Dr. Browning? What does this reveal about chaplaincy as “walking with” rather than “fixing”?

B. Sojourning vs. Clown/Detective Ministry

How does “sojourning” change your understanding of chaplaincy compared to “clown” (entertaining) or “detective” (constantly analyzing or solving) ministry?

C. Visible Reminder of the Holy

Is “visible reminder of the Holy” an adequate definition of chaplain? Why or why not?

D. Motivations for Chaplaincy

What motivates people to become chaplains, and how can you discern pure versus mixed motives in yourself?

E. Growth of Chaplaincy

Why do you think chaplaincy is growing across so many sectors (healthcare, military, corrections, corporate, education, public safety, etc.) today?

You may wish to jot brief notes here to help you in discussion:

Case Study Activity

Scenario:

A patient tells you, “I don’t want to talk about God, I just need someone to listen.”

Your Task (Individual or Pair Work):

1. Identify the Need

In one or two sentences, describe what this patient might be asking for beneath their words.

Response:

2. Plan Your Response

How would you respond in a way that offers purposeful presence without imposing your beliefs?

- **What would you say?**
- **What would you avoid saying?**
- **How would your body language and listening posture communicate care?**

Response Notes:

3. Role-Play (if assigned by your instructor)

- **One person plays the patient; the other plays the chaplain.**
- **Practice a short 3–5 minute conversation based on the scenario.**
- **Afterward, briefly reflect:**

What I learned from the role-play:

Going Deeper

Choose one of the following optional extension activities (or complete both if you have time).

1. Chaplain Word Map

Create a word map (mind map) using key terms from this chapter, such as: *sojourner, visible reminder of the Holy, advocate, presence, listener, spiritual care, institutional representative, etc.*

- Place “Chaplain” in the center.
- Branch out related words and short phrases that describe what a chaplain is and does.
- Add brief notes or examples near each term.

Notes for my word map:

2. Observation Exercise (Real-Life or Imagined Setting)

Think of a real or imagined secular institution where chaplains serve (hospital, prison, school, workplace, military unit, etc.).

- Describe how a chaplain could quietly be a “visible reminder of the Holy” in that setting without preaching a sermon.

Description:

Key Takeaway

The chapter emphasizes that chaplains are sojourners—they embody the presence of the Holy, listen deeply, and walk 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

Session Overview

In this chapter, you will explore how spiritual formation and calling shape chaplain ministry. You will reflect on key questions of vocational discernment, consider how identity influences your presence and care, and think about how your own story of formation connects to a call to chaplaincy.

Learning Objectives

After engaging this chapter and completing the activities in this workbook, you will be able to:

- 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.

Guided Reading Questions

As you read Chapter Two, use the following questions to guide your reflection. Write your responses in the spaces provided.

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?

What compels you to consider becoming a chaplain? List specific reasons and reflect on what they reveal about your sense of calling.

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?

Can you describe a situation where your work in secular settings could create a challenge to your personal integrity and religious fidelity? How might you respond in a way that is faithful to your beliefs and respectful of your context?

Reflection & Application

Use this section to connect the chapter's ideas to your own story of spiritual formation and calling.

Journal Prompt – Spiritual Formation in Your Story:

Describe two or three key experiences that have shaped your spiritual formation. How have these experiences influenced your desire to serve as a chaplain?

Personal Application – Discernment of Call:

List one or two concrete next steps you can take in discerning your call (for example, talking with a pastor, mentor, spiritual director, or chaplain). Why are these steps important for you right now?

Identity and Integrity:

In your own words, describe how your identity as a follower of Christ (or your faith tradition) should shape the way you show up as a chaplain in secular settings.

Group Discussion Questions

Prepare your thoughts on these questions so you can contribute meaningfully to group discussion.

What does spiritual formation mean in the life of a chaplain? How is it different from simply gaining ministry skills?

How do you discern between a broad calling (for example, to ministry in general) and a narrow calling (for example, to chaplaincy in a specific setting)?

What role does identity play in shaping how you minister as a chaplain? Share one aspect of your identity that you believe will influence your chaplain presence.

How does the case study in this chapter illuminate the challenges of calling and formation? What warning signs or encouragements do you see?

What does it mean to “work out our identity” as chaplains over time, rather than assuming it is fixed from the start?

Case Study Activity

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

Identify and briefly describe at least two identity struggles or tensions you observe in the case study.

Explain how these struggles might affect the chaplain’s presence, decision-making, or relationships.

Outline how you think a chaplain should respond, paying attention to spiritual formation, calling, and integrity.

Going Deeper

If you have additional time or want to explore further, complete the following exercise.

Write a short spiritual autobiography (one to two pages) describing how your experiences have shaped your sense of calling. Include key moments, people, and places that have influenced your spiritual journey and your interest in chaplaincy.

Key Takeaway

A chaplain's ministry flows from spiritual formation and calling. Identity, discernment, and preparation shape both presence and practice. In one or two sentences, summarize your personal key takeaway from this chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN -- HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY

Session Overview

In this chapter, you will be introduced to healthcare chaplaincy, including ministry in hospitals, long-term care, dementia care, hospice, and VA settings. You will explore the unique intensity of these environments and the chaplain's role in providing holistic care to patients, families, and staff.

Learning Objectives

After engaging this chapter and completing the activities in this workbook, you will be able to:

- 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.

Guided Reading Questions

As you read Chapter Sixteen, use the following questions to guide your reflection. Write your responses in the spaces provided.

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?

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?

As a multidisciplinary team member, how might a chaplain advocate effectively for patients' and staff's spiritual and emotional needs?

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 to access and honor these stories?

Several assessment instruments have been developed and used in the healthcare setting for identifying and quantitatively scoring a specific patient's spiritual distress level. 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?

Reflection & Application

Use this section to connect the chapter's teaching on healthcare chaplaincy to your own experiences and calling.

Journal Prompt – Encounters with Illness and Loss:

Reflect on a personal experience of serious illness, hospitalization, or loss (your own or someone close to you). How might this experience influence your strengths and vulnerabilities as a healthcare chaplain?

Supporting Families:

Describe two or three ways chaplains can support families in crisis or grief in healthcare settings. Which of these do you feel most prepared for, and which feel most challenging?

Hospice and Dementia Care:

What special skills, attitudes, or practices do you think are needed in hospice and dementia chaplaincy? How might you begin developing these now?

Group Discussion Questions

Prepare your thoughts on these questions so you can contribute meaningfully to group discussion.

What makes healthcare chaplaincy unique among chaplain roles?

How do chaplains support families in crisis or grief, especially when medical outcomes are uncertain or heartbreaking?

What special skills are needed in hospice and dementia chaplaincy, and how can chaplains cultivate them?

Case Study Activity

Case Study: Discuss a hospice chaplain's role when a family disagrees on treatment decisions for a dying loved one.

Describe the family dynamics and the points of disagreement about treatment or care.

Identify the chaplain's responsibilities toward the patient, the family, and the healthcare team.

How might the chaplain create space for each voice to be heard while maintaining focus on the patient's dignity and wishes?

If you were the chaplain, what concrete steps would you take in this situation?

Going Deeper

If you have additional time or want to explore further, complete the following extended exercise.

Draft a brief care plan for a patient in a hospital or long-term care setting. Include the patient's spiritual needs, family considerations, interdisciplinary communication, and possible rituals or practices that could support the patient and family.

Key Takeaway

Healthcare chaplains provide compassionate, holistic care in moments of crisis, illness, and transition. In one or two sentences, summarize your personal key takeaway from this chapter about healthcare chaplaincy.

MEMORABLE MOMENT ONE -- CHANGE HIS CIRCUMSTANCES

Story Overview

While in Kampala, Uganda, Chaplain R. Michael Warner meets Sekerena, a double-amputee beggar. He first gives money, but senses the Holy Spirit inviting him to do more—to help change Sekerena’s circumstances, not only provide a handout. With the help of his Ugandan colleague Godfrey and a gathered crowd, they learn Sekerena’s story as a genocide survivor who lost family, legs, and livelihood. The community responds with a business opportunity, housing, and a wheelchair, and Sekerena’s life changes in a single day. Warner realizes that true obedience meant becoming a catalyst for long-term change, not just offering a moment of charity.

Reflection & Application

Reflect on how this story speaks to your own call as a chaplain or ministry volunteer. Use the questions below to guide your thinking.

How did the chaplain discern between simply giving money and addressing deeper needs in Sekerena’s life?

Where in your own ministry are you tempted to stop at quick, low-risk responses instead of listening for God’s fuller instruction?

What role did the Holy Spirit play in guiding this encounter, and how do you sense the Spirit prompting you in your daily interactions?

How did the community come together to transform one man’s life? What does this suggest about chaplains serving as catalysts rather than doing everything themselves?

What does this story teach you about moving beyond temporary charity toward long-term, sustainable change?

Personal Next Steps

Identify one person or situation in your current context where God may be inviting you to move beyond an immediate “gift” toward deeper engagement or advocacy. Describe what a faithful next step might look like.

Group Discussion Questions

How do we discern when God is inviting us to “change circumstances” rather than only meet an immediate need?

What prevents chaplains and ministry volunteers from engaging at this deeper level (for example, fear, time, resources, lack of partners)?

How can chaplains invite others—churches, businesses, community leaders—into God’s work instead of trying to carry it all alone?

Share a time when someone went beyond a simple act of charity in your life. How did that shape you?

Key Takeaway

In one or two sentences, summarize what this story teaches you about listening to the Holy Spirit and partnering with others to pursue long-term change.

CASE STUDIES

See Appendix Two

HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY

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

Scenario Reminder

You are both a voting member of the hospital ethics committee and the CPE supervisor. A life-or-death ethics crisis collides with the scheduled oral midterm your students have prepared for over eight weeks.

Reflect

- What responsibilities do you have to the patient/family, the hospital, and your CPE students?
- How would you decide what to do first? What principles guide that choice?
- How would you explain your decision to your students and to the ethics committee?

Practice / Activity

Write 5–7 sentences explaining your decision and reasoning to your CPE students.

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

CASE 13 – CHUCK’S MORAL INJURY AND ASSAULT (MILITARY VETERAN)

Scenario Reminder

Chuck, a veteran, feels guilty for killing in war and deeply ashamed after being sexually assaulted. He says, “I know I’m going to hell for what I did.”

Reflect

- What is the difference between guilt for actions and shame for what was done to him?
- How might you talk about God’s grace without minimizing his pain?
- What kind of professional help might you encourage, alongside chaplain care?

Practice / Activity

Write 5–6 sentences you might say to Chuck that show empathy and point toward hope.
