

Kirk Stowers: Public service for building godly character

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Kirk Stowers, a member of [Travis Baptist Church](#) in Corpus Christi, has been a patrol officer with the Corpus Christi Police Department since 2002, with five years in investigations. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on being a follower of Christ in public service. To suggest a Texas Baptist leader in the public service to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

My responsibilities with the Corpus Christi Police Department are to respond immediately to calls from the public for police services and to conduct traffic enforcement to reduce crime, reduce the fear of crime and enhance public safety. This provides me a unique position for responding to members of my community in their time of crisis—often on the worst day of their life—and for bringing God’s love to crisis situations.

Where else have you served, and what were your positions there?

I served in the United States Army directly after high school. I also served in the Aransas County Sheriff’s Office and Aransas County E.M.S. as an ambulance crew member.

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Fayetteville, N.C., then was moved to Virginia Beach, Va., and ultimately to Corpus Christi, where I graduated from high school. I also got to spend summers with my grandparents in Lakeland, Fla.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I was raised in an unbelieving home and had no church experience until I entered adulthood. I had a tragic experience while in my early 20s that opened my eyes to faith. I began to hear God after my heart was broken.

I moved back to Corpus Christi after my separation from the military, and I visited Travis Baptist Church near the apartment I rented. I joined a few months after that visit and have been a member ever since.

On reflection, I know God placed people in my life to nudge me in the right direction. There was no profound impact that happened or incredible incident. Instead, the journey was like a slow climb out of a deep hole. People who offered me encouragement and provided tools and support as I stepped along a way toward growing light.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

I have an associate's degree in criminal justice from Del Mar College and a certificate in ministry from the South Texas School of Christian Studies. I am in my final semester at Stark College and Seminary working toward a Master's degree in ministry.

About life in public service

Why do you feel called into public service?

I feel called into public service based on reading the Bible and relationships I have developed with other people. Scripture provides a mirror of the fallen human condition—including my own flaws and failures. People around me speak and behave in ways that challenge my character. Scripture and these relationships have spurred me to develop godlier character. I strive to change my fallen condition rather than try to change

the world.

The best place for me to be in order to do God's work of changing my character is in public service.

I intended to rejoin the Army after Sept. 11, 2001. My wife expressed her disagreement with me joining the military, but I felt a compulsion to serve as a protector. My wife and I compromised, and I entered law enforcement to serve the community. This is the product of a complicated web of prayer, reading Scripture, listening for God and respecting relationships with other people.

How does being a Christian influence your decisions in public service?

I have greater patience with others as my relationship with God grows. I am able to see more clearly the subtle complications affecting the decisions of others. Rather than recognizing the obvious answer to certain problems and believing the person is wrong for not arriving at the same conclusion I do, I understand better the human condition and the complications that play a role in preventing a clear solution to the problem.

What is your favorite aspect of public service? Why?

My favorite aspect of public service is meeting people. I get to meet people from all parts of the community. I like to learn about other people and their experiences. I am pleased when I can serve them and offer help to their problems. Mostly, I like to be able to get to know them.

What one aspect of public service would you like to change?

Rather than demanding police solve social problems, there needs to be a broader culture of accountability. The growing trend over the years has

been to call for police service and then refuse to be involved for fear of appearing in court, being confronted by the accused and retaliation.

The public at large doesn't understand the importance of standing up against wrongs in the community. Police rely on sources. Anonymous sources are eliminated in court because they can't be cross-examined. Some believe police fabricate information and attribute it to anonymous sources. Being a reliable source is an important role in our society.

How has your place in public service or your perspective on public service changed?

I have greater regard for those who serve. I didn't understand public service was such a skilled occupation until I served. I have seen incredibly skilled people serve the community I love.

How do you expect public service to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

People are people, and the same problems will remain. Technology will change public service, but service delivery will remain constant. Programs to address social issues will cycle as they have in the past.

I am amazed when I explain new strategies to retired officers and learn they employed the same strategy decades earlier but under a different name. There seems to be no new ideas, just making the old strategies new again. I expect that trend to continue for the next 20 years.

Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your area of public service.

One significant challenge to public service is the demand that we solve the variety of social problems. The role of police was designed for law enforcement, but the function of police has become a universal problem

solver for the community.

A second challenge is an increased demand for police services at the same time it is becoming more difficult to find applicants. Fewer people want to work in a field poorly regarded by the public. Many of my co-workers join, serve a short time and then go into different fields paying just as well, without shift work, with less risk of injury and that are more highly regarded by the public.

A third challenge to public service is the increased popularity of recreational intoxication. I believe the number one root of the problem in households is when someone is intoxicated. More and more people seek intoxication as if there is no harm from it. Intoxication is not victimless.

What do you wish more people knew about public service?

I wish more people knew that those in public service are people. People have good days and bad days. They have limits and get exhausted. People have feelings and need support. Too often, it seems public servants are seen as objects rather than people. There is demand for public servants to understand the public they encounter, but too often, there is no reciprocity, specifically in regard to manners, consideration and grace.

What is the impact of public service on your family?

I work irregular hours, so my family has made adjustments for celebrations and gatherings. We no longer celebrate holidays on the actual calendar date. Plans can be cancelled quickly because of demands for court appearances. I am unable to participate in weekend activities because of the work schedule.

How can people make a difference in their communities?

It is important to mentor young people. Gain credibility with a young person, and guide him or her toward a beneficial path. Mentoring is spiritual and cultural. Mentors shouldn't try to take on too much at once or overdo things. Instead, be subtle, light, constant and long term. It's important to be a role model and to mentor others.