Calvary Chapel, an official endorsing agent recognized by the Department of Defense, is now authorized to place pastors into every branch of the service as military chaplains. Pastor Stephen Brown is the first Calvary Chapel pastor commissioned as a chaplain in training. He is currently serving Marines and their families at Camp Pendleton.

"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)

For the first time, Calvary Chapel chaplains—both active duty and reserve officers—are bringing verse-by-verse Bible teaching to service men and women in every branch of the armed forces. This rapidly growing ministry began more than 3 years ago through Calvary Chapel Mira Mesa and its ministry at Marine Corps Air Station, (MCAS) Miramar in San Diego.

"I'm the first non-military Calvary Chapel chaplain in training," explained Stephen.
Sargeant Jeff Briar signs up for the “Deo Semper Fi” prayer chain at a ministry resource table.

Jeanne Pittman serves lunch to a Marine. Several Southern California Calvary Chapels served Marines and their families a picnic lunch at Camp Pendleton.

This past spring the Department of Defense authorized Calvary Chapel as an endorsing agent to place pastors into every branch of the service as military chaplains. Stephen is the first CC pastor commissioned as a chaplain in training. Other chaplains already in the service with ties to Calvary can now become Calvary Chapel-authorized as well.

Military ministry can be a challenge. Calvary Chapel-endorsed military chaplains do not have to compromise their beliefs to serve in that capacity.

For more than 10 years, Stephen has felt the Lord’s call to reach out to military members in general and Marines in particular. In 1994, before entering the School of Ministry at CC Costa Mesa, Stephen was nearly killed in an automobile accident. All four military services told him he would never be able to serve his country in the armed forces.

Stephen considered serving his country through law enforcement or fire and rescue following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but felt that God was continuing to press his call for the armed services. After completing the School of Ministry, Stephen began ministering to approximately 475 Marines who are members of an amphibious assault battalion at Camp Pendleton. To share the love of Christ with them and express appreciation for their service, CC Costa Mesa, CC Living Word, Irvine, and several local CCs recently joined together to host a barbecue in honor of these Marines.

Stephen is attending seminary to complete a Master of Divinity degree program. He has already been sworn into the United States Navy as an inactive reservist and teaches at the Calvary Chapel Sunday worship service on Camp Pendleton, as well as a mid-week Bible study at the Naval hospital on base. He visits and ministers to hospital patients, many of whom have been wounded in Iraq.
CC Chaplains Official Endorsing Agent

Captain Dave Starkey, a 25-year active duty Navy chaplain stationed at Miramar, and CC Mira Mesa’s senior pastor, Bernie Sloan, spearheaded Calvary Chapel’s application for Department of Defense recognition as an official endorsing agent. In March 2005, that application was approved.

This recognition was a crucial step in making the distinctive Calvary Chapel style of ministry more accessible to service members and their families. There are several Calvary Chapel pastors in the process of joining the armed forces and fulfilling Defense Department educational requirements for military chaplain candidates. These men are subject to the same standards and requirements (boot camp, physical fitness, etc.) as other members of the military.

Bernie said, “The Department of Defense requires military chaplains to have a Master of Divinity or equivalent upper-graduate level degree. This is the biggest hoop that Calvary Chapel pastors have to jump through, since Calvary Chapel emphasizes the calling of God rather than the recognition of men.”

“Those aspiring to this special ministry are raised up and trained by their local Calvary Chapel pastors. Once the chaplain candidates have met all of the requirements, they are sent out into the military as missionaries/pastors of the fellowship that sent them out.”

To be certified as Calvary Chapel chaplains, these men go through the same training and ordination process as civilian Calvary Chapel pastors. Once they have completed the educational requirements and have been certified by the Calvary Chapel endorsing agent, these men can begin to become military chaplains.

Calvary Chapel wants to support these chaplains and their families throughout their military careers. Bernie and four others are part of the Calvary Chapel Military Chaplains Board, which is responsible for approving, overseeing, and ministering to the families of Calvary Chapel-endorsed military chaplains.

This ministry has also opened up tremendous opportunities for Calvary Chapel fellowships located near military installations. On bases where there are no Calvary Chapel chaplains assigned, local Calvary Chapels can reach out to the service men and women at that installation by beginning Bible studies and home fellowships on that base. Fellowships interested in doing so can get details by contacting Bernie.

Stephen and his family are prayed for by Pastors Paul and Chuck Smith, CC Costa Mesa, and Dave Rolph, CC Pacific Hills, after the swearing-in ceremony.

Stephen shakes hands with Naval Reserve recruiting officer, Daniel Masse, after being sworn in.

Calvary Chapel wants to support these chaplains and their families throughout their military careers.
Lieutenant Charlie Owens, United States Navy: Charlie Owens gave his life to the Lord in 1985 on a college campus. After getting married, he began teaching a home fellowship at Horizon Christian Fellowship. Pastor Mike MacIntosh ordained and sent Charlie out to plant a new CC in Montana’s Flathead Valley. After 8 years as a senior pastor, Charlie felt the call to join the Navy. He is serving on the USS Dubuque, homeported in San Diego, overseeing the spiritual care of 500 sailors. Because of the close quarters on a naval ship, Chaplain Owens encounters many unique opportunities to reach out spiritually to his fellow shipmates. Lt. Owens recalled, “One night after the evening prayer, a young Petty Officer came knocking at my stateroom door. He said that he had walked by my door several times over the last few days but could not decide whether to knock. I asked if I could pray for him and almost immediately, the emotional floodgates opened.”

“He was engaged to be married in a couple of months and felt that the choices he had made as a young sailor disqualified him from God’s blessing on his life. It was such a privilege to put my hand on his shoulder and let him know about the wonderful grace of God. We talked for hours that night about the fact that Jesus knew him intimately and longed to have a relationship with him. Before he left, he prayed for forgiveness and asked Christ to make him new.”

“I e-mailed my wife that night and marvelled at the possibility that all of the steps of faith that we had taken over the past couple of years to join the Navy could have been so that a young sailor could knock on a chaplain’s door, late at night, miles out to sea, and hear of the wonderful love of Jesus.”

Captain Anthony Baker, United States Marine Corps: Captain Baker is a company commander at MCAS 29 Palms. He leads worship for the Calvary Chapel Tuesday evening Bible study on base and serves as the junior high school youth pastor at Joshua Springs Calvary Chapel. Captain Baker was recently ordained. He is being voluntarily discharged from the Marine Corps to attend seminary and become a chaplain candidate. After graduation from seminary, Baker will serve in the United States Navy as an officer and CC chaplain.

Captain Dave Starkey, United States Navy: Captain Starkey has been a Naval chaplain for 25 years. He is the base chaplain at MCAS 29 Palms in Southern California. Captain Starkey oversees five other chaplains and teaches a verse-by-verse Bible study at the Sunday morning chapel service on base. In 1973, Starkey was a 19-year-old Marine stationed in Tustin, California. He didn’t know the Lord yet. Even though he loved being a Marine and maintaining CH-53 helicopters, he knew that something was still missing. He planned to make the Marine Corps his career. Starkey said, “There was an emptiness, a hole that seemed to suck the life out of everything and everyone I came in contact with. My life seemed to be crumbling around me.” Another Marine invited him to a rock concert that Saturday night. Starkey sat down in a tent in Costa Mesa. He enjoyed the music and then Pastor Chuck Smith preached about the love of Jesus. Starkey couldn’t resist the Spirit’s call and that night he invited Jesus into his life. More than 30 years later, he’s become Calvary Chapel’s first active duty chaplain.

Chaplain Starkey is presently organizing a 5-day evangelistic musical crusade/festival called “Freedomfest,” to be held on base in October 2005. Freedomfest is expected to draw a crowd of several thousand.

Stephen Brown is holding an evangelistic crusade, “Revival,” on Camp Pendleton this summer. The last two events of this type on Camp Pendleton attracted more than 50,000 people.