

**What is OCF?**  
**Making the OCF Vision a Reality**  
by LtGen Bruce Fister, USAF (Ret.)

Have you ever been asked, or asked yourself, "What is OCF really about?" The answer is found in our formal Purpose and Vision statements, but in simple terms, OCF is about

**CHRISTIAN OFFICERS**

Who exercise

**BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP**

To raise up a

**GODLY MILITARY**

OCF starts with local fellowships composed of all ranks from cadets and midshipmen to senior officers and retirees, who are edified and educated by publications, recharged at conference centers, matured at gateways, and mentored and supported by regional staff. They seek to claim victory for Jesus Christ among the men, women and families who serve our God and our nation in our Armed Forces. In short, OCF means fellowship, it means equipping and it means outreach.

Local fellowships, of course, are at the core of the OCF Purpose, "To glorify God by uniting Christian officers for biblical fellowship and outreach, equipping and encouraging them to minister effectively in the military society." But, as that statement clearly indicates, just being part of a local OCF Fellowship is not the end, only a beginning, and that activity alone will never allow us to join fully in God's work toward fulfillment of the OCF Vision. Indeed, we are to be "...ambassadors for Christ in uniform...living with a passion for God and compassion for the entire military society." Fulfillment will only come through ministry to "...the entire military society." This means outreach.

As Christian officers, we were commissioned to lead both on and off duty. The ability to exercise biblical leadership is a blessing and talent bestowed upon us by God. It is the strength that we as officers can bring to the business of outreach in the military community.

Among a host of activities, biblical leadership in outreach can mean:

- **Supporting our chaplains and chapel programs**
- **Inviting enlisted members and their families to fellowships**
- **Leading Bible studies on bases, posts, or ships**
- **Organizing to support families during deployments**
- **Preparing our units for biblical fellowship and witness during contingencies**
- **Coordinating with other Christian organizations for more effective ministry**

In future articles, I will continue to discuss the OCF vision of a godly military. I will specifically address how we can effectively reach out to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen, and their families. However, for now, **my main point** is that **OCF is about ministering to the whole military society**. We do this by listening to God, being obedient to Him, and exercising biblical leadership professionally, and in our families and communities.

Our obligation is to allow God to work through OCF to achieve that godly future-state envisioned for our military. We must Catch the Vision and understand what it means to us, personally, where the rubber meets the road—in our units, in the field, on our flight lines, on board our ships, and with our families at bases and posts around the world. Only then will we see:

**Christian officers exercising biblical leadership  
and ministering to  
Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen,  
and their families  
any time, any place, any way.**

**What is OCF Really About?**  
by Lieutenant General Bruce Fister, USAF (Ret.)

Last month we began to answer the question, “What is OCF really about?” I introduced a summary of and a slogan for the OCF Vision and Purpose:

**CHRISTIAN OFFICERS Exercising BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP**  
To Raise up a **GODLY MILITARY**

That’s what OCF is really about.

We summarized our fellowship by stating that OCF starts with local fellowships composed of all ranks from cadets and midshipmen to senior officers and retirees, who are edified and educated by publications, recharged at conference centers, matured at gateways, and mentored and supported by regional staff. We concluded with the emphasis “**OCF is about ministering to the whole military society.**” Today I would like to discuss further how we might minister to the military society by supporting our chaplains and chapel programs and by including enlisted members and their families in various fellowships.

OCF was founded upon the premise that there will always be a need for officer-to-officer fellowship. This premise remains true today; however, this does not mean we should not include enlisted personnel and their families in OCF activities. To minister to the whole military society, we must reach out to our enlisted members just as we reach out to other officers, both saved and unsaved. “**...In Christ we who are many form one body; and each one belongs to all the others.**” Romans 12:5

As ambassadors of Christ in our military, our first duties are to set a biblical example on-duty as leaders and professionals, and off-duty in social and personal relationships. This establishes a framework from which we can minister through fellowship, in our chapels, and through other OCF activities.

How we include enlisted members and their families in Bible studies and fellowships should be determined by how God speaks to you at the local level. It might mean fellowships led by OCF members for all ranks in the unit or aboard ship, it might mean inviting NCOs to a weekly Bible study, or it might mean leadership in a chapel-based fellowship.

**A good starting point may be with your unit, post, or base chaplain.** A “Pray and Obey” format may be appropriate. Find out how you can help make the chaplain’s program successful for all ranks and for all families and don’t worry about who gets the credit. Just be a servant leader. Our chaplains have a huge load to carry and helping them will also help to minister to the whole military society.

Besides supporting our chaplains through fellowship activities, we might employ a unique OCF opportunity, the use of OCF conference centers for special chapel retreats. For those bases and posts within driving distance of Spring Canyon or White Sulphur Springs, you may be able to offer a made-to-order location and program for a chapel family weekend retreat.

Whether fellowship is in the unit, aboard ship, or in the chapel there are a few important things we should remember. **First**, we are still active or retired

members of our military and appropriate customs and courtesies should be observed. While there is no need to lord authority over others, there remains the need to respect positions of authority and maintain the proper officer-enlisted relationships. Romans 13:7 provides guidance on this issue. **Second**, however we may serve, there is no need to try to take over the chaplain's programs. Chaplains are assigned a position of authority that we should respect. Remember it is all about servant leadership. And **third**, maintain a special respect for our NCOs and their families. The strength of the American military is in our NCO Corps. That NCO strength is the singular distinction that makes the U.S. military different from most other militaries of the world.

You can set the example through biblical leadership. **But as an officer, you may not be able to directly minister to a young enlisted person; however, a godly NCO can.** Christian NCOs are an important part of reaching out to the whole military society.

In summary, listen to what God is telling you about how your local fellowship might reach out to enlisted members and their families to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole military society. Within the bounds of respect, protocol, and service regulations, there are no limits. Catch the Vision where the rubber meets the road—in our units, in the field, on our flight lines, on board our ships, and with our families at bases and posts around the world.

Christian officers exercising biblical leadership and ministering to Soldiers,  
Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen, and their families  
Any Time, Any Place, Any Way

## **What is OCF Really About?** by LtGen Bruce Fister, USAF (Ret.)

Following last month's article in this series, I attended the funeral for Lieutenant Colonel Tom Hemingway, USMC, Retired. Tom was one of God's greatest warriors in Officers' Christian Fellowship and he knew the meaning of **CHRISTIAN OFFICERS Exercising BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP To raise up a GODLY MILITARY.**

Tom was passionate about reaching the entire military society and he touched every part of the OCF ministry from local fellowships, to our key training center ministries, to the Service Academies, and to our conference centers. Tom and his wife Sarah served as the Spring Canyon Conference Center Director for 17 years and for the last three years, Tom was the OCF National Director for ROTC Ministries.

Tom left a legacy of investing in people for the Lord Jesus Christ. He had the gift of being able to go to any base, any post, or aboard any ship and join in a fellowship and minister in a way that focused people on their relationship with Jesus Christ. He always enthusiastically supported the chaplains. He ministered intimately to officers, enlisted personnel, or families, yet he always maintained a relationship that honored the customs, courtesies, and regulations of the services. He invested in people in a personal way that helped them credit their accounts for eternal purposes.

In the previous articles in this series, we discussed the various ministries of OCF, our roles as ambassadors for Christ in the military, the importance of supporting our chaplains and chapel programs, and some basic guidelines for officer involvement in all-rank ministries. Remembering Tom helps me expand on some of these ideas.

Your OCF fellowship should serve as a base for equipping and encouraging you to exercise spiritual leadership at your base, post, or aboard your ship. But how should we exercise spiritual leadership and minister? Tom probably would have said go to your unit or installation chaplain first. Seek his advice and ask the chaplain where he needs help. Sunday school, music ministry, a unit Bible study, lay reader aboard ship; those are some of the suggestions you might receive.

I encourage OCF members to be proactive in their outreach to the whole military society through the chapel program, in coordination with other military ministries, or through inclusion of enlisted members and their families in your local OCF fellowship activities.

In support of outreach, OCF has some unique publications. The OCF pamphlet entitled "Supporting Your Chaplain" is a great place to start. This publication explains why it is important to be involved in the installation chapel program and it provides guidelines for entering into service with your chaplain. **My favorite publication is "Standing in the Gap, a Lay Reader's Guide for the Seagoing Christian."** Although aimed at the sea services, this pamphlet is rich

in guidance for lay leaders aboard ship or in a deployed unit. "Sound the Trumpet," is a compilation of readings on revival for men and women in the military and is a valuable study source. All of these publications can be helpful in your outreach to the entire military society.

Two other publications, "Service Separations, a Wife's Perspective," and "Deployed Not Disconnected" can support another important outreach responsibility for the Christian officer; support to families during unit deployments.

One of my last conversations with Tom Hemingway concerned this very important subject dear to his heart and mine. For years as a commander of special operations units and air mobility forces, I deployed units around the world on an almost daily basis. In this **process my thoughts would always go to my junior enlisted gunner on an AC-130 Gun Ship with a wife and two children at home** or my newest Second Lieutenant maintenance officer whose wife had been in our military family for less than a year. The unit was deploying to perhaps some undisclosed location for six months. Did the families live on base or in a secure apartment complex? Did they have friends around them who would help them when the baby was sick or a major appliance broke? Did they have a source of spiritual support and nourishment? I know those were questions that many of you have asked in today's expeditionary military.

Families need a support structure so they can continue the mission at home and continue to grow spiritually while the unit is deployed. There are many service programs, which meet many of these needs, and chaplains are the place to start. Deployments are opportunities to minister in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ under difficult circumstances at home. There is no simple answer and every organization and deployment will be different. However, as Christian officers, we should exercise Biblical leadership in planning for support and outreach to families during unit deployments.

In summary, I see what Tom Hemingway saw, OCF fellowships that reach out to the military society around them. I see fellowships that encourage support for chapel programs or provide unit lay leaders. I see fellowships that encourage family support and ministry for deploying units. **I see Biblical leadership and ministry to military personnel and their families, Any Time, Any Place, Any Way.**

## **What is OCF?**

### **Making the OCF Vision a Reality**

#### **Last in a series**

by LtGen Bruce L. Fister, USAF (Ret.)

This is the last in a series of articles designed to help us **understand what OCF is really about** and how each of us can be part of the exciting vision of:

### **Christian officers**

exercising

### **biblical leadership**

to raise up a

### **godly military**

Previous articles discussed the various parts of the OCF ministry, beginning with our lay-led local fellowships. Local fellowships aboard ships and at bases and posts around the world are the core of OCF because that is where we “glorify God by uniting Christian officers for biblical fellowship and outreach, equipping and encouraging them to minister effectively in the military society.”

**Local fellowships are where the rubber meets the road.**

I also wrote about how local fellowships are supported by other components of the OCF ministry. Regional staff members meet with local leaders and provide leadership training and encouragement. Academy and ROTC ministries reach out spiritually to Cadets and Midshipmen. At Gateways (Ft.

Leavenworth, Air University, and Quantico) we minister to more senior officers and newly commissioned officers. OCF conference centers at Spring Canyon, Colorado, and White Sulphur Springs, Pennsylvania, provide for spiritual training, encouragement and refreshment. Conference centers have the added focus of providing resources to help raise children in the ways of the Lord and equipping teenagers and college students to be spiritual leaders. I discussed how all OCF ministries are supported by COMMAND magazine and other publications. These publications also encourage chaplains, service members, and families around the world. **It is God's work, for His glory: transforming our military for Jesus Christ.**

If God wants to use OCF to transform the military society for His purposes, then outreach must be part of our local fellowships. Our daily duty performance and our outreach from fellowships are how we minister to the whole military society.

Within the context of outreach, many possibilities for including enlisted personnel and their families in OCF activities were presented. **I continue to emphasize that beginning this process through your unit, post or base chaplain might be the most appropriate way to proceed.** This outreach approach can help support our chaplains, an important OCF responsibility. Our support for chaplains should be designed to help make the chaplain successful, and to share the gospel with all our military families.

Whatever approach is taken toward biblical fellowship with enlisted personnel, the proper observation of service customs and protocols between junior and senior officers, and between officers and enlisted personnel is biblical and is always appropriate. Outreach to enlisted personnel and their families is an

important component of our ministry; through prayer, let the Holy Spirit be the guide.

Throughout this series I have written about the importance of exercising biblical leadership every day, professionally in our units and aboard our ships. Integrating biblical standards of leadership and excellence into our professional responsibilities will not only make us better officers, but it provides a basis from which we can serve as a witness to those around us. It was within this context that the important responsibility of Christian officers exercising leadership to prepare for the support of families during unit deployments was emphasized.

The consistent practice of biblical leadership on the part of officers will facilitate two other important functions that have not been discussed. The first is to be supportive in preparing your unit spiritually for deployment. The purpose here is to assist the commander or chaplain in fulfilling their responsibilities and to maintain fellowship at deployed locations under circumstances that may be much more difficult than during garrison operations. Often, deployments are unscheduled, so these preparations should be made long before unit notification. **Deployments may offer the greatest opportunity for ministry.**

Another area where you should exercise spiritual leadership is in the coordination and support of other ministries on your post or base. Officers are commissioned to lead, so it is natural for local leaders or area coordinators to help facilitate coordination among parachurch organizations. This does not mean to "take over" or "gain credit," but to help a Navigator representative, a Christian Military Fellowship leader, a Campus Crusade leader, etc., to become more effective in ministry for our Lord. In John 13:34 Jesus commanded that we love one another, and in Romans 12:5 Paul says that we are one in the body and

that each one belongs to the other. **Simple coordination, support, and demonstration of love for one another will make all of our ministries and our chaplains a more powerful witness for our Lord.**

In summary, OCF is about ministering to the whole military society. The equipping, encouraging and reaching out comes from local fellowships and the support comes from regional representatives, from Academy, ROTC, and Gateway ministries, from conference centers and through OCF publications. The complete OCF ministry should function together and the result I see is:

***Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen, and military families***

***--active duty and retired—***

***being led and ministered to by Christian officers.***

***That is the mission. A transformed military is the vision.***