BY TACY ELLIS

It wasn’t long after we moved to Woodson that Pete Parker joined the Marines. It was his calling at the time. I remember seeing him in his uniform, remembering him in high school and by his actions on and off the football field and toward his parents and grandparents. I thought, “if this is the type of person dedicated young men in the military is employing, our country will be all right.” Turns out that calling to be a US Marine led Pete Parker to a much greater one.

When asked about his first time to preach, he explained, “On my first tour of duty in Iraq, on a Sunday morning, I went down to our operations center before going out to church. It just so happened that one of our outlying units had encountered some tough enemy contact. We had four casualties being flown in to our little emergency surgery unit, and the chaplain needed to be there when they arrived. I went to the chapel (an old passenger train car we converted into a chapel) and got the chaplain’s attention.”

Pete said that the music had begun for morning service when the chaplain came to the back of the chapel to speak with him. He told the chaplain of the casualties, and the chaplain left. Pete looked up to see around 30 people who had “given up their sleep time to come worship the Lord.”

Pete continued, “It was at that point that the Lord spoke to my heart, and I felt led to get some notes from a Bible study I had been teaching, and when the music ended, I walked up into the pulpit, leaned my rifle against the wall and put my pistol under the pulpit and began to share God’s word for the first time as a pastor. I did not expect it to go beyond that point, but God had other plans for my life, and over time, He made it clear that He was calling me to serve Him as a pastor.”

Pete preached the word several more times in Iraq on his first tour of duty and when he returned stateside, after several months of praying, he “surrendered to ministry.” Pete still had 18 months to serve before retiring from the Marine Corps. He served a second tour in Iraq, where he preached once a month and served communion.

“I believe between these two tours of duty, Palms Baptist Church, where I had been serving for 9 years, licensed and ordained me.” When Pete retired from the Marine Corps in 2006, he returned home to Woodson and was called by the Woodson FBC to become the pastor. “After three incredible years there, the Lord began to work in my heart to step down as pastor. And in the following months, I led the church to call another pastor.” Shortly after that, Throckmorton FBC asked Pastor Parker to fill the pulpit, and Pete explained, “After a few months of seeking God’s will, I accepted the call to be the pastor.”

We sometimes forget that pastors have lives, and normal lives at that. Pete and his wife, Cindy, grew up together in Woodson. Pete shared, “My dad retired from the Army in 1977 and we moved to Woodson where my grandparents (Bob and Ruby Walker) were living. Cindy and I probably met around then.”

“She is a couple of years younger than me. We were friends and even went on one date when we were in high school. She was a Christian and I was not, and that was pretty much the reason for only one date.” Pete explained that he accepted Christ as his Savior when he was 20. A couple of years later, Cindy and Pete were in a wedding together. It was at that point that “we started dating and although I was in the Marine Corps and living in California, we both felt something more than friendship.”

The pair wrote letters weekly, and he called a couple of times a month. Over the next year Pete came home twice, and in December of 1989, Pete proposed to Cindy. “We were married in April 1990.”

Pete and Cindy Parker. Pete is the pastor at the First Baptist Church of Throckmorton.

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"Geoff was 2 when we got married, and I became a father right away," Pete bragged on Geoff, "He was the perfect Marine's son. He liked things to be neat and tidy and that went over well with me." Maggie was born 10 years later, in Kansas, at an army hospital. Pete remembered the day, "It was the Marine Corps birthday on the day she was born, and the nurses sang the Marine Hymn to me and her. I also taped a Marine flag to her bed just to be sure she started life on the right foot."

Pete's personal goal is to "serve the Lord as a pastor until I can retire." At that point he wants to "serve the Lord in other ways." He mentioned possibly being involved with disaster relief and working with the Texas Baptist Men.

When asked what the best part of preaching is, Pete responded, "Seeing people I have known and loved for many years come to know Christ or grow closer to Christ. I am blessed to get to know many families inside and outside of the church body. As a pastor I spend many hard times with families as they work through the issues of death and life. I always feel blessed and honored when I am invited into these families to share the life of their loved ones and to honor their memory."

When asked what his flock does best, Pastor Parker responded, "The Lord has given FBC a mission of reaching the young ones in Throckmorton. We have excellent Wednesday night ministry for the kids, as well as our summertime VBS and kids' camp. These ministries are always open to all kids and the adults here at FBC really support each one. We have over 20 adults ministering to the kids each Wednesday night during the school year, and for VBS, over 30 each day."

He continued, "Within the church there is also a strong desire to see the adults who do not attend church, or believe in Jesus, come to believe. There are men's and women's Bible studies during the week on Tuesday and conjoined Bible studies on Wednesdays."

Though Pete didn't share it, the number for the church is 940-849-4231, should you need information on service times or need to contact Pastor Parker.

Perhaps you have come to know Pete as you heard him perform a wedding or a funeral. Or maybe he has visited in the hospital upon the birth of a child (as he did when our Claire was born), or when someone is ill (again, Pete has been there for our family) or in need. Or maybe you've worked beside him or heard him speak at a veterans' service. Or, perhaps you have just shared a community experience.

Pete has come to know the people of his flock, the people of the town and the people in the county. His sincerity is inherent. Pete is humble, honest, compassionate, truly caring and truly committed to sharing God's love.

What does he want for his church, for us all, one goal: "to live for the glory of God."

A couple of months ago as I was visiting with a friend, we were talking about the Christian life and how we are doing in our walk with the Lord. As we were sharing, he said that when he starts to think about his own life and how he is doing, he asks himself this question, "If everyone in the church was just like me, what would the church look like?" That question hit me like a ton of bricks.

As I went about my day and my week and the last two months, that question has remained in my mind. It has caused me to really think about how I go about each day.

Let me share a few things about that question that have crossed my mind over the last few months:

- Would there be Sunday Evening services at the church? If I am not willing to be a part of Sunday Evening services and everyone in church is just like me, would we cancel those services? I bet so.

- Would we have any children's ministries? If I don't support our children's ministries and everyone is just like me, I guess our kids are just left out. The same can be said about youth.

- Would there be a need to have Bible studies during the week? If I don't support them or teach them or attend them, I guess we shouldn't have them.

- If everyone in the church was just like me, would there be anybody not in church hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ? How would anybody hear about Jesus if I am not willing to tell them, and everyone else who knows about Jesus is just like me?

- If everyone in the church was just like me, would the church even look like the church?

- Those are some tough questions, but the one that really hit home to me was this: If everyone in the church was just like me, would I want to be in the church?

If you let that question soak in a bit, eventually you will begin to wonder things like, would there be any singing in church? Would there be any worship or prayer? Would there be an offering to pay the electric and water bills?

Now don't get caught up in tearing apart the question. I know that God created each of us unique and He gave each of us giftings to serve Him, so we will never all look the same. The point is, as I examine my own life and my own walk with the Lord, am I walking worthy of the Gospel of Christ (Philippians 2:17). Am I truly committed to loving the Lord with all my heart, my soul, my mind, and my strength?

I encourage each of you to take some time and consider your relationship with the Lord. I would love to hear about how this question affects you and your thinking over the next few weeks. Please feel free to share with me as you see or feel welcome to come by and share at the church. Blessings, Pete.

PASTOR'S PEN

MARK THE DATE...

HOMECOMING
NOV 2-4: THS 2018 Homecoming Dates - Friday, Nov 2 - Football game SATURDAY, NOV 3: Homecoming Parade, Ex-Students Association Business Meeting SUNDAY, NOV 4: Alumni Worship Service in the morning