



James Schosser and his pastor, Pat McFarren, tell the story of James' enlistment

Military Enlistment and Conscience: One Young Man's Story

James: The military ads made it seem like you could be a superhero and protect your country.

Pastor: James was attracted by the recruiter's sales pitch, including the sharp uniforms and a chance to be one of the "few and the proud." He was going to slay the dragon just like in the military ads, and enjoy the honor and pride.

James: The recruiters came to my school. They did a good job of making the military seem like the right thing ... like a place where you could really become part of a brotherhood.

Pastor: When James' decision to join the Marines became public, many people in the congregation tried to dissuade him. My discussions with James focused primarily on whether or not he was making a wise decision, whether all the promises that the recruiters had made would be fulfilled.

James: My mother is a conscientious objector to war, and my congregation teaches conscientious objection. Just about everyone in the congregation talked to me at one point or another. We had a series of lessons in our

youth group about conscientious objection. It was hard. I started to feel singled out and targeted on all sides.

Pastor: James did not respond favorably to the congregation's efforts to talk him out of his commitment to joining the Marines. At one point he said, "I can't wait to get away where nobody will tell me what to do!"

James: There is really not too much anybody could have done to change my mind. I can be pretty hardheaded. I used my own interpretations of Scripture such as, "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's," to support what I was doing. But people still supported me personally. They told me to visit them when I returned home.

Pastor: The recruiter came to the church after the service on Sunday, June 3, to pick James up.

We prayed for James during the service, especially for him to have wisdom, and for his safety. The congregation focused on James as an individual, being careful not to honor the mission to which James was giving himself.

James: In basic training, the drill instructors were rude and vulgar. Some of the chants we sang during drills were very disrespectful. In first aid class, we were shown what we do to each other in war. We were shown a skull crushed by the butt of a gun. I began to wonder, "Why do we do this?"

Pastor: On June 21, I received my first letter from James. He described the constant talk