

Dyer: 'We need more people with passion'

By Mike Eiman Staff
Reporter

Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer spoke candidly Thursday about personal and professional struggles during the Kings Prayer Force's 15th annual National Day of Prayer in Hanford.

Dyer, who has been with the Fresno Police Department for 36 years and nearly 14 of those as chief, told the crowd of hundreds gathered at the Civic Auditorium how faith in God has guided him and provided purpose during good times and bad.

Over the past few months, Dyer said, two of his officers have died of cancer and a cadet was accidentally shot at the police gun range.

Police have also been the subject of numerous protests and riots in recent months stemming from claims of police brutality and racism.

Then in March, Deputy Chief Keith Foster, a man who Dyer had elevated within the department, was arrested on federal drug charges. Adding insult to injury, Dyer said he found himself the subject of claims on social media that he knew about Foster's alleged misconduct and even participated.

Several years ago, Dyer was subjected to rumors that he had murdered one of his lieutenants who committed suicide near his house.

"In every one of those times of crisis, someone will inevitably come to me and say, 'Chief, I don't think you can survive this one. I think this is going to be your demise,'" Dyer said. "And in each one of those circumstances, I have to just rely on God."

Dyer said that having a sense of purpose provides the passion to do the impossible.

"What we need today in our societies, we need more people with passion," he said. "We need fewer people going through the motions of life and more people who are filled with passion to do the unthinkable."

He recalled a series of brutal robberies that took place when he was still an assistant police chief. He said then-Chief Ed Winchester was frustrated that detectives were unable to catch the criminals, who targeted the elderly in broad daylight, beat them and stole their valuables.

Winchester motivated the detectives by showing them photos of the victims, and reminding them that they could be looking at their own parents or grandparents.

"He said nothing else other than, 'Go out and catch these guys,'" Dyer said. "And they did. In two days, those suspects were in custody. Why? They got their passion back for their job."

Dyer told the crowd about a time when he lacked purpose in his life.

"In the early part of my career, I had been consumed with the job, consumed with alcohol," Dyer said. "I started making some very poor decisions about my life, my career, my personal life. I involved myself with another woman for many years while I was married."

At that point, he and his wife, Diane, separated. Divorce was imminent, Dyer said.

"It was at a time in my life where I really didn't care," he said. "I didn't care about my job. I didn't care about my marriage. And I really didn't care about life. I didn't have a purpose for life."

A coworker, who wasn't aware of what was going on in Dyer's life, invited him to church. Dyer called his wife and asked if she would go with him.

"I picked her up that Sunday and went to church," Dyer said. "I remember the message preached was on alcohol and adultery. When the altar call was given for people to go down, I grabbed my wife's hand and said, 'Let's get out of here. I don't want to be part of a place where they know all about you.'"

They returned the following week and were again met with a sermon about alcohol and adultery. After three weeks, Dyer said, the message got through to him and he gave his life over to God.

"From that day forward, God has given me a purpose in my life," Dyer said. "I knew I had a purpose to keep people safe, but I never felt it the way that I feel it today."

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