

California Official Orders Police and Fire Chaplains to Stop Praying 'In Jesus' Name'

A California police chaplain and a fire chaplain are demanding that their local city council revoke a recent order that forbids them from concluding prayers at events "in Jesus' name."

First Liberty Institute, a nonprofit legal group that aims to defend religious freedoms, sent a letter to the Carlsbad City Council requesting the organization overturn a recent order by the city manager to keep police chaplain J.C. Cooper and fire chaplain Denny Cooper from praying in the name of Jesus.

J.C. Cooper is a local pastor who has served as a volunteer chaplain for the Carlsbad Police Department for six years.

His father, Denny, has served as the volunteer chaplain for the Fire Department for 18 years.

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According to First Liberty, the Coopers provide support, encouragement and prayer to first responders as they face traumatic situations.

In early March, J.C. was asked to give an invocation at the Carlsbad Police Department Awards Ceremony, and he concluded the prayer "in Jesus' name."

About a month later, J.C. was told by Police Chief Christie Calderwood that the City Council had decided that unless he removed "in Jesus' name" from future invocations, he would be subject to discipline.

His father, Denny, was told by Fire Chief Mike Calderwood around the same time that the city manager told him Denny could no longer perform invocations unless he also removed the phrase, "In Jesus' name."

J.C. sought counsel with his father and pastor and told the police chief that "removing the name of Jesus from his prayers would be a denial of his Savior Jesus Christ, a violation of his conscience and a sin."

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As a result, he declined to give the invocation at the upcoming Carlsbad Police Promotion Ceremony.

Later, the police chaplain had a meeting with the chief of police and City Manager Scott Chadwick.

According to First Liberty, Chadwick claimed that invoking the name of Jesus was considered "harassment, created a hostile work environment and lifted one religion above another."

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