

Former SEALs Chaplain Could Be Kicked Out of Navy for Christian Beliefs

A chaplain who once ministered to Navy SEALs could be thrown out of the military after he was accused of failing “to show tolerance and respect” in private counseling sessions in regards to issues pertaining to faith, marriage and sexuality, specifically homosexuality and premarital sex, according to documents obtained exclusively by *Fox News*.

Lt. Commander Wes Modder, who is endorsed by the Assemblies of God, has also been accused of being unable to “function in the diverse and pluralistic environment” of the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command in Goose Creek, South Carolina.

“On multiple occasions he discriminated against students who were of different faiths and backgrounds,” the Chaplain’s commanding Officer Capt. Jon R. Fahs wrote in a memorandum obtained by *Fox News*.

Modder is a highly decorated, 19-year veteran of the military. Prior to becoming a Navy chaplain, he served in the Marine Corps. His assignments included tours with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit and Naval Special Warfare Command—where he served as the Force Chaplain of the Navy SEALs.

His record is brimming with accolades and endorsements—including from Capt. Fahs.

In Modder’s most recent review, Fahs declared that the chaplain was “the best of the best,” and a “consummate professional leader” worthy of an early promotion.

So how did Chaplain Modder go from being the “best of the best” to being unfit for service in the U.S. military in a

span of five months?

The Navy did not return my calls seeking comment—so all we can do is rely on their written accusations and evidence.

Michael Berry, a military veteran and attorney with Liberty Institute, a law firm that specializes in religious liberty cases, is representing Modder. He accused the military of committing a gross injustice against the chaplain in a letter to the Navy. He told me they will respond forcefully and resolutely to the allegations—which they categorically deny.

“We are starting to see cases where chaplains have targets on their backs,” Berry said. “They have to ask themselves, ‘Do I stay true to my faith or do I keep my job?’”

He said Modder is being punished because of his Christian faith.

“They want chaplains to be glorified summer camp counselors and not speak truth and love into people’s lives,” Berry told me. “There are some anti-religious elements in our military. Anytime somebody wants to live their faith out, there are people who say that is offensive.”

Modder told me he was devastated by the accusations. He believes charges have been trumped up.

“The military now wants a 2.0 chaplain instead of a legacy chaplain,” Modder said. “They want a chaplain to accommodate policy that contradicts Scripture.”

Modder’s troubles started on Dec. 6 when an assistant in his office showed up to work with a pair of Equal Opportunity representatives and a five-page complaint documenting grievances against the chaplain.

The lieutenant junior grade officer went on to detail concerns about Moody’s views on “same-sex relationships/marriages, homosexuality, different standards of respect for men and

women, premarital sex and masturbation.”

Modder said the young officer had only been working with him for about a month and would constantly pepper him with questions pertaining to homosexuality. He had no idea that the officer was in fact gay—and married to another man.

“His five-page letter of complaint was unconscionable,” Modder said. “He said I had a behavioral pattern of being anti-discriminatory of same-sex orientation.”

The chaplain was not even given a chance to defend himself. He was immediately removed from duties and told to clean out his office.

“It was insulting and it was devastating,” Modder said. “I felt discriminated against. How could something like this happen at this stage of my career?”

Zollie Smith, the executive director for the Assemblies of God, U.S. Missions, told me they stand firmly behind the chaplain.

“We stand behind him 100 percent,” he said.

In hindsight, Berry believes the officer was setting up his client—and in doing so may have committed a crime.

“I believe some of what the lieutenant has alleged could constitute a military crime—false statements, taking what the chaplain said and twisting or misconstruing it—in an attempt to get the chaplain punished,” he said. “He abused the position he was placed in as a chaplain’s assistant.”

He believes the officer may have gained access to private counseling files.

“To be clear, Chaplain Modder does not dispute that during private, one-on-one pastoral care and counseling sessions, he expressed his sincerely held religious belief that: sexual

acts outside of marriage are contrary to biblical teaching; homosexual behavior is contrary to biblical teaching; and homosexual orientation or temptation, as distinct from conduct, is not sin," Berry said.

Modder said many Americans may be shocked to discover how much military culture has changed over the past few years.

"This new generation is very secular and very open sexually," he said. "The values that the military once held—just like the Boy Scouts of America—are changing. The culture wants this. Culture is colliding with truth. That's at the heart of this."

Modder recalled an incident that occurred when he first arrived on the base. He was about to deliver the invocation at a graduation ceremony when the captain pulled him aside.

"He looked at me and said, 'Hey, chaplain—do not pray in Jesus' name,'" he recalled.

Modder said he understands the firestorm he is about to enter—but he remains resolute.

"Every fiber in my being wants to run away from this—but if I do I'm not being obedient to the Lord," he told me. "I need to stand up for righteousness, and this is something I cannot walk away from."

The reality is that many other chaplains could find themselves in Chaplain Modder's shoes. The Roman Catholic church and the Southern Baptist convention have nearly identical positions on the issues that the Navy found problematic with Modder.

"It's going to be a hard road for me," he said. "But it's what God has called me to do."

Ultimately, it's about leaving a legacy and setting an example for his family—his wife and four young children.

The day he was relieved of his duties, Chaplain Modder's 14-

year-old son tagged along to help pack up his dad's office. A few senior enlisted men were there as well.

As they were driving away, the boy told his father that the enlisted men had spoken to him.

"They told my son that 'you can be proud of your father because he's keeping the faith,'" Modder said. "The whole command knows that Chaplain Modder is keeping the faith."

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