

He Knew His Life Had a Greater Purpose

By [Shirley Rhodes](#) - [South Charlotte News, Charlotte Observer](#)



Ish Payne, 67, opened Restoring Hearts Ministries, a Christian- based counseling center in Matthews.

Payne has worked as a Christian counselor for more than 15 years. He said he opened the Matthews location because he felt there was a need in the community for residents who are seeking Christian counseling but are without a church affiliation.

"The consulting services help clients to cope with debilitating stress that can cripple their lives and can lead to more serious illnesses," said Payne. "Spiritual inner healing is a medication- free approach to physical healing."

Payne, who lives in Indian Trail, grew up in Chattanooga, Tenn., where his religious values were influenced by his mother, a volunteer counselor for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Payne said he recalls making his first commitment to God at 10 years old, when he attended a Billy Graham crusade with his mom at a Chattanooga field house.

His parents valued discipline and wanted him to have the best education, so they sent him to the Baylor School, a military prep school in Chattanooga, where he attended grades seven through 12 and graduated in 1962.

After graduation, he enrolled in the University of Tennessee as a business major with his sights set on a business career, but after his first year, his life took a different direction.

"I knew my life had to have greater purpose than just having money to buy bigger houses or fancy toys," said Payne.

The following September, instead of returning to college, he headed to Parris Island, S.C., to serve as a Marine during the Vietnam War.

He served for six years and rose to the rank of sergeant E5 before receiving an honorable discharge in 1969. He returned to Tennessee with a new direction in his life and joined the Red Bank, Tenn., police force, where he served as police chaplain.

"Policeman, like Marines, are a close-knit team, and many don't have an outlet for sharing their struggles and frustrations," said Payne. "The role as chaplain just flowed naturally to me."

He found the work satisfying and became an ordained minister. He worked as an associate pastor teaching inner healing and counseling before moving to Indian Trail in 2003.

In addition to the consulting center, Payne supports the community through educational conferences, speaking engagements and volunteer work through the [Elevation Church](#) of Matthews, where he and his wife, Tonda, are core team leaders.

He has also written three books - "[Life in the Red Zone.](#)" "[Crossing Over](#)" and "[A Warrior's Walk](#)" - which are available through his website.

In his book "[A Warrior's Walk.](#)" he recounts his life as a Marine and compares his commitment to serving his country to his commitment to serving God.

"In order to be a spiritual warrior for God, you must be more concerned about others than about yourself," said Payne.