



ONE MARRIAGE.

ONE FAMILY.

UNDER GOD.

INDIVISIBLE

DEVOTIONS

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“HEATHER AND I ARE CALLED TO THIS”

DIVORCE: DON'T LET THE ENEMY DETER YOU FROM YOUR MARRIAGE



Divorce is rampant in the military, touching soldiers and families in all ranks. In this scene, the sense of God's calling to the chaplaincy so firmly announced by Chaplain Turner, contrasts with the glaring reality of military divorces, marriages and families strained to the breaking point by repeated deployments to the combat zone. Even the commander is divorced. But Chaplain Darren

Turner is yet to experience the ravages of war or the way it affects families. He and his wife, though certain of God's calling to military ministry, are yet to experience the uncertainties of marital separation or the stresses it creates.



Despite efforts to sustain frequent communication through phone calls and videos, the call to ministry on the battlefield and at Fort Stewart is no "cake walk." Pressures mount at home as Heather meets with families who've lost loved ones, helps with the Family Readiness Group, and singlehandedly manages the household. That's tough for any military spouse. Darren is equally taxed, dealing with losses in the unit and threats to his own safety. Heather and Darren begin to disconnect from each other and from God. Disconnects lead to doubt, miscommunication, and loss of trust. These are the elements that lead to divorce. But it's a reality faced by many military couples.

"EVEN THE COMMANDER IS DIVORCED"



Duties, roles, and responsibilities strained by separation rob many military couples of the joy they once knew. They may forget the vows they promised and the happiness of just being together. This is when the enemy wins!



Much like in war, marriage also has its battles. Some are won some are lost. When we lose one, the enemy tries to deter us from our original mission or calling in our lives. He gets us to lose sight of why we began our marriage.

God created marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). God not only calls us to ministry like Darren and Heather, he also calls couples to live as "one flesh." But the stresses on Darren and Heather's marriage created an opportunity for the enemy to divide and conquer.

They got caught up with everyone else's problems, as well as their own individual needs; they forgot their first ministry, each other! The moment their relationship with God stopped and conversation halted, it led them to consider divorce. In Malachi 2:16 God says, "For I hate divorce." God's best is never divorce.

For those struggling to hang on, God is big enough for anything you give Him. He is not surprised by your situation and neither is He sitting on the sidelines watching. He's waiting for us to ask Him for help. Chaplain Turner and his wife, Heather, came to understand this and turned to God to heal their marriage and restore their calling.

Digging Deeper

- 1) What are some ways you can serve your spouse? Hint: Think of things you don't normally do.
- 2) What does Ephesians 5:21 mean to you? If applied, how would that change your marriage?
- 3) 1 Corinthians 13 gives us a detailed definition of Love. If you were to apply this to your marriage, would it be close? Read through 1 Corinthians 13 and supply your name in every place you find the word "love" or "charity."



A Prayer for a Troubled Marriage

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you today and ask for your guidance and direction in my marriage! Would you please teach me to be the person I need to be in this marriage? What do I need to change? Lord, show me now! Teach me Ephesians 5 and let me live it out in my marriage and restore the joy again.

In Jesus holy name I pray, Amen!



About The Author: Jody Burkeen, Pastor, Author, and Speaker. (Gulf War Vet)

Jody Burkeen is the founder of Man Up God's Way men's ministry and lead pastor at Ignite Church in Eureka, MO. He has been married for 28 years to Nan and has 4 wonderful children, Eevee, Gabe, Paul and Addy. He has authored three books: *Man Up- Becoming a Godly Man in a Ungodly World*, *Pursuit of a Godly Life*, and *The Marriage Advance- 15 Answers to Questions Men Won't Ask*. He also authored the men's devotion for *Hacksaw Ridge*. He travels around the country preaching to men and teaching them to Man Up God's Way!



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“HEATHER AND I ARE CALLED TO THIS” DIVORCE



This scene addresses marriage and the all too common issue of divorce in the military. It depicts the unfortunate circumstance many military families find themselves in during or after deployments. Recent studies show that the longer a family is separated by deployment, the higher the risk of divorce. Deployments put a huge strain on families and many are unable to cope, opting to end the marriage, thinking that a divorce will stop the struggle and pain.



In this scene, Colonel Jacobsen is giving Chaplain Turner the introduction brief around the base. As they're sitting in his office, he pulls out a large stack of files and slides them across his desk. "Divorces filed in the last three months," he says. As Chaplain Turner slowly reaches over and picks them up you can see the shock on his face. "Soldiers losing families and having nothing to go home to is not the stabilizing force we need around here," Colonel Jacobsen adds.



Deployments are hard on marriages. Families spend months and often a year or more apart, which creates stress on both sides. Warriors are in a foreign country, fighting an enemy, dealing with life and death situations everyday. Families are at home, working to hold things together and juggling the demands of everyday life. Minimal communication and strained conversations exacerbate the situation. Families also are unable to relate to the challenges their deployed spouses are experiencing. These stresses take a toll on any marriage, especially those that don't have a solid foundation.



When God designed marriage (see Genesis 2:22-24) he created woman from man; and through marriage, the two essentially become one flesh. God also intended for marriages to last, not to fall apart at the first sign of a challenge. "'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together" (Mark 10:7-9). God makes it abundantly clear that He doesn't desire for any marriage to dissolve in divorce.

Just as warriors spend years training for battle, married couples also should prepare and plan for tough times. Without constant communication, grace, mutual respect, and admiration, marriages will have a difficult time withstanding the storms of life. How can Chaplain Turner prep his own marriage, as well as those of the warriors he is responsible for? Do you need help? Look to those seasoned veterans who have had their marriages battle-tested. They can offer support and advice. Are you a seasoned veteran that has navigated these challenges? Then connect with a newly deployed couple or family and share what you've learned. It may be exactly what they need to overcome their marital strife and persevere.

Digging Deeper

- 1) In Genesis 2:24, what does God say happens when a man and a woman get married?
- 2) According to Colossians 3:18-19, wives are called to respect their husbands and husbands are called to love their wives. What is the significance in the different commands for husbands and wives?
- 3) As couples stand firm in their marriage vows, what is the significance of the three-cord strand explained in Ecclesiastes 4:12?



A Prayer for those Dealing with Marital Strife

Dear Lord, help us to trust You regardless of the challenges we are facing. May we love our spouse the way You have loved us. Help us to treasure faithfulness in our marriage and in our lives. Let us respect one another and show sacrificial love for each other every day. Let us "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count [our spouse] more significant than [ourselves]" (Philippians 2:3). Amen.



About The Author: Damon Friedman, D. IS, Special Tactics Officer, Lt Col, U.S. Air Force

Damon Friedman is an elite Special Tactics Officer and leader in special operations with four combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is the recipient of three Bronze Stars (one with valor) and the Combat Action medal among other awards. In 2011, he started SOF Missions, a non-profit organization aimed at helping veterans. He is the executive producer of the film *Surrender Only to ONE*, which creates awareness of the PTSD and suicide epidemic among the veteran community. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Lewis University, University of Oklahoma, and a doctorate in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary. Friedman, his wife, and their two children live in Tampa, Florida.



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"THIS IS THE HARDEST THING I'VE EVER DONE" BRINGING COMBAT TRAUMA HOME



You have probably seen the mobiles that hang above a baby's crib. Perfectly balanced, spinning with the slightest puff of air, but always beautifully stable. Your household is like that mobile, with each family member fulfilling their role, balancing out the others.

When one of you is deployed, it's like pulling one of the pieces off the mobile. Suddenly, it's unbalanced and jerking around wildly. But as the remaining family members adjust their positions on the mobile, order and stability are (somewhat) restored. This adjustment is not easy, as Heather shared with Amanda: "This is by far the hardest thing I've ever done." But somehow, a new balance is achieved, and it prevails until you come back home.

Naturally, you hang your piece back on the mobile, which throws everything out of kilter again. Your spouse has to relinquish responsibilities that had been yours before, but were his or hers while you were deployed. New - and possibly better - systems and styles are now in place. Your reintegration into the family dynamic is probably going to produce some turbulence for a while.

Add to that the possibility of bringing home a good dose of PTSD, and you may be faced with some grave difficulties. And sadly, your children probably will suffer the most.

There is a psychological disorder called Secondary Traumatic Stress, and it occurs when one person's trauma symptoms cause great distress to someone who loves them. Despite the family members' best efforts to keep peace on the home front, the trauma sufferer's outbursts of emotion, rage, or violence can cause trauma symptoms in their spouse or children.

The absolute last thing that a service member wants to do is to traumatize his or her kids. When Darren returned from deployment with PTSD and became furious with Elie and Sam for reading his diary, Heather recognized that Darren's symptoms had gotten out of control and were doing psychological and spiritual harm to their children. To protect them, she kicked him out. Darren was





devastated that his behavior had come to this. His eviction from his own home was his wake-up call. He began to take action to heal his PTSD, to win back his family, and to set their mobile right again.

If you have come back from deployment with trauma symptoms, what actions can you take to protect your children? Here are four things that will prove to be helpful:

1. PRAY.

Seek God's supernatural intervention. Pray for - and with - your spouse and your kids. Recruit others to pray for you and your family.

2. WORK ON YOURSELF.

PTSD sufferers tend to lose ambition, shift their lives into neutral, self-isolate, and just hope things get better. But they won't, and your family will continue to pay the price. God wants to heal you, but He will not whack you with a magic wand. However, if you will be intentional about creating an environment of healing, cultivating your relationship with Jesus Christ through daily prayer and Bible reading, fellowshiping with other spiritually healthy Christians, getting good counseling, and start serving others, you will experience His healing.

3. TALK TO YOUR KIDS.

Share frankly that you experienced things while deployed that have made you very sad and angry, and that it's going to take a while for you to be able to get back to normal. Kids sometimes blame themselves for abuse they receive. It's an illogical shame/guilt response, which Satan will exploit to shake their identity and their perception of reality. Reassure them that your behavior is not their fault. Gently correct and clarify as you see this false reasoning develop. Assure them over and over again of your love - by your words and by your actions.

4. PLAY WITH YOUR KIDS.

There are two reasons for this: (1) The more happy memories you make with them, the more it will strengthen their trust in you, and their desire to be with you. (2) They may not be able to express their emotions verbally. Play and imagination are a child's native language. Give them opportunities to "talk" as you play with Legos, in a sand box, with cars or dolls. Ask God for insight as you play and talk.



Digging Deeper

Look up the following Scriptures and use them as a template to craft specific prayers for yourself, your spouse, and for your children: 1 John 4:16; Psalm 3:3; 62:7,8; 68:19; 91:1-16; Romans 14:19; Galatians 5:22,23; Philippians 4:6,7; Colossians 3:12,20-24; Hebrews 4:15,16; 5:8.

A Prayer for Your Children

Father, impart your great father's heart to me. Give me pure love for my children, and help me to demonstrate that love through my words and my actions. May they sense peace, safety and love in our home. Protect them from the trauma symptoms that I am currently battling, and for their sakes, heal me.



About The Authors: Chris & Rahnella Adsit

Chris & Rahnella Adsit have been in full-time ministry for over 40 years, focusing on veteran and first responder trauma since 2005. They currently provide leadership to REBOOT Alliance- Chris as Resource Coordinator and Rahnella as the Leader Development Coordinator.



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**"THIS IS BY FAR THE HARDEST
THING I'VE EVER DONE."**

THE HOME FRONT



Single parenting is hard. A baby that will not sleep and children who are anxious make single parenting harder. Add concern for a husband deployed with a combat unit and you can understand Amanda's dilemma. Heather identified with Amanda's frustration when she said, "I don't know about you, but this is by far the hardest thing I've ever done." Oh, that every deployed spouse would have a friend like Heather to come alongside and say, "It's okay to feel overwhelmed." Even better if that friend follows those words with, "You're not the only one who feels that way." Amanda's relief is visible in this scene as Heather gives her permission to acknowledge the emotion and isolation that often accompany family separation.

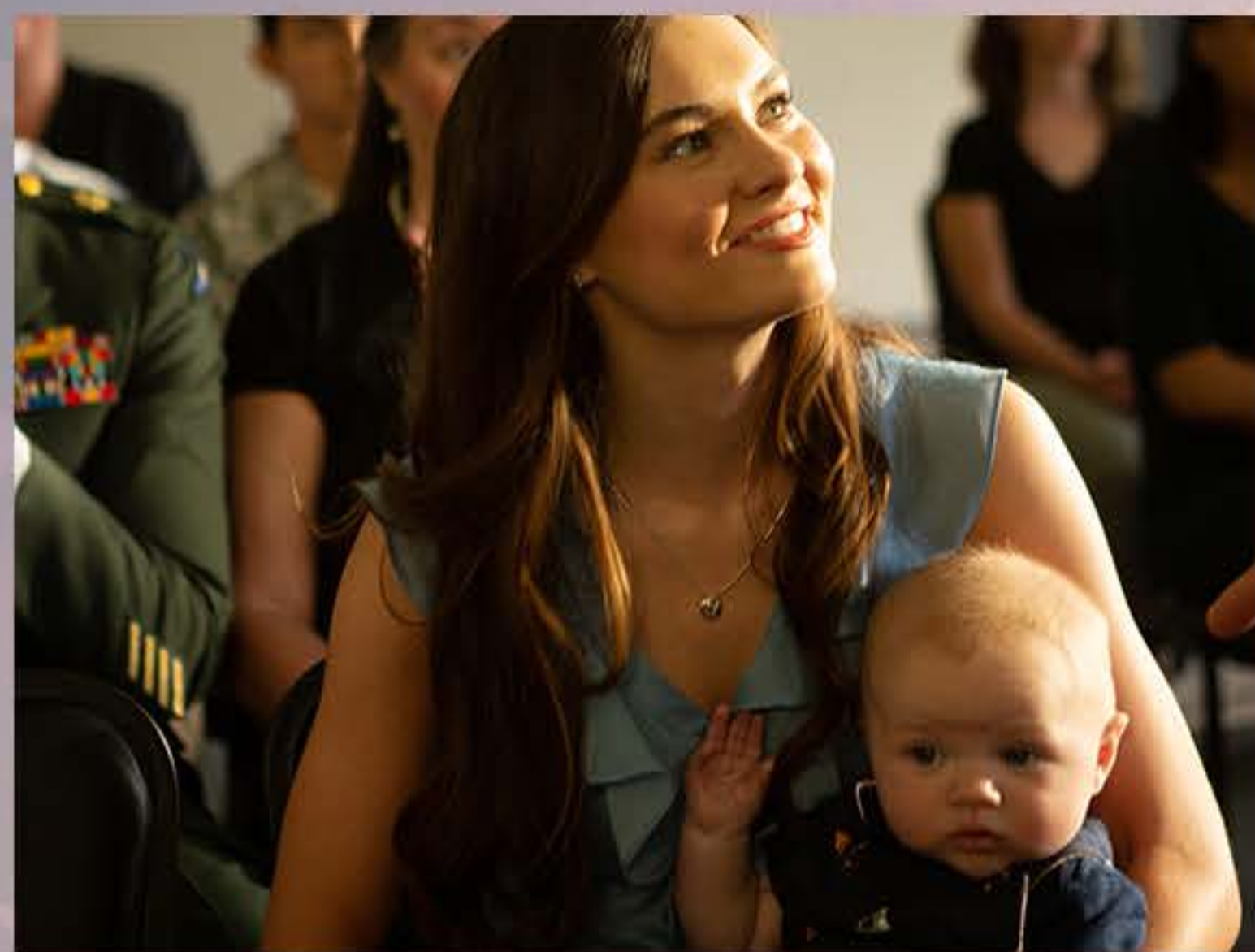


Amanda and Heather's husbands are the ones deployed, but these women are expressing their own sense of feeling battle-weary. Their weariness does not come from combat, but from lack of sleep because of a crying baby, anxiety for a husband in a danger zone, and responsibility of trying to hold down the fort at home.

Military spouses can become independent and self-reliant out of necessity and experience. The tendency to think, "I have to be strong for others and do things for myself" can lead to hiding insecurities that if not acknowledged and dealt with can result in loneliness, exhaustion, and depression. Heather could have ignored Amanda sitting alone on a bench and

Amanda could have rejected Heather's invitation of friendship, but they both took a courageous step toward one another. Heather spoke simple words with profound possibilities when she offered her contact info and said, "If you want to talk or hang." The scene ends with the encouraging picture of Amanda no longer alone but seated on the bench next to Heather.





Family separations are inherent to military life. Deployment, training, and schools for the military service member will all happen-and happen again. A commitment not to go it alone is key and essential to making it through a military family separation. Heather reached out to Amanda and they found in each other a battle buddy. Their shared military experience provided an immediate bond that became a support system throughout the deployment. They both understood the challenge of war, whether on the battlefield or at home.

There is another friend who understands the challenges a military family experiences during separation. A friend who offers comfort, hope, and wisdom when circumstances seem overwhelming. Isaiah 40:11 is a beautiful depiction of God as a shepherd who shows loving care to the vulnerable. "He tends to his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young" (NIV). This loving promise indicates that God, who is great and mighty, also is compassionate, gentle, and stands-or sits-beside you ready to attend to your deepest needs.

Digging Deeper

1) You will find numerous Scriptures known as "one another" commands in the New Testament. How can you apply the following "one another" commands to family separations?

- a. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- b. Hebrews 3:13
- c. Hebrews 10:23-25



2) Encouragement in these Scriptures is used to describe coming alongside someone to give aid, strength, comfort, or courage. How can you do this for someone today? How has someone done this for you?

A Prayer for Those Experiencing Family Separation

Dear Lord, strengthen the one who is alone today because of a military deployment or other cause of separation. Encourage them through the power of your Holy Spirit and intersect their life with someone who will sit with them, walk with them, talk with them, and be a friend who shares your love.
Amen.



About the Author: Brenda Pace, D. Min.

Brenda Pace is a popular conference speaker and author with a passion to bring encouragement and hope to women. Her journey has taken her from small-town beginnings in Tennessee, around the world as a military wife and back again as an author, speaker, and military ministry consultant. Her most recent book series, *Journey of a Military Wife*, *God's Truth for Every Step* published by American Bible Society, follows the journey of multiple biblical characters and makes application to the journey of the modern-day woman. Brenda served in leadership roles for military organizations, including eight years on the national and international board of Protestant Women of the Chapel. She currently serves as the advisor for the military women's ministry Planting Roots, a non-profit that helps women live out their faith wherever the military plants them. After 28 years of military life, Brenda and her husband Richard live in Cleveland, Tennessee. (www.brendapace.com)



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**"I'M SURE YOU DID
EVERYTHING YOU COULD"**
WARRIOR GRIEF: DEALING WITH LOSS



**"THIS ONE IS FOR
YOU, CHAPLAIN,
DO WHATEVER IT
IS YOU DO"**

negatively impacting survivors beyond the battlefield.

This scene addresses grief and loss, not only the loss of comrades, but also the loss of innocent civilians. It depicts the craziness that occurs on the battlefield-the wounded, the dead, and the dying and how that is so traumatizing, especially for caregivers. Such trauma is not easily dismissed. Traumatic effects linger long after the battle is over, often

Those traumatic effects are evident on Chaplain Darren Turner's face in this scene. The grief is understandable. A child has died. Children are not supposed to die. The sense of helplessness is also apparent. "This one is for you, chaplain," Specialist Bradley says. "Do whatever it is you do," he adds, as he places the dead child in the arms of the chaplain. The chaplain's task is to find the family and console them the best he knows how.

Warrior grief is a significant issue for many combat veterans. It's also a private pain, not typically shared with civilians. Most civilians don't get it and some unfortunately don't care. But it's not just the loss of comrades that's devastating; it's also the loss of innocent civilians, particularly children, as evident in this scene. This is exactly what a fellow chaplain experienced in Iraq. He held a dying child in his arms. He was never the same again. Nothing seemed to assuage his pain.



But loss is not just about the loss of life; it's also sometimes about the loss of purpose and meaning or some other loss- one's faith, confidence or self-respect. These kinds of losses are also evident in the characters in the movie. What can we do for people like them? What do we say to them? What words of comfort or challenge might we give them?



The Scriptures tell us "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18). Here we find two things: God's presence and God's deliverance. These are powerful truths that mean God is always present for those in pain. He gets it. He knows. And, perhaps most importantly, he cares. He saves those whose spirit is crushed. When we feel beat down, He's there to raise us up. When we feel all is lost and we're all alone-we're not! He's there for every warrior and anyone who has ever sustained a loss. He is the "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

This is what Specialist Bradley needed to hear. This is what Chaplain Turner needed to remember, and what he had to tell the family. God cares. He's present. They weren't alone in grief; everybody suffers, even the chaplain. But we don't have to bear the pain by ourselves. God is there for us; he's near to every broken heart and is able to deliver us from our pain.

Digging Deeper

- 1) According to 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, what should we do with the comfort God gives?
- 2) As we share in Christ's sufferings, what else do we share in? (v. 5).
- 3) According to Psalm 42:11, what does God tell those whose "soul is cast down"?



A Prayer for Those in Grief

Dear Lord, May those who grieve today know your Presence and experience your saving power. Give them faith for their doubts, hope for their despair, and forgiveness for their failings. May they see beyond their losses and learn to count them as gain for the sake of Jesus who bore "our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). Amen.



About The Author: Dean Bonura, Chaplain (COL), U.S. Army (Ret)

Dean Bonura currently serves as a lead writer for The Warrior's Journey and is on its Board of Advisors. He has over 30 years of military service including two combat tours and several deployments to the Middle East and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also is the author of *Beyond Trauma: Hope and Healing for Warriors* (2016) and holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Corban University, Western Seminary, and a doctorate from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Denise, live in Memphis, Tennessee.



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"I'M SURE YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD" WARRIOR GRIEF: DEALING WITH LOSS



"WE COULDN'T SAVE HER, CHAPLAIN."

Chaplain Turner moved to the truck to cradle a limp form handed down from the cargo bed.

A somber voice said, "We couldn't save her, Chaplain." The cheery scarlet of the girl's floral dress contrasted with the caked blood on her delicate arms. Her tender face was peaceful, but pale with dust and death.

In that heartbreaking moment, the Chaplain asks a critical question, "Specialist, what is your name?"

"Bradley, Lance Bradley."

The survivors of loss each have a name, just like those we have lost.

While grief has a communal aspect that is crucial for sharing the burden, grief is also intensely individual. Some people process loss relatively quickly. For others, grief involves a long journey. Delayed waves of grief are common. There is no "right way" to grieve. Your pilgrimage "through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4) will have its own path and pace.



When you find yourself on that painful path—an experience the military community knows more than most—remember that God knows your name. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). You are unique. You are understood. You are loved.

The military warrior ethos can be a powerful and positive thing. At times, though, it may lead to pressure to short-circuit one's grieving process. You might face unspoken or even direct expectations to "move on" and "stay on mission." You may even propagate those ideas. This tendency can be particularly pronounced among leaders, who may feel they can't let their troops down by giving room for their own grief. Trust me, I've been there.



So give yourself and others permission and space to grieve. By all means, support each other-yet resist the urge to compare your experience. Your loss is personal. Jesus knows your name and walks with you. "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me" (John 10:14).

Before Jesus came to earth, many people anticipated that the promised Messiah would be a conquering warrior, one who would rule in majesty, far above the normal concerns of life. Had they read their prophets' writings more closely, they would have noted Christ would instead be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). His time for joyful victory would come-but not before a season of sorrow and grief.

Jesus offers you His example-and thus His permission-to grieve. He will shepherd you with care through your very personal journey. Only you can walk it. As you do, may you encounter the God who knows your name.

Digging Deeper



- 1) Read the prophetic words about the suffering of Jesus in Isaiah 53. How does Jesus' suffering influence your perspective on pain and loss?
- 2) Read about Jesus the Good Shepherd in John 10:1-18. What personal lessons do you draw from the way Jesus leads His flock and cares for each individual in the midst of troubles?
- 3) Is there a loss you've experienced but perhaps not fully grieved? Talk to a person you trust, as well as to God about it.

Prayer for Those in Grief

Father, thank you that you love me and know me by name. You know my pain and loss. You understand what grief feels like. When it is time for me to grieve, walk with me and show me how to embrace the process. Don't let me be overwhelmed by despair, guilt, shame, or anger. But I am so thankful that you'll listen when I need to vent those kinds of feelings to you. As you help me grieve, please show me how I can help others who are grieving in their own way. In Jesus' name, Amen.



About The Author: Col (Ret) Dan Daetz, U.S. Air Force

Dan Daetz is the Deputy Director of the military ministry of The Navigators, which focuses on building Jesus-followers who will go and make fellow disciples wherever they are. Dan graduated from the United States Air Force Academy and served 24 years on active duty, including combat time in the skies over Iraq. He and his wife, Esmé (also an Air Force veteran), live in Colorado Springs, CO.



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“3RD PLATOON, ALPHA” **SUFFERING AND EVIL**



of evil that are prevalent in war. They often look to someone like Chaplain Turner for answers.

Military units deal with grief by honoring the memory of their fallen. It often falls upon the chaplain to offer consolation to the grieving and to lead them in a memorial for the dead. In the course of fulfilling his duties, Chaplain Turner is confronted by the grieving members of 3rd Platoon. He's challenged by Specialist Lance Bradley-"Got a verse for that, chaplain?" Expressing his anger, grief, and disappointment, Bradley is really looking for some answers. We all wonder at times like this, asking, "Where is God?" Or, "Why does God allow such deaths, particularly the death of a little girl?" Without some satisfaction, the raw emotions induced by grief and fueled by anger give way to despair and unbelief.

Evil exists as a result of sin. People's decision to sin impacts us and usually results in suffering. But God is all-powerful and loving, and promises to eradicate suffering and evil when He returns. "The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness. But He is patient with us, because He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, MEV). This means God's delay in righting wrongs is actually an act of grace so that more people might have a chance to repent of their evil choices. However, one day God will judge the evil of this world.



"But, according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which



righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13, MEV). At that time there will be no more suffering, for" 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death.' Neither shall there be any more sorrow nor crying nor pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4, MEV).

While we do not always understand the reasons for suffering and evil, we can be assured of God's love and comfort when we turn to Him in our grief. Job experienced this and discovered that a relationship with God was enough, even without all the answers (Job 42:5-6). We can help soldiers struggling with suffering and the effects of evil by listening to them, granting space, permitting their expression of anger, and loving them unconditionally. We also can engage them through prayer and encourage them to receive counseling, if needed.

Inner healing begins by realizing that "No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13, MEV).

The unconditional love of God and our understanding of His eternal nature provide some understanding of suffering and evil. God's love gives healing and strength in our quest for meaning in life, and it also restores faith in God and man. He is always present during our journey so that we can begin to heal from the wounds of suffering and evil, as well as the hurts that cause us to question God. Chaplain Turner was not able to fully answer Specialist Bradley's questions, but he assured him that he cared, God cared, and that God had His reasons-reasons not immediately apparent, but ones that must be understood in view of all God's attributes, particularly His eternal love and all-knowing plan in which one day evil and suffering will be no more.

Digging Deeper

- 1) Why should we keep faith in God in the midst of suffering and evil? (2 Peter 3:13).
- 2) How can we heal from our grief and loss? (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- 3) What hope can we offer loved ones suffering from the impact of evil? (2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 21:4; A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis)



A Prayer for Victims of Suffering and Evil

Heavenly Father, May Your Spirit heal victims of suffering and evil. Help them process their sense of loss and grief by running to You rather than from You. Restore faith and reason; and grant them calm assurance of your sovereign control in the events of mankind. Grant forgiveness for their shortcomings and surround them with Your unconditional love, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.



About The Author: Chaplain (MAJ) James F. Linzey (Ret)

James F. Linzey served his country honorably for over 20 years in military service beginning in 1985 with the United States Air Force before transitioning to the Army in 1998. He is currently a highly sought-after speaker for crusades, conventions and seminars, and has had numerous radio, TV and movie appearances. Jim is the author of *Moral Leadership*, *A Divine Appointment in Washington, DC*, and *The Holy Spirit*, he has also been the chief editor for several bibles. Currently, Jim serves as a volunteer co-pastor for the Airman-Marine Memorial Chapel, in support of the Command Chaplain, MCAS Miramar, San Diego, CA, and as Chaplain for the California Military Officer's Association of America. He is the president of Military Bible Association, Inc., and he is an ordained minister in the Southern Baptist Convention.



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“WE MUST PREPARE FOR NEW CHALLENGES” REUNION



War changes everything and everyone. Nothing ever remains the same. Soldiers return home not to the way things were, but to the way things have become. Chaplain Darren Turner understands this reality, and so reminds his soldiers of the importance of preparing for new challenges-readjusting to changes, reassuming roles, and recognizing the efforts of loved ones, who carried the heavy burden of responsibilities while their soldier was at war.

Unfortunately, the events of war follow soldiers home. Chaplain Turner was no exception. The loss of Specialist Lance Bradley, killed on a final patrol, and the severe wounding of Major Michael Lewis were devastating for Chaplain Turner. In this scene, his words, body language, and facial affect betray deep sadness and guilt-survivor's guilt, a feeling that maybe he could have prevented the tragedy or maybe he was some how to blame for it.

Chaplain Turner's final sermon flows out of a broken heart and his warnings serve up new challenges not only for his soldiers but also for him-challenges that would become his own haunting enemies, reducing him to despair, and threatening not only the foundations of his calling but also the sacred bonds of his family. He declares: "The Lord is the strength of [our] life; of whom shall [we] be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1, NKJV). He means we can remain confident in God no matter the pains or losses of war or the challenges of reintegrating with family. God is present for soldiers and families alike. We can know and "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13, NIV). These are powerful reminders of God's resources for those who must put the stresses of combat behind them and embrace a new normal in the "land of the living," back at home.

His words ring true and reflect tremendous insight. Chaplain Turner confidently declares: "We are blessed to be among the living. In going home, we must prepare for new challenges. Anxiety, anger, depression, and even the idea that, somehow, not going home would be better-reject these enemies and ask for help-just ask!" He is speaking not only to his soldiers, but also to himself. He closes with these words





from Ephesians 6:13,17: "Remember your armor and the sword of the Spirit and you will prevail."

But the stresses of war are not so easily forgotten. Chaplain Turner will face the very enemies he warned others to avoid. Post-traumatic stress (PTS) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) separate people from God and drive a wedge between loved ones. It develops from witnessing or becoming a victim of any event that traumatizes or threatens one's life such as combat, abuse, or disaster. Symptoms often include: despair, anxiety, alienation, and the inability to relate or reunite with loved ones, or handle new challenges.

While PTSD separates people on many levels, God is the great unifier. Efforts to overcome PTSD begin with a desire for a safe place that is absent of fear. God provides that place. An ancient warrior, David, spoke of a safe, spiritual place when he penned these words: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4, NKJV).

Likewise, Solomon, experienced unity in his family and showed the right emphasis to have when he implored: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV). Though reunion with God or loved ones may pose challenges during difficult times, God's reassurances make it possible.

Jesus, who suffered for us on the cross, said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27, NKJV). His words reassure us that God understands our trauma when no one else can. We are not alone, even in our darkest hour.

Digging Deeper

- 1) How does God protect us? (Psalm 23:4).
- 2) What can help us deal with fear? (Psalm 27:1).
- 3) How can we resist the enemies within ourselves?



A Prayer for Reunion

Heavenly Father, in your divine love, protect military personnel suffering from alienation and post-traumatic stress disorders. As they walk through their valleys and shadows of death, give them the vision to see clearly the obstacles in their way while lifting them to higher dimensions of spiritual peace. Restore a sense of unity with You and their loved ones with the peace that passes all understanding, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



About The Author: Chaplain (MAJ) James F. Linzey (Ret)

James F. Linzey served his country honorably for over 20 years in military service beginning in 1985 with the United States Air Force before transitioning to the Army in 1998. He is currently a highly sought-after speaker for crusades, conventions and seminars, and has had numerous radio, TV and movie appearances. Jim is the author of *Moral Leadership*, *A Divine Appointment in Washington, DC*, and *The Holy Spirit*, he has also been the chief editor for several bibles. Currently, Jim serves as a volunteer co-pastor for the Airman-Marine Memorial Chapel, in support of the Command Chaplain, MCAS Miramar, San Diego, CA, and as Chaplain for the California Military Officer's Association of America. He is the president of Military Bible Association, Inc., and he is an ordained minister in the Southern Baptist Convention.



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“WE MUST PREPARE FOR NEW CHALLENGES” REUNION CHALLENGES



After more than a year away, the day is finally here: joyful anticipation mingled with fearful apprehension. Army Chaplain Darren Turner seems to inherently grasp the contradictory nature of this situation as he addresses his fellow soldiers at the end of a grueling, loss-filled 15-month combat deployment: “We are blessed to be among the living. But going home, we must prepare for new challenges: anxiety, anger ... depression—even ideas that, somehow not going on would be better. Reject these enemies ...and ask for help. Just ask.” He would have been wise to heed his own perceptive counsel, with its instinctive recognition that the combination of lengthy family separation, overseas military service, and especially war- seeing and smelling death and grievous injury—including that to our own psyche, leaves us inescapably changed. As his neighbor and fellow officer, Major Michael Lewis had scathingly warned him beforehand, “You ain't never gonna be the same.” Indeed, we can never return home as the same person who left. Moreover, we must come to grips with the fact that those whom we left behind have changed as well.

And this is not an isolated human experience, nor is it limited to our own time and place. For example, in the Old Testament book of Ruth, we read about the Jewish widow Naomi, living in the neighboring (and religiously-hostile) country of Moab. She was recently bereft not only of her husband but also of her two sons, both childless—and hence left destitute, utterly lacking in any future financial means. So, this woman, whose name means “pleasant” or “sweetness,” also returned home, to Israel, battered and worn down by the cruel and seemingly indiscriminate tragedies of her life, all of which occurred through no apparent fault of her own. Irrevocably changed. So much so that, upon arriving, she asked that the people in her hometown no longer call her Naomi but rather “Mara”—bitter. For “I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty” (Ruth 1:20-21).

But we subsequently discover that God smiled upon Naomi through the resolute faith—equally astonishing and implausible—of her excellent daughter-in-law Ruth, herself a Moabite. And importantly, though wounded and crushed in spirit,



Naomi did not resist this work of renewal but rather increasingly came to see the LORD's kindness toward her (Ruth 2:20).

How can we learn to similarly trust Him in the anxieties and brokenness of our own homecomings? It all starts with knowing God-which Jesus Himself equates with eternal life (John 17:3). And this is not merely an intellectual awareness of who He is but a living relationship with God through faith in His Son, Jesus. And the Scriptures abound with the blessings that flow to us from such intimate fellowship with God, that: He loves us with a

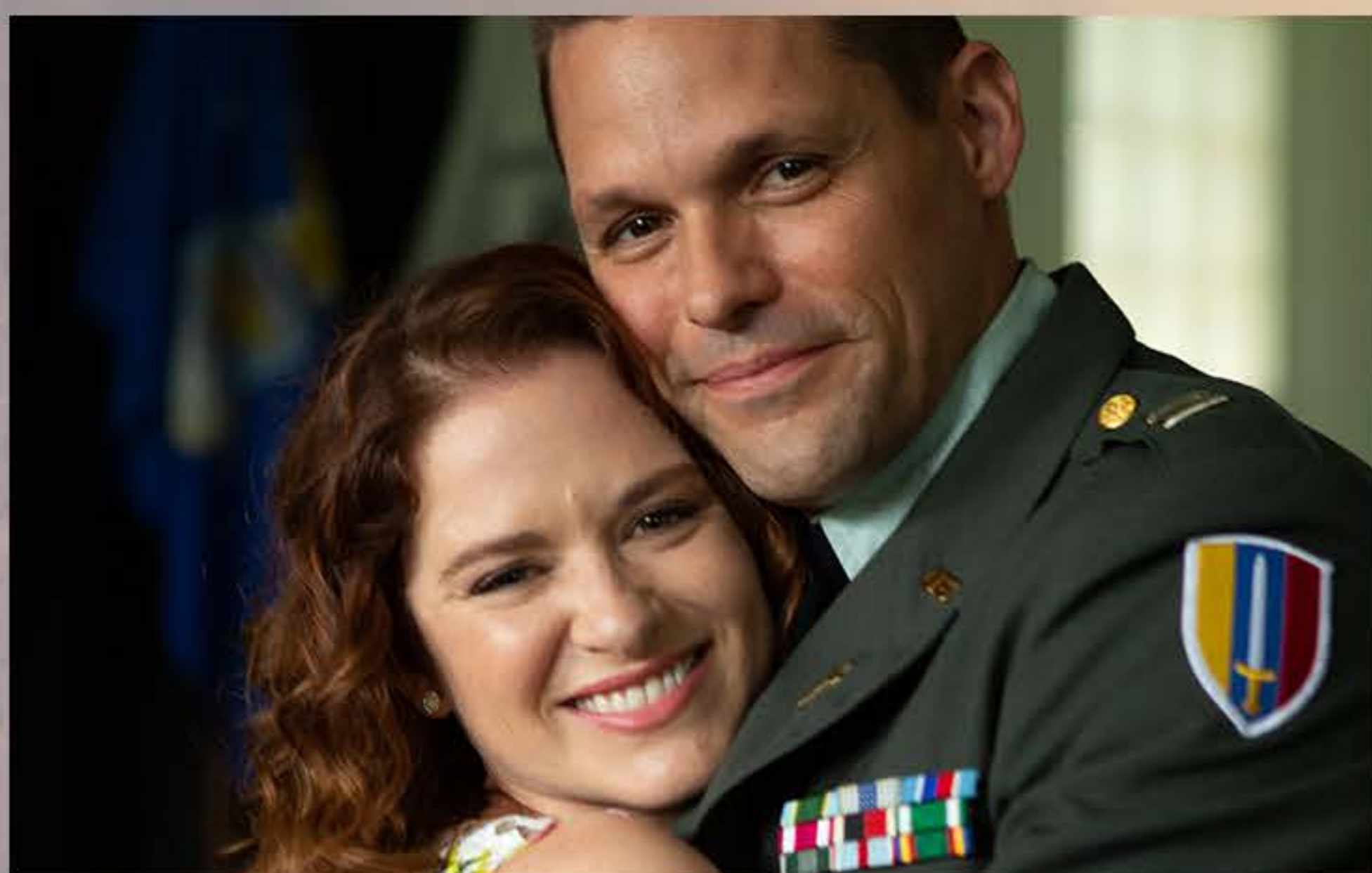
steadfast love (Psalm 13:5, 26:3) from which nothing can separate us (Romans 8:38-39). He causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28). He fights for us, and promises to always be with us (Deuteronomy 3:22; 31:8; cf. Matthew 28:20b).

"HOW CAN WE LEARN TO SIMILARLY TRUST HIM IN THE ANXIETIES AND BROKENNESS OF OUR OWN HOMECOMINGS?"

Accordingly, do not fear and take courage, as Jesus reassured His disciples in Matthew 14:27. And, as the Psalmist wrote: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a). Personal knowledge of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, with humble dependence and trust in God, is key to experiencing this inner "stillness"-even in the myriad uncertainties associated with our returning home.

Digging Deeper

- 1) According to Lamentations 3:21-25, how does the LORD benevolently care for us?
- 2) What four "action verbs" describe our responsibilities here (vv. 21a, 24b-25)?
- 3) Read Ruth 4:13-17. How does the glorious conclusion of Naomi's story differ from its hopeless beginnings? What made the difference?



A Prayer for those Wrestling with Fear and Uncertainty

Sovereign Lord, as the prophet wrote, "The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action." Therefore, even in times of extreme hardship and disorientation, grant your people the will to call upon and earnestly seek you, the patience to wait for and rest in you, the grace to trust and find their hope in you, and the courage to fully obey you.
Amen.



About The Author: Rev. Fred Butterfield (U.S. Navy, Ret.)

Fred Butterfield and his wife Janet serve as Field Staff with Cru Military in Hampton Roads Virginia. He is both a retired Navy Surface Warfare Officer and submarine-qualified Engineering Duty Officer and a retired senior Federal employee with DOE and the EPA. Fred holds degrees from the U.S. Naval Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School, as well as a Master of Divinity degree from Capital Seminary and Graduate School. He and Janet have been married for more than 40 years and are richly blessed with two married sons and six grandchildren.



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“I’M GONNA’ DO THINGS RIGHT THIS TIME”

**RECONCILIATION: MARITAL & FAMILY RECONCILIATION,
LOVE, AND FORGIVENESS**



Relationships are worth keeping. No matter the issues you’re facing, just like the courage you had "downrange" to complete the mission; that same mindset needs to be brought to the arena of restoring your marriage and family.

In this scene, Michael, with great humility and courage, takes the risk to make things right with his family. He knew he was losing the battle at home. The walls were getting higher and higher between he and his loved ones. No matter how much his daughters loved him, no matter how much his wife cherished him; they were losing their connection to him. His kids had grown distant and were only hearing their mom’s voice. Yet with the reality of having potentially lost them, Michael purposed to come home and express the words his family longed to hear: "I love you girls so much. I’m so sorry. I promise you I’m gonna’ do things right this time . . ."

As a counselor and marriage coach-and having served military marriages for more than a dozen years-I often have witnessed the marital and family strain placed on military families.

**“RELATIONSHIPS ARE WORTH KEEPING.
NO MATTER THE ISSUES YOU’RE FACING...”**

In great humility and sorrow, he promises to "do things right;" and in an instant, his family is "all in," encouraged by his resolve and willingness to take personal responsibility. Just like Michael, you too can "come home."

You can take this step of the journey; but it's going to take courage, humility, and obedience to God-believing His plan really can and will work. He is the "God of Second Chances," but we have to take the first step. The next step is prayer. Whatever you do, it must be immersed in prayer.

This may sound too close to home, but in this scene Michael shows us how to take the first steps to restore a family ravaged by the strain of war and frequent separations. In great





Another important step is to validate the offense and the pain. When a relationship is at risk and there are open loops of conflict, one person can begin the journey to reconciliation by validating the offense and the pain. Fear and anger may run high and may need validation: "I understand you're angry." But as you step up in prayer together, showing empathy by listening to one another, purposing to resolve the conflict, you will move toward forgiveness and reestablishing trust. It will take time and perseverance.

Paul writes in Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." I know you may be sensing "it's too hard. There's too much damage. I don't know if we can win." But I assure you, God wants you to win. He wants to restore your marriage and family. You have the power through the Holy Spirit to take the step right now.

Michael knew in his heart that he could take these steps and reclaim his family. He just needed the roadmap home. Receiving God's love and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit will lead you home!

Digging Deeper

1) According to Matthew 11:28-30, when we are hurting and at the end of ourselves what does Jesus call us to do?

2) In Ephesians 4:32, Paul writes that we are to be "kind and compassionate to one another." In the open loop of conflict-and the relationship that is at risk in your life-how can you demonstrate being compassionate and kind?

3) Paul's promise to us in Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Where do you need to reject the voice of the enemy of God, who repeatedly reminds you of your sin?



A Prayer for Those Seeking Reconciliation

Heavenly Father: With confidence and humility I come before you today, asking you to forgive and empower me so that I might take the steps necessary to reclaim the territory the enemy has tried to steal. Give me the courage to begin my journey home and reclaim my family. Strengthen me for the task; give me the will and determination to persevere. Please prepare the hearts of those I love to sense that, even though I will come up short, I still love them. Bring healing to my family; and may they know Your love as I have known it.

Amen.



About The Authors: Dr. Gary and Barb Rosberg

Dr. Gary and Barb Rosberg are America's Family Coaches. Award winning authors of several books including *6 Secrets to a Lasting Love* and *Healing the Hurt in your Marriage*, they have spoken across the US and internationally since 1985. For the last thirteen years they have purposed to serve military marriages through HonoringAmericasHeroes.org, coaching wounded heroes and their caregiver spouses, as well as most recently First Responder couples.



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“I’M GONNA’ DO THINGS RIGHT THIS TIME” RECONCILIATION



“CAN THEIR MARRIAGE HANDLE MANY MORE OF HIS EXPLOSIVE OUT- BURSTS?”

man they can be proud of, he suddenly turns to his right side and looks Tonya square in the eyes. He slowly reaches out his hand to touch her. Tonya's facial expressions change from a look of surprise to an expression of hope. Something profound is going on inside her husband. Their marriage up to this point has been marred with many unmet needs and expectations, mostly due to the toxic anger Mike has been carrying for years. But almost magically, something is changing.

The scene is a hospital room. Major Mike Lewis, the recovering patient, is surrounded by his wife, Tonya, and his two daughters. There is palpable nervousness and anxiety for Tonya. As angry and jacked up as her husband has been from previous deployments, what would things be like now with Mike experiencing severe war Trauma? How will he handle things? Can their marriage handle many more of his explosive outbursts? How would the children respond? Tonya is visibly struggling to control her thoughts.

Mike is groping for the right words. Finally, he turns to his daughters on his left and says “I’m gonna’ do things right this time.” As he goes on to tell his daughters that he wants to be a

What Tonya doesn't know is that God is transforming her husband. During his deployment he committed his life to God, but never communicated this to her. Mike's perspective has changed. The Holy Spirit is showing him the changes that Mike needs to make, particularly in his relationships with his wife and daughters. It's also quite possible that the serious injury Mike sustained has served as a catalyst to help realign his priorities.

In the quiet surroundings of the hospital room, reconciliation happens with the entire family. Though each family member participated, it didn't occur simply because of human will. 2 Corinthians 5:18 tells us: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to him self through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." The reconciliation that Christ brings can turn around even the worst of circumstances. Upon his release from the hospital, Mike's attitude toward



toward life, and especially his wife and daughters, makes a radical shift for the good.

It's no secret that the horrors of war have wounded warriors physically, but there are also hidden wounds resulting in Post-Traumatic Stress and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The effects have also penetrated family defenses and often done irreparable damage. But it doesn't have to be this way. The Lord knows what military families experience and He can bring healing and reconciliation. As the Lewis family illustrated in this scene, the truth of Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) can overcome the deepest hurts: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Many warriors and families have turned to God for reconciliation. It's clearly the Lord's will. But the path toward reconciliation is not an easy one. It will be a process that requires time, effort, patience, and forgiveness. So why not get started now?

Digging Deeper

1) Romans 8:28 (NIV) says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Do you think that God may have used Major Lewis' wounds to help heal him spiritually?

2) Following Major Lewis' release from the hospital, what kinds of things would the family need to do in order to build on the reconciliation that the Lord had begun?



A Prayer for Those Needing Reconciliation

Lord, you have reconciled us to God the Father. We ask that you help us as your followers to be reconciled to one another. Despite the harsh words or harsh treatment we may have directed toward each other, help us to follow your loving example. We know we can't do this on our own. We need your love, your strength, and your courage.
Amen.



About The Author: Scott McChrystal, Chaplain (COL), U.S. Army (Ret)

Scott McChrystal currently serves as a principal military advisor to The Warrior's Journey and is on the Board of Advisors. His active duty military career spans 10 years as an infantry officer to include a tour in Vietnam and three tours with the 82nd Airborne Division. As a military chaplain, he served numerous tours at home and abroad, his last assignment being senior chaplain at the United States Military Academy. Chaplain McChrystal served as the managing editor for *The Warrior's Bible*. In addition, he and his wife, Judy, have authored five devotionals especially written for the military community. Scott and Judy have four children and twelve grandchildren.



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“NO... YOU’RE NOT HERE” **REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES**



Meltdown. After many weeks of being home from war - a painful and unanticipated season of life typified by long stretches of stony silence, surliness, lack of marital intimacy, and family detachment - things between Army Chaplain Darren Turner and his longsuffering wife, Heather, finally come to a head. The couple has harsh words for one another about this "new normal" with Darren defensively asserting, "I'm back. I'm here." To which Heather plaintively responds: "No ... you're not ... here. Not with me. Not with the kids.... I don't recognize you like this. You're angry, and distant, and mean." Heather Turner has not been in combat herself-but heroically, she has been a single mother of two small children during Darren's 15-month overseas deployment-and still is. She bitterly explains to Darren that, throughout his time away, she has "been holding wailing, sobbing wives, mothers and their babies in my arms. I have seen and I felt their hearts torn to shreds-and you don't think I've been through something." Heather sorrowfully adds: "I need you ... your children need you."

Following the tragic loss of a young soldier with whom he was particularly close, and the severe injury to a fellow officer, Chaplain Turner is in a deep depression. Darren is almost certainly suffering from PTSD as a result of his experiences in combat, and he urgently needs not only professional counseling but also emotional and spiritual healing. His behavior also demonstrates that, as a mature Christ-follower, his internal thought processes have become badly distorted-including, significantly, his view of God-and are in desperate need of repair.

Chaplain Turner's distorted thinking about God leads to disappointment with God-bordering on unbelief. Somehow God "failed" Chaplain Turner. He thought God should do what he thought God ought to do.

But it never works that way. This misunderstanding about God and his failure to trust in God contributes to his reintegration issues, his inability to reconnect with his family, and his failure to move forward in service to God.

In the Old Testament book of 1 Kings, Elijah boldly confronts the evil Israelite King Ahab and then orchestrates the defeat of the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel-only to then give in to paralyzing fear as a result of a threat from the pagan Queen Jezebel, which induced Elijah to flee for his life. Like Chaplain Turner many centuries later, the prophet also succumbed to spiritual depression and unwarranted fear characterized by error-filled beliefs about both himself and God.



But the Lord remains in complete, sovereign control of His world, then and now. As God reminded Elijah of those who still remained true, there was no need to fear. There was no warrant for panic. Trusting God requires continuous adjustment in thinking. Thinking correctly about God leads to transformation, freedom from fear, freedom from depression-a spirit-filled confidence in God. This is what Elijah came to understand; and it is what gave Chaplain Turner a renewed perspective that ultimately led to complete restoration to his family and healing for his soul.

Digging Deeper



- 1) Read 1 Kings 19:11-13. How can we be trained to hear the "still, small voice" (KJV) or "low whisper" (ESV) of the LORD?
- 2) How does God's gentle restoration of Elijah model for us how we should act toward those who are suffering from spiritual depression, emotional depression, or faulty thinking?
- 3) According to Romans 12:2, is transformation something we do - or is it something we receive?

A Prayer for Those in Deep Emotional and Spiritual Crisis

Almighty God, as you have freely poured-out your saving grace to us in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:6), may we be quick to show grace to others in their frailty, affliction, and sorrow, of whatever sort. And with dependence upon the enabling Holy Spirit, let us purpose to remove every obstacle hindering You from transforming us by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2).

Amen.



About The Author: Rev. Fred Butterfield (U.S. Navy, Ret.)

Fred Butterfield and his wife Janet serve as Field Staff with Cru Military in Hampton Roads Virginia. He is both a retired Navy Surface Warfare Officer and submarine-qualified Engineering Duty Officer and a retired senior Federal employee with DOE and the EPA. Fred holds degrees from the U.S. Naval Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School, as well as a Master of Divinity degree from Capital Seminary and Graduate School. He and Janet have been married for more than 40 years and are richly blessed with two married sons and six grandchildren.



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“NO... YOU’RE NOT HERE” **REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES**



This scene opens with Chaplain Darren Turner marching into the kitchen following a run. He is obviously angry. As he attempts to put a glass into an already full drainer, he smashes a glass, resulting in the need for stitches on his hand. The ensuing interaction with his wife, Heather, illustrates the extreme emotional upheaval that can occur within a military family following the return of a spouse from combat.

Though Darren Turner has physically left the war and returned home, the war has not left him. His thoughts and emotions are back on the battlefield, as he replays the violent events that resulted in the loss of fellow warriors, as well as civilians. He becomes locked in his own private world of pain, regret, and doubt, oblivious to the presence of Heather and his children. To make matters worse, Darren justifies himself by saying, "I'm here," implying that his wife has nothing to worry or complain about. But Heather fires back, "No... you're not here!" As she desperately attempts to tell her husband how she and the children feel, the dialogue becomes even more explosive.

Especially frustrating and hurtful to Heather is her husband's seeming blindness to the stressors she dealt with on the home front while he was deployed—running a household with two daughters, along with the heavy responsibilities of bringing comfort to other multiple spouses who suffered pain and loss during the deployment. As the scene ends with Darren storming out of the kitchen on the way to the hospital, neither he nor Heather believe they have been understood. For Darren, he's convinced that because Heather didn't experience what he did, "she will never get it." As her husband departs, Heather puts her hand over her mouth in utter horror and disbelief. Her expression is one of helplessness.



How does communication in a seemingly healthy and loving marriage relationship spin out of control so quickly? Is there a way ahead, and if so, what is that path?

First, what happened in the kitchen that day didn't just explode like a flash fire. Both Darren and Heather had been placing log upon log in their relationship which could suddenly



ignite with a single spark and burn out of control. Why? By failing to communicate honestly and openly during the deployment. Both put up a facade that made the other believe that the deployment was going well on both ends. In truth, each was dealing with personal stressors that were hidden from the other. At no point did they stop loving each other. But the intense stressors and misunderstandings resulted in them hurting each other rather than working together to solve the issues.

Situations like this one have been repeated many times in military families. Reintegration can be so deceiving. The honeymoon phase of being reunited is often very short-lived. Everyone has changed, and adjustments need to be made. The bad news is that many marriages have ended in divorce following redeployment, causing enormous pain for everyone involved. The good news is that the Turner's situation, as the movie depicted, was neither helpless nor hopeless. God knows, and He cares. Scripture tells us "he heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3 NIV).

As in the Turner's case, many couples will require counseling from a military chaplain, pastor, or trained marriage counselor. While we were only given a brief glimpse of the counseling done by the senior chaplain, almost assuredly he walked them through steps resulting in renewed understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Even with professional help, reintegration is a difficult process and takes time, effort, patience and prayer.

Digging Deeper

- 1) Ephesians 5:22-33 provides a wonderful description of what marriage is supposed to be like. How do you think reviewing these verses could help with reintegration?
- 2) Understandably, there is usually some angst on the part of the spouse and the returning military member just prior to redeployment. How could meditating on Philippians 4:6,7 help to lessen this anxiety?
- 3) Why is the truth of Colossians 3:13 so essential for the process of reintegration?

A Prayer for Those Experiencing Reintegration

Lord, may those who are struggling with the process of reintegration know that you have full knowledge of their pain, frustration, and feelings of helplessness. Remind them that you not only are their Creator and Sustainer, but also their Healer. Assure them that as they run to you, their Strong Tower, you will provide comfort and refuge.

Amen.



About The Author: Scott McChrystal, Chaplain (COL), U.S. Army (Ret)

Scott McChrystal currently serves as a principal military advisor to The Warrior's Journey and is on the Board of Advisors. His active duty military career spans 10 years as an infantry officer to include a tour in Vietnam and three tours with the 82nd Airborne Division. As a military chaplain, he served numerous tours at home and abroad, his last assignment being senior chaplain at the United States Military Academy. Chaplain McChrystal served as the managing editor for *The Warrior's Bible*. In addition, he and his wife, Judy, have authored five devotionals especially written for the military community. Scott and Judy have four children and twelve grandchildren.



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"I'M TERRIFIED" **HEALING A CRUSHED SPIRIT**



Heather: "Why? Why the distance and the silence with me?"

Darren: "Because I'm ashamed. I know I'm failing you. And I want to make it better, but I just don't know how. I loved those men, and He took them away. And we're supposed to get that and be okay, but I'm not. I'm terrified, because I love you, and the kids so much more."



American service members are the best-trained and best-equipped warriors in history. As they deploy to a war zone, they usually feel ten-feet tall and bullet proof. But often something happens downrange that shakes that conviction to the core. Their self-confidence, emotional stability, identity, and the assumptions they held about how things work in the world and in the kingdom of God are shattered. Darren-and all those who suffer with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder-experience the harsh reality of Proverbs 18:14: "A healthy spirit conquers adversity, but what can you do when the spirit is crushed?"

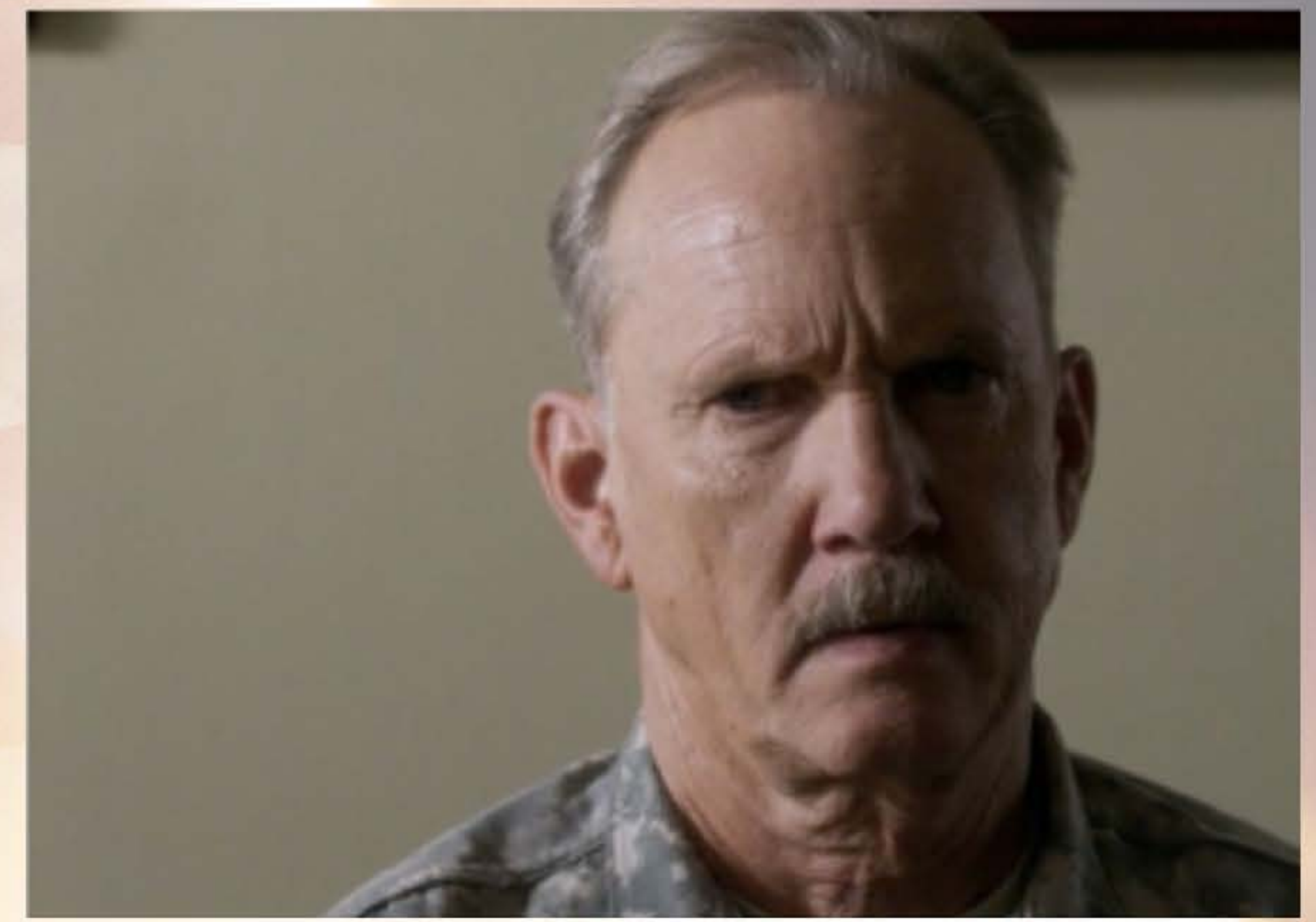
PTSD describes the symptoms of a crushed spirit: anger, fear, shame, guilt, nightmares, inability to sleep, traumatic memories that pop into your head unbidden, flashbacks, panic attacks, self-isolation, anxiety in crowds and traffic, substance abuse to either numb or ramp you up, inability to show care and affection for those you truly love, hypervigilance, thoughts of homicide and suicide.

**"BECAUSE I'M
ASHAMED. I KNOW I'M
FAILING YOU."**

And as Chaplain Rodgers told Darren, "That's normal, Darren, that's normal." It is normal to be affected negatively by combat. It is normal to be affected by pain.

PTSD is a condition of good warriors-men and women who were willing to jeopardize their lives for their country, their families, and their battle buddies. They followed orders, put their feelings aside and performed unimaginable tasks. It is truly a heroic condition-though it doesn't feel that way.

Everyone who encounters trauma experiences post-traumatic stress. But when a person gets stuck in that high-alert, defensive mode, we must recognize that this is not weakness or cowardice. This is a wound. If you are cut, you don't want to keep bleeding. You don't want a broken bone to go unset. So you take steps to deal with it. In the same way, no one wants to stay in that high-stress, high-alert PTSD mode. To quote Chaplain Rodgers again, "It takes time, and intentional rebuilding of tools and muscles that we use to control our thoughts."



Darren got intentional despite being terrified. He showed great courage-which isn't a lack of fear, but taking action in spite of the fear. He received counseling from Chaplain Rodgers. He reconnected emotionally with his wife, sharing his deployment diary to communicate to her what he had experienced. He got out of his house, working and exercising consistently. He engaged with his friends, taking to heart what Michael said about the good things God had accomplished in his life through Darren's ministry. He worked with his hands, creating that awesome "Fort Bumblefoot" play structure for his kids. He re-entered a life of service as a Special Forces chaplain. And most importantly, he continued to put on the Armor of God daily. "Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." (Ephesians 6:13)

Trauma has physical, psychological, and spiritual components. So does healing. If you are a combat vet, and are interested in getting your spirit un-crushed, make sure that The Healer (Exodus 15:26) is orchestrating the process. As Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Digging Deeper

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 17:45-47. David was in a very vulnerable position. He was about to fight a 9'8" giant, backed up only by an inferior force of Israelites, and facing the Philistine army. What character qualities do you see in David because of his confidence in God? How does God+ me= a superior force?
- 2) What does 2 Corinthians 1:3 & 4 say about why God allows us to experience affliction?
- 3) Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. What insights does this passage give you about why we need to be in community with other believers as we seek to heal from PTSD?

A Prayer for those struggling with PTSD

Father, thank you for the trials You are allowing me to experience, because I know you have allowed them in order to make me stronger, and better able to help others who are afflicted. But sometimes I feel overwhelmed by it all. Give me endurance, strength, wisdom, and insight, so that I may cooperate with you in the process of healing.

Amen.



About The Authors: Chris & Rahnella Adsit

Chris & Rahnella Adsit have been in full-time ministry for over 40 years, focusing on veteran and first responder trauma since 2005. They currently provide leadership to REBOOT Alliance- Chris as Resource Coordinator and Rahnella as the Leader Development Coordinator.



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"I'M BACK BUT MY NEIGHBOR'S GONE"

WINNING THE WAR WITHIN: THE FIGHT FOR YOUR FAITH



As the pastor of the local church, I'm often asked to help people wrestle with tough questions. Warriors asked me the same tough questions while I was serving as a military chaplain. No matter the situation, when people go through great suffering, it's common to ask, "Why, God?" It breaks my heart to watch God's people suffer amid difficult circumstances. It's even more painful to see what these struggles can do to their faith. I call this fighting the "war



within". We often face the war within when we wrestle at the soul-level with the suffering that God is allowing us to experience. The "Why" question is all about trying to understand our circumstances. Adding "God" to that question is when the issue becomes spiritual. After many years of counseling people through difficulties, I believe that the "Why, God?" question is about something much greater than external circumstances. I believe this question is a battle for peace... peace with God and peace with yourself.

War is traumatic. It will leave scars on people. For some, the scars look like a gunshot wound or limb lost to an explosion. For others, war leaves scars on the inside. Many who survive situations in combat will experience the emotional and psychological scars of losing comrades. These scars on the inside can quickly become spiritual scars when they shake the faith of a warrior. That's why you and I need a team of friends we can trust.

Chaplain Darren Turner had the spiritual strength during his combat tour that helped point other soldiers to Jesus. However, the loss of one of his soldiers shook his faith. This scene shows the honest spiritual struggle Darren experienced when he came home. If you're going through difficulties right now, I hope that this scene gives you some comfort. If a chaplain can face spiritual struggles, you should feel free to be honest about your spiritual struggles as well.



God put a lot of people in Darren's life to help him go through these struggles. Heather Turner not only had the spiritual strength to help other military families while Darren was away;



she also helped her husband fight the war within when he came back home. Sergeant Shonda Peterson helped her chaplain physically while he was in combat and helped him spiritually when he returned. It takes an army to fight a war. You need friends to help you when you are fighting the war within.

Jesus dealt patiently with people as they wrestled with their faith. John the Baptist was one of the greatest men of faith recorded in the Scriptures. Yet, even he struggled with his faith. Here's how Matthew's Gospel describes John's struggle: "John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, 'Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?'"

If personal suffering caused John the Baptist and Chaplain Darren Turner to wrestle with their faith, it can cause you to struggle as well. Don't hide your spiritual struggles. Share them with good Christian friends. Here are three suggestions if you are going through the spiritual battle that Darren and John the Baptist faced.

Digging Deeper

Fighting for Your Faith

- 1) Read Matthew 11:1-6. Notice, Jesus didn't criticize John for his lack of faith (v.4).
- 2) Jesus points back to what he's done in the past when people wrestled with their faith. Reflect on the love Jesus displayed on the cross when you are struggling with your faith (v.5).
- 3) There is a future reward waiting for those who remain faithful despite struggles (v.6).

A Prayer for Peace Within

Holy Spirit, you are The Comforter. When your people struggle with difficulties in life, please remind them of their relationship with God the Father. Remind them of the love of Jesus displayed on the cross. Help them to hold on to the promise that you will never abandon them, even when life gets difficult. (Hebrews 13:5).

Let this promise give them peace.

Amen.



About The Author: Jeff Struecker, Chaplain (MAJ), U.S. Army (Ret)

Jeff Struecker is the Lead Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia. A member of the Ranger Hall of Fame, Jeff served in the US Army for more than 22 years. His combat experience includes participation in Operation Just Cause in Panama, Operation Iris Gold in Kuwait, Operation Gothic Serpent, in Mogadishu, Somalia, and multiple tours in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Jeff holds a Ph.D. from the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. He is an award-winning author with several books in print. Jeff and his wife, Dawn, have five children and two grandchildren.



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“I’M BACK BUT MY NEIGHBOR’S GONE” LOSING FAITH



In this scene Chaplain Turner and Major Lewis are reunited some months after their return to the United States from Iraq. Major Lewis, is still recovering from his war trauma. Chaplain Turner has left the Army Chaplaincy and is now working at the Digger O’Dell Nursery. As the conversation between these two friends unfolds, it quickly becomes obvious that injury and brokenness are not always visible signs of wounding. Although it is Lewis who sits in a wheelchair without one of his legs, the one who is truly wounded and in need of healing is the chaplain. What

happened? Fear, anger, and loss pushed him to a place of personal crisis, a crisis of faith. The “man of faith” is now in need of faith. The “healer” needs healing. Doubts have displaced confidence. Despair has replaced hope.

War has a unique way of changing the way we look at things we once saw clearly. For Chaplain Darren Turner, combat and the loss of those he cared about, changed the way he looked at God. These things caused him to question God. Before his deployment he was confident in what he knew and believed, certain of his calling and fully committed to a life of Christian service. But now, facing his friend, who’s asking, “Where has my neighbor gone?” Chaplain Turner isn’t sure of anything anymore.

For many who experience the chaos of combat, it might seem reasonable for someone to question their faith. As Major Lewis pushed his friend on what exactly he was feeling, Chaplain Turner admitted he was angry with God and frustrated over the losses he experienced.

How do we help those soldiers who might be struggling in their faith with questions about things that happen in war? Where might they find a firm place where they can plant their feet with a renewed sense of confidence in God? It all begins by understanding the nature of faith. Faith is the opposite of human control. The reason why we become angry and fearful when life takes a turn we can’t explain is because we’re dealing with our own lack of control. The chaplain shared he was afraid because if he could lose soldiers he cared about, how could



our control and letting him take over.

he have any confidence God would keep his family safe? But this is the point of faith. Without the possibility of loss and lack of ability to control life, faith would be completely unnecessary. Faith is acknowledging God is bigger than any situation we might find ourselves in. It's having an understanding that while not everything is as we would like it to be, our job is to trust God to do His job, and to give us strength and wisdom to do what He calls us to do. It's giving up

The question of faith really comes down to understanding the object of faith. If your faith is in your ability to protect those you love and to maintain control of an ever-changing world, then you will live like an angry person, full of fear because it's all up to you. When the object of your faith is God who loves you and whose plan is bigger than you, then you have peace even when the world feels like it's falling apart.

The psalmist describes faith this way: "Now I know that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:6-7). We all have some kind of faith. But those with unshakeable faith, genuine faith, have placed their confidence fully in God both for direction and outcome.

Digging Deeper

- 1) Proverbs 3:5-6 have given comfort to many. How do they describe faith?
- 2) According to these verses in Proverbs, what is the result of trusting God?
- 3) What is the result of trusting God as found in Isaiah 26:3?

A Prayer for Those Who Are Losing Faith

Dear Lord, Renew the faith of those who are questioning you; give strength and comfort to those trying to make sense of a world they don't understand. Encourage them with the truth of your Word so that they may know your love for them; and even in the darkest hours may know see your plan for their lives. Please provide that "Peace that passes all understanding;" and may you heal the hidden wounds of faithlessness in those who hurt.
Amen.



About the author: Jeremy Stalnecker

Jeremy Stalnecker is the Executive Director of the Mighty Oaks Foundation, which is dedicated to helping America's military warriors and their families who are suffering from the unseen wounds of combat. Jeremy is also a former Marine Infantry officer and served in Iraq in 2003. He and his wife have four children.



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TheWarriorsJourney.org

“TRUE HEROES” REUNION



Soldiers pay a price to serve the nation. But their families also sacrifice-more than anyone can imagine. For many military families, moving frequently, uprooting kids from schools, finding new friends, and setting up households are quite wearisome. Those things tax the most seasoned families. When soldiers deploy, those families must carry the ball alone, actually juggling several balls to ensure some semblance of normalcy, especially for children.

It was no different for Chaplain Turner and his family. Unfortunately, it took some time and some painful experiences for him to understand the sacrifice his family made while he was deployed.

**“BUT THEY, LIKE SO MANY
OTHER SERVICE MEMBERS,
SERVE AT GREAT COST- TO
THEMSELVES AND THIER
FAMILIES.”**

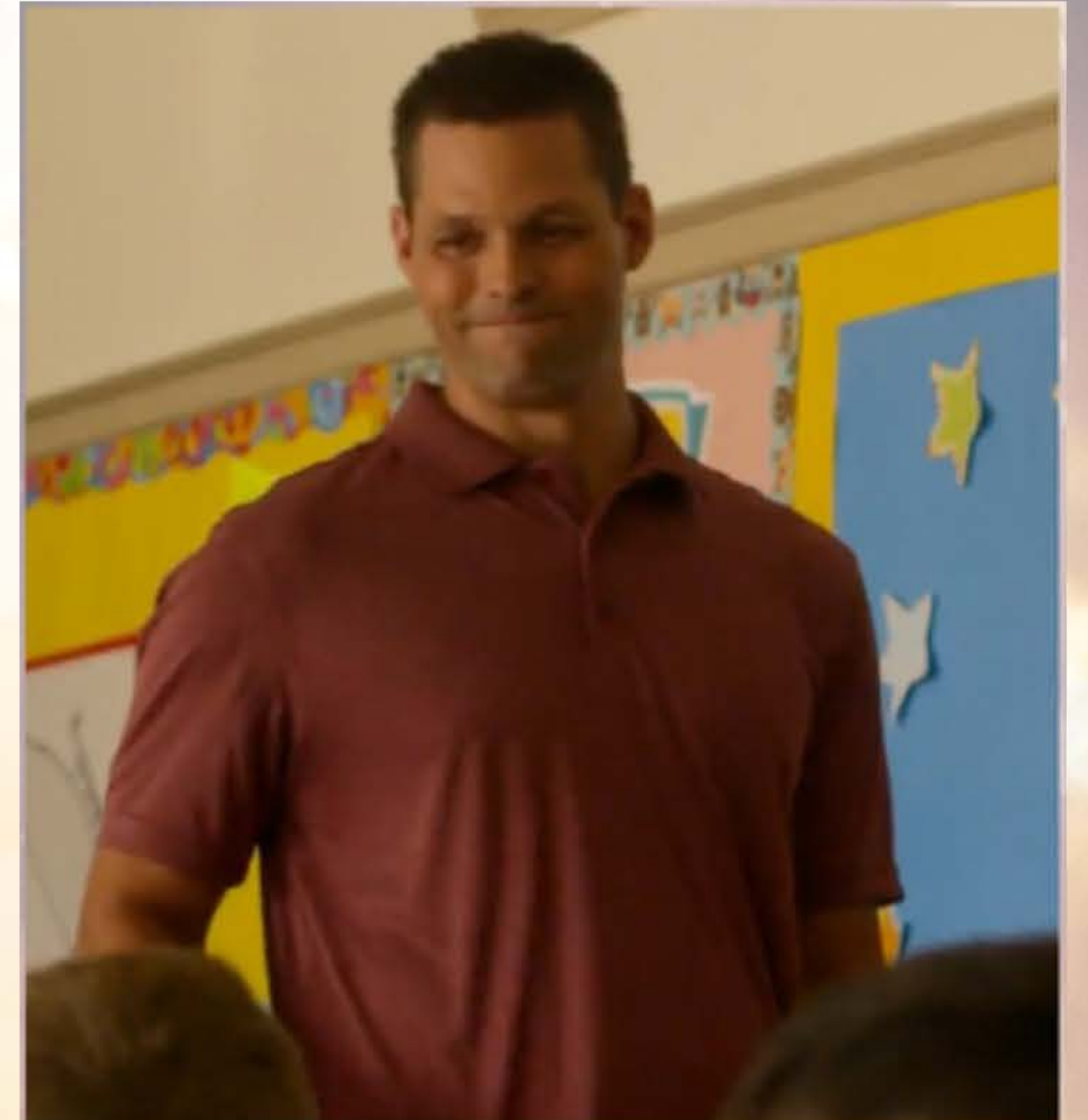
Chaplains are dedicated to serving others. They serve God and country, servants among service members, and are committed to meeting the spiritual needs of military members and their families. But they, like so many other service members, serve at great cost-to themselves and their families.

In this scene, honor is paid to all military families for their sacrifice-"The true heroes are the soldiers' families." But what does it mean to sacrifice? To sacrifice is to give up some thing held dearly for something else more valuable or more worthy. Sacrifice is noble. It comes from the heart. While it is viewed as a loss for some, it's a gain for so many others. Soldiers sacrifice their time, their energies, and sometimes their lives so that others might live free. Military families give up a lot as well, loaning their loved ones to do the nation's bidding, living separated lives, managing households, and raising children like single parents; or worse, sometimes losing their military spouse through death or a disability such as PTSD. This is what the Turner family experienced and many other military families as well.



God understands the nature of sacrifice. He gave His Son so that we might be set free from the dominion of sin. Jesus willingly sacrificed His life for us. He did this to fulfill God's purposes out of a heart of love for humanity (I Peter 2:21-24; 3:18).

Heroic families are those who continue to make sacrifices for the benefit of others. They suffer. They endure long separations. They carry heavy burdens of responsibility. In 2 Timothy 2:1-4, the writer addresses these heroic actions and what it takes to sustain them. The first thing we note is that we must receive God's strength by his grace, v. 1. We can't carry the burden alone; we need God's help. He's there to give it. The second thing we see in this passage is the importance of faith. Heroic families learn to "keep the faith." A good soldier serves faithfully and selflessly. Like these soldiers, military families "keep the home fires burning." They "share in the suffering of Christ." They draw strength from their connection to Him. Out of his suffering and pain they've learned to endure, too. Lastly, they stay focused on what's important. They make their aim to please God in all that they do. They don't get caught up in the non-essentials. They don't get distracted from the mission.



So what does this mean in practice? Military families learn to set priorities and stick to the plan. They communicate often about it and share their concerns with God. They rely on God and draw from His strength like a child who allows a parent's hands to be placed on their own to pull a wagon, to steer a bicycle, or to write a letter. These families pray often. They count the cost. They trust God knowing that God wants the best and only the best for them (Psalm 37:3-5).

Digging Deeper

- 1) Read Proverbs 3:5-6. In what practical ways can you acknowledge God and express your trust in Him?
- 2) Read Philippians 2:1-11 and see if you can identify the mindset that motivated Jesus to serve heroically?
- 3) According to 2 Timothy 2:4, a good soldier avoids unnecessary entanglements. Identify

A Prayer for the True Heroes

Lord, Thank you for all true heroes who serve selflessly and humbly with little recognition. Grant to these military families your strength and the truth in knowing that their service matters. Lift them up when they feel down and support them "in the whelming flood" when things go wrong and doubts arise. May their sacrificial example inspire me and others to love more deeply and serve more selflessly.

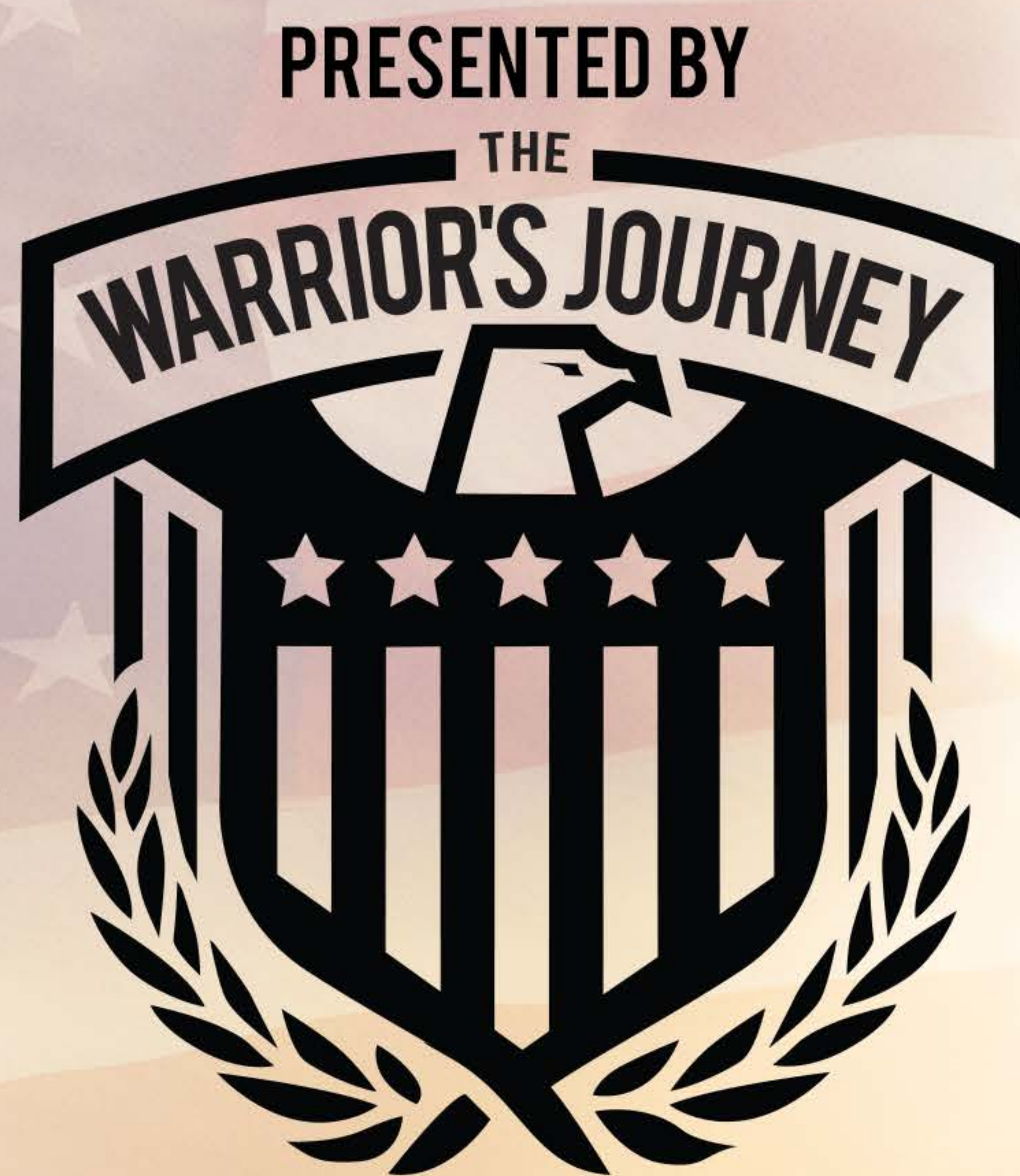
Amen.



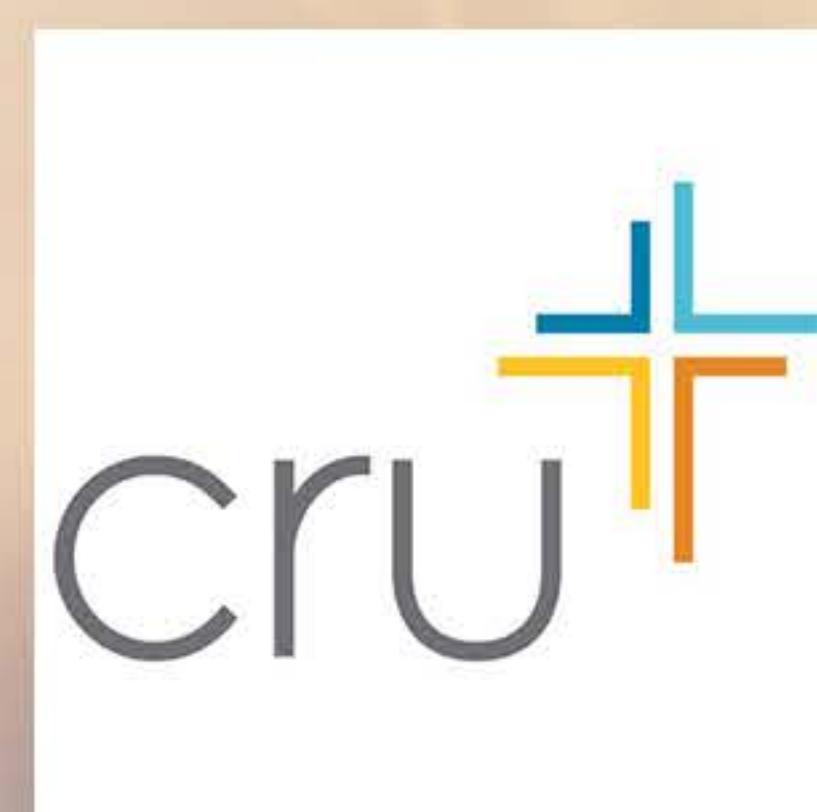
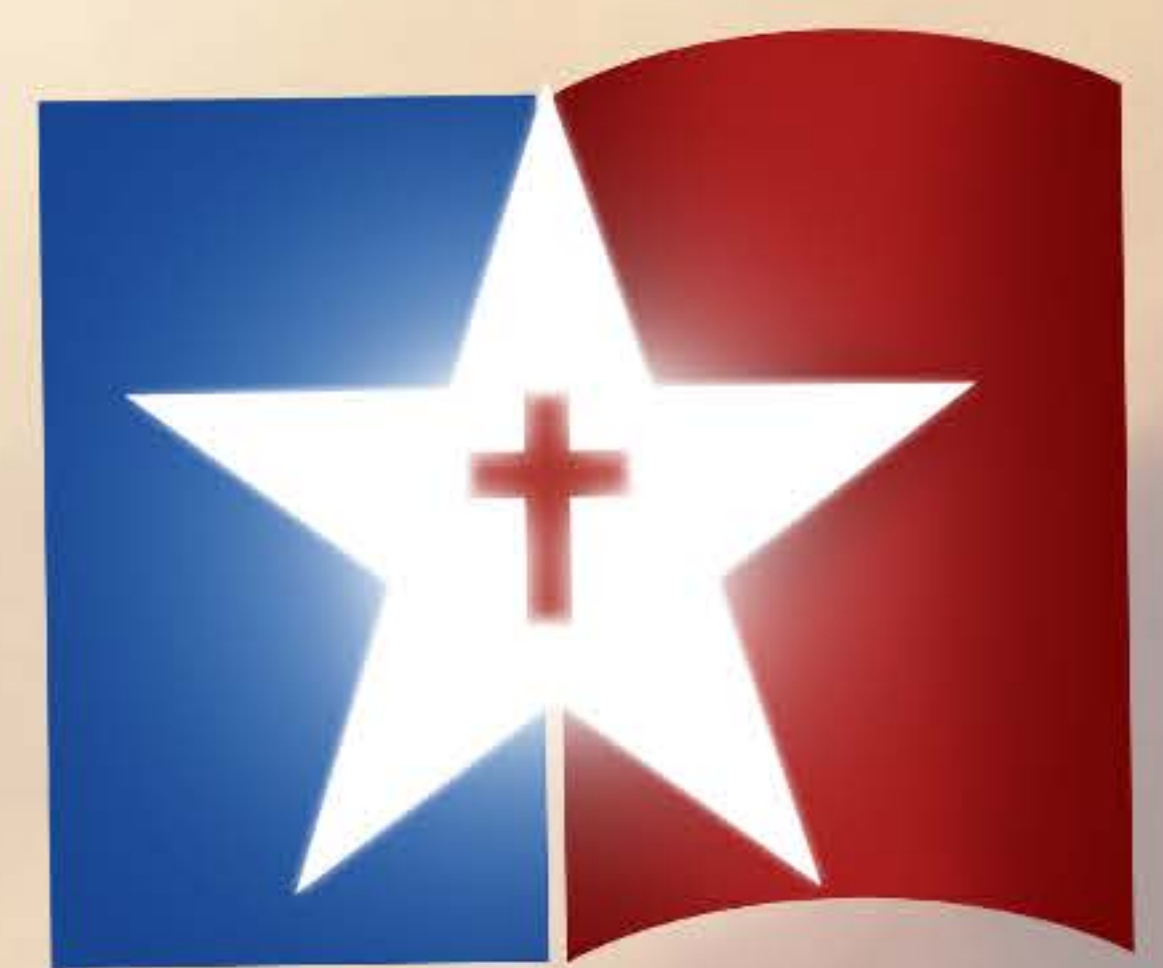
About The Author: Dean Bonura, Chaplain (COL), U.S. Army (Ret)

Dean Bonura currently serves as a lead writer for The Warrior's Journey and is on its Board of Advisors. He has over 30 years of military service including two combat tours and several deployments to the Middle East and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also is the author of *Beyond Trauma: Hope and Healing for Warriors* (2016) and holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Corban University, Western Seminary, and a doctorate from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Denise, live in Memphis, Tennessee.





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