

“GEAR UP: EQUIPPING THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN A
PRE-DEPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT”

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ABSTRACT

The Christian who enlists in the United States Armed Forces is given all the tools he or she needs to complete the mission on account of their new identity as a United States soldier. The aspect of life a soldier may find himself ill-equipped to handle is his spiritual life. The military offers no spiritual training for the soldier so that he can defend himself against the devil and all of his schemes, and that is not their job. The military does provide assistance through pastors who are certified through their denominational affiliations, and who are commissioned as officers. The training which comes from the military chaplains is ineffective due to the dualistic nature of the chaplaincy and its improper handling of Scripture. As a commissioned officer, the chaplain is subject to the duties of the chaplain corps and the orders of those appointed over him. As a pastor, he is bound to the denomination which is sponsoring him as their representative.

In order to assist the Christian soldier in his spiritual struggles it is necessary for the WELS military contact pastor to understand their member's conflicting identities, as a soldier and as a Christian. Using Ephesians 6:10-17, along with modern day applications to the armor of God, the contact pastor can supply positive imagery to solidify the soldier's identity in Christ.

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Literature Review

In preparation for this senior thesis project, many resources were consulted in order to obtain clear and accurate information about military culture, military equipment, and ways in which a soldier's armor can be used as positive imagery in spiritual warfare. Research was conducted using the Bible, commentaries on the Bible, material written by psychologists (both civilian and former military), published documents and training manuals published by the Department of Defense, interviews with veterans and currently active troops, as well as WELS civilian chaplains.

Edward Tick is a psychologist with a PhD in psychotherapy who specializes in psychological, spiritual, historical, and cultural aspects of war in the Vietnam War era, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder. Dr. Tick is an expert in both the classical Greek and Native American traditions of war and rites of passage. His book, titled *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*, was an invaluable resource in looking at the historical rites of passage into adulthood in a military environment. Dr. Tick also authored the book, *Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War*, which examined aspects of a soldier's identity. These resources aided in understanding the historical significance of a soldier's rite of passage as it contributes to the lives of those serving in the 21st century United States military.

The most significant research conducted on military training and identity came from Lt. Col. Dave Grossman. Col. Grossman is a former Army Ranger, paratrooper, and psychology professor at West Point. He retired from the US Army in 1998 and has devoted his life to teaching others about the reality of combat. Col. Grossman's book, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, is one of the clearest, most accurate, and most revealing resources in understanding the psychological training involved in transforming the civilian into a soldier. Col. Grossman's work expounded on some of the deep, dark, and heartbreaking realities concerning the metamorphosis of a civilian into a soldier.

Before looking at ways the WELS military contact pastor could equip military members in the realm of spiritual warfare, research had to be conducted on the role the military chaplain currently fulfills. In order to gain insight into the precise role the military chaplain holds, it was beneficial to examine carefully the Department of Defense Army regulation form 165-1, "Army Chaplain Corps Activities." This document was helpful in understanding the authorized duties of the military chaplain.

The Veterans Affairs website helped in understanding different aspects of military culture, as well as published statistics about military facts pertaining to culture and life. This website provided a free and condensed look at the values of the different branches that make up the United States Armed Forces, and provided informed research about the overall system of each branch of service.

The interviews which were conducted by this researcher with both active and retired veterans provided a firsthand look at how the culture of the military can affect the Christian soldier. Each interview was audio recorded and the manuscript for each interview quoted in this paper can be found in appendix A. These interviews helped in dissecting different aspects of military culture in the life of the 21st century US soldier, and provided truthful and helpful insight into the life of a soldier serving in the military.

Along with the research obtained concerning a soldier's life and culture, it was also necessary to examine biblical resources to address the spiritual problems afflicting US soldiers. A meaningful biblical resource to help soldiers in their spiritual warfare is the armor of God. In order to accurately apply the armor of God to the life of a soldier it was valuable to study Ephesians 6:10-17 exegetically. Also, to gain insight about the armor of God, the researcher conducted an examination of various passages throughout the book of Ephesians along with Isaiah 59 which helped in establishing answers to important questions about the Christian soldier's identity. The most insightful resource explored was the book, *Put on the Armor of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, by Tom Yoder Neufeld.

The research which was conducted by examining facts and statistics helped to establish the cultural component for the Christian serving in the military. However, the interviews and the biblical exegesis are the heart and soul of this thesis.

Introduction

Military ministry has been an important part of this nation's history since the establishment of the Chaplain Corps in 1775, through a resolution made by the Continental Congress. "In 1776, a regulation mentioned the express desire for chaplains to be commissioned into regiments, companies, troops, and garrisons. In addition to these there were hospital chaplains, a chaplain missionary to the friendly Indians, and, interestingly, a German chaplain-at-

large.”¹ From its founding in 1775 until 1862, the Chaplain Corps was comprised solely of Christian chaplains. Jewish chaplains were added to the Chaplain Corps in 1862, and since then many other faith groups are represented by men and women serving as members of the United States Military Chaplain Corps.

The United States Army was the first branch of military service, founded in June of 1775, followed by the United States Navy established in October of that same year. Out of these two branches came the United States Air Force, a branch of the Army, and the United States Marine Corps, which serves as a department of the Navy. For the purpose of this paper and from this point forward, whenever the term “soldier” is mentioned, it will apply to all branches of service, even though that term is normally associated with members of the Army. All branches suffer the attacks of spiritual warfare and are in need of care and training.

The men and women who enlist in the United States military receive the best training and the most advanced equipment, allowing them to defend the people of the United States and to protect this nation against enemies, both foreign and domestic. Because of that expert training, the soldier is capable of analyzing a specific situation and utilizing whatever tool is called for to resolve the given scenario. If the soldier’s training was incomplete, if the information for the operation was not up to date, or his equipment was manufactured incorrectly, the soldier and his squad would suffer major casualties. Though well prepared physically, many Christian soldiers have not received appropriate spiritual training. As a result, they find themselves ill-equipped to face the assaults of the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh within military culture. By employing the various pieces of a soldier’s physical armor as positive triggers in connection to the armor of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) military contact pastor can equip his Christian soldier(s) to engage in spiritual warfare in a pre-deployment environment.

Part One: The Transformation

Rites of passage: Historical view of identity through combat

The term, “Rite of Passage,” was invented by French anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep. A rite of passage is connected to almost every culture throughout history and marks important

¹ Clayton E. Krug, “Ministering to Members in the Armed Forces,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File (Dec. 1978):1.

milestones in a person's life, such as birth, maturity, reproduction, and death. Along with each of those stages comes a change in social status and, therefore, "a rite of passage consists of a change of status in the eyes of an individual's social group."² The person undergoing the rite of passage is first "symbolically" separated from his old status, where the individual undergoes an adjustment to the new status, consisting of a period of transition, and then is finally brought back into society with his new social status.³ Van Gennep determined that rites of passage consist of "three distinguishable and consecutive elements: separation, transition, and reincorporation."⁴ The specific rite of passage where the old status is removed in preparation for the new status has been referred to as a "purification rite." In summarizing the rite of passage Van Gennep says:

Elaborate rites of passage are commonly rich in symbolism that prominently includes representations of the states of separation and transition and, especially, insignia of the new status. Most common among these markers of new status are alterations and embellishments of visible or invisible parts of the body, distinctive garments and bodily decorations, and insignias corresponding to symbols of office. All parts of the body that may be altered or embellished without ordinarily causing serious disability have served as the symbols of social statuses and have been elements of rites of passage. Outstanding among these insignias are special styles of hairdress, clothing, and ornaments; the filing, staining, and removal of teeth; the wearing of ornaments in pierced ears, noses, or lips; tattoos.⁵

Rodney Frey, professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of Idaho, uses Van Gennep's analysis as a starting point and believes that rites of passage were not only "publicly acknowledged as transitions from educational, social or spiritual status to another, but more fundamentally, to facilitate and bring about within the individual such transformation in the first place."⁶ Prof. Frey has indicated that he believes there are four universal components to the symbolic structuring of any rite of passage within a given culture. The first element of a rite of passage presupposes an "orphaned status." At this stage the individual is understood to be an "orphan," which means they are somehow incomplete. It is understood that the individual is missing something that is of prime importance, and it needs to be addressed. The second element of a rite of passage involves a separation, a journey and a sacrifice.

² Edward Norbeck, and Bobby C. Alexander, *Rite of passage*. [Online Article] (Encyclopedia Britannica: August, 2009). Accessed November 02, 2016, Available from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/rite-of-passage>; internet.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Rodney Frey, *Rites of Passage* [University website] (University of Idaho, February 2000). Accessed November 02, 2016, Available from <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~rfrey/rites.html>.

The individual may be physically removed by the elders of his village and taken to a “bush school” for a certain period of time. The individual may journey on a vision quest to a mountain site where the quest may last for several days. An apprenticeship may occur, initiated by the individual with an established sage, teacher or shaman which can last for several years.⁷

This is known as the “liminal state,” where the initiate is physically and socially removed from the only world and life he has ever known. In the “bush school” the initiate goes nameless and unwashed and without social definition and status. The third element in a rite of passage involves the acquisition of knowledge and strength, or in other words, the void has now been filled. The initiate can be molded into something that is now considered sacred. Finally, the fourth element in a rite of passage involves the affirmation and rebirth of the initiate. The initiate returns, having been filled with knowledge and insight, where he has been identified with new status.⁸

Edward Tick, in his book *War and Soul*, quotes historian Mircea Eliade, “ ‘Initiation is equivalent to a basic change in the existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possesses before initiation; he has become *another*’ and experienced ‘a ritual death followed by resurrection or new birth.’”⁹ Tick understands the process of initiation in the same way as Prof. Frey concerning a rite of passage. Tick explains that, in traditional societies, boys and girls were often separated from their families and friends, and they would then be taken into the woods, the desert, a cave, a temple, or even an underground chamber. It was there, Tick explains, that the elders of their tribe would submit them to ordeals of ritual decoration, wounding or scarring. An example of this would be circumcision for the boys. He continues by stating that the boys were being trained for war through their entire childhood, and this occurred because of the expressed desire to become warriors. The focus of young initiates was on preparing themselves for that role, because they understood it was necessary in order to be accepted as men. Tick says, “Once the initiates had passed the ordeal and been publicly celebrated, they gained the privileges of their new status as men and warriors.”¹⁰ It is here that Tick illuminates the motivation and purpose behind the desired transformation when he focuses on the historical mindset of a young male warrior as he

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Edward Tick, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2005), 46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 46-47.

states, “Risking death for the protection of one’s people transforms a boy into a warrior. Successful completion of the transformation makes him a man. This pattern is so universal that in the portrait of the human psyche evolved by depth psychologists, the warrior is a recurring motif recognized as an archetype.”¹¹

This motif is often seen in the American culture. One of the most popular Halloween costumes worn by young boys and girls is a superhero costume. Whether it’s as the Hulk, Iron Man, Spiderman, Batman, Wonder Woman or Superman, children imagine themselves as warriors. It could be argued that this desire comes through the medium of television. In a world where in which people fight for equal rights for people of all genders, ethnicities, and social standing, there is the ingrained idea of warriors defending their homes and loved ones against the forces of evil, which in turn, earns the status of being a hero.

The desire to defend one’s home and family can be described in military terminology as a sense of duty. Yet a sense of duty is not the only motivation for undergoing such initiation and transformation. Tick also lists a “desire for excitement and adventure as a cause for undergoing such ordeals.”¹² However, no matter what the motivation, two realities cannot be overlooked: One, the transformational nature of the rite of passage from initiates into warriors, and two, that the new status or identity, as warrior, is rooted in war.

Tick argues that war is a rite of passage:

War, as we have seen, has traditionally been a rite of passage through which an adolescent would be transformed into an adult. He would develop his character, face stuff, and learn how fragile life is. His culture would help heal and shape him into a mature warrior who, having been tested and proven, would take his place in society. Even now, we still yearn for the initiatory process war once offered. The long shadows cast by suicide bombings and the horrors of the modern battlefield have not extinguished our spiritual hunger for righteous service.¹³

This spiritual hunger could be understood to be the warrior’s desire to carry out his duties and mission in a way which reflects the will of God (cf. Lk 3:14). We can look at society and see that war is built into the psyche of human beings. Tick explains that “the idea of war and our psyche serves as a blueprint and fits into the order of our society as rites of passage to

¹¹ Ibid., 49.

¹² Ibid., 149.

¹³ Ibid., 174-175.

adulthood.”¹⁴ In order to clarify his meaning on war and the psyche Tick attempts to prove this idea by using examples such as the jock and brainy high school subgroup or rival street gangs.¹⁵

Spanning across time and continents, sociologists examine the significance of the rites of passages within a given cultural dynamic. Each culture has its own set of rites and rituals for important stages of life. Anthropologist Edward Norbeck and ethnologist Rodney Frey favor the idea that the rite of adulthood not only marked the stage of puberty but also served as an initiation into the ranks of warriors among the tribe. Tick sums up his views concerning the identity of warrior-hood by expressing that,

Rites of passage are *necessary* for healthy human development. When we reach one of life’s thresholds, it always challenges us to grow, change, and deepen. Simultaneously, we let go of our old identity in the accoutrements we no longer need. We start and complete schools and jobs, join the military, give up our single lifestyle to become partners or spouses and then perhaps parents or grandparents. Eventually, we stop working, suffer illness, and face death. In each major transition, we undergo a transformation, even though our present culture provides little formal ritual for doing so.¹⁶

The identity of a person is constantly changing and adapting because it is impacted by situations and experiences which alter how people view themselves and how society views them.

Basic Training: Civilian to Soldier

In American culture we have ages and stages where a person’s identity is altered. Some examples would be the sweet sixteen party of a teenage girl or a person’s graduation from college with the idea that the “real world is about to begin.” The decision to join the military is another one of those experiences which qualifies as a rite of passage in American society. Many young Americans use their new found freedom to enlist in the Armed Forces. The typical age for both men and women to enlist in the United States Armed Forces is 19-25. According to the statistics obtained by the Center for Deployment Psychology the military is primarily occupied by Caucasians and African-Americans, which are followed by Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and others. As such,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 269.

¹⁶ Ibid., 45.

The American Armed Forces attempt to attract young people by offering them a path to fulfill the mythic ideal of the warrior, the cultural idea of a hero, whose service is blessed by the divine and who makes the strife-ridden cosmos safe for his people, and our youth respond. To that end to create a soldier, the mold of civilian identity must be broken. Training must overcome acculturation and restore the individual's access to the primitive bundle of instinctual impulses that can destroy without hesitation. Ideally, soldiers learn to discipline these impulses strictly, so that they are used only under orders and with particular direction – not wildly lashing out at everyone in sight, but making moral distinctions between friend and foe, combatant and civilian. The Savage must be carefully controlled.¹⁷

The morality which Tick is referring to is “a morality that is learned from the military, based out of aggression, hate, bias speculation, and yet a mix of duty and savior complex.”¹⁸ This identity built on aggression, hate, and bias speculation begins with the influence a person's parents, friends and teachers have on them, as well as the role of social media in how it portrays those with whom the United States is currently engaged in conflict. The stimulation the initiate receives during his basic training helps to mold and build upon Tick's idea of “primitive instinctual impulses.” At the same time the idea of duty and salvific self-identification is developing. The initiate is taught that the people across the sea are the enemy and that they are an evil plague which needs to be dealt with in order to bring peace and security back home. This transformational process begins at the recruitment center.

At the recruitment center the individual desiring to join the military speaks with the recruiter and receives general information about different jobs which make up the particular branch of service the individual seeks to join. The military recruiter fills out particular forms with overall information about the individual, as well as taking height and weight measurements to determine the physical fitness of the potential recruit. The individual receives a small military ringed book which informs him briefly about that branch's military history, as well as enlisted and officer ranks and insignia. Also, that branch's creed is proudly displayed for the individual to learn before shipping off to basic training. After the individual receives some general information and fills out the appropriate forms, the recruiter will administer a practice Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, or ASVAB test. The ASVAB tests the individual on mathematics, English, problem-solving, critical thinking, and science. The practice test helps the

¹⁷ Tick, 175.

¹⁸ Ibid.

recruiter to determine what possible vocation the potential recruit qualifies for and if he meets the basic competency standard.

After the initial meeting between the recruiter and the potential recruit, an appointment is scheduled for the individual to travel to the closest Military Entrance Processing Station, or MEPS as it is commonly known. Upon arrival at the MEPS facility, the individual, along with other potential recruits, is placed in a secluded room where the group takes the official ASVAB test. The overall score, along with the scores from each individual section, is recorded and examined so that official placement can be determined.

After this test, depending on the branch of service the individual desires to join, another physical fitness test is required. If the potential recruit desires to enlist in the Army or Marines he is required to perform a lift test. The individual must lift a pack weighing approximately 70 pounds. This is due to the fact that the average Army or Marine pack weighs around 70 pounds or more, and if the individual is unable to lift the practice pack, more physical fitness may be required before he can enlist in that particular branch of service. The potential recruit is then taken to an examination area where he is supervised as he performs a urinalysis to determine if any drugs are present in his system. From there, the individual is taken to a private examination room where he is given a basic physical exam. If the potential recruit has a clear urinalysis and has no physical issues that would prevent him from performing his assigned tasks in his specific branch, he is sent to a military counselor from his desired branch of service to view possible vocations. The military career counselor meets with the individual and informs him of the potential vocations for which he qualifies, and then gives a general, yet thorough, explanation of the basic functions and tasks which are required for that specific vocation.

After the information about potential vocations is distributed, the individual takes however much time is needed to consider each one. At this time the potential signing bonuses are discussed in regard to the specific vocation the initiate has chosen. If the initiate still wishes to continue with the chosen vocation, the military career counselor writes up the paperwork. The counselor also prepares the overall enlistment package and goes over it with the individual. After reading the packet, the individual signs and dates the military contract. From there the individual is taken to a specific room along with other recruits, and the commanding officer of the MEPS facility is brought in to discuss with the new potential recruits what it is they have just signed. He

gives the recruit one final chance to back out of military service. If the individual still desires to enlist in his particular branch of service, he is given the option to take “the oath.”

The oath is not strictly required in the induction process in the military, although it still plays a part in the process of initiation. The

“oath of allegiance ceremony” follows the induction procedure, but the regulation states clearly, ‘The oath of allegiance is not a part of the induction... In every instance, there will be an appreciable break to ensure that the taking of the ceremonial oath does not appear to be any part of the induction.’ When it is time to take the ceremonial oath those who do not wish to participate will be asked to sit and remain silent. Those Inductees desiring to take the oath may either ‘swear’ or ‘affirm’ the oath, and may choose to omit ‘so help me God.’ However, should the inductee refuse to take the oath it may affect their Certificate of Clearance which may be required of specific vocations in their branch of service.¹⁹

The oath is as follows,

I, *state your name*, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the president of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the regulations and the uniform code of Military Justice. So help me God.²⁰

The oath taken by those who will serve as officers is slightly different, yet, in general the oath is the same.

Upon signing the contract, the individual is now an initiate, or a recruit. Depending upon his orders, the recruit will either fly out to the state of his basic military training compound or wait until the issued date, which can be anywhere between a few weeks to a few months. At the appointed time, the recruit flies out to the state where his or her basic training will commence. The recruit will exit the plane along with all of the other recruits and will meet his new boot camp instructors in the baggage claim area.

It is at this point that the civilian identity begins to be broken. The boot camp instructors begin to work up the recruits into a panic by screaming and barking orders which may be quick and unclear. The new recruits are ordered onto a bus which is parked outside the airport terminal and commanded to sit down and keep quiet. A second boot camp instructor sends a form which

¹⁹ Betsy Perabo, “How Soldiers, too, Can be Saved: Allegiance and Idolatry in the US Military,” Western Illinois University (2010): 258.

²⁰ Ibid.

needs to be filled out throughout the bus. The form asks for emergency contact information, followed by a forwarding address, so that the recruit's carry-on luggage and current clothing can be shipped home. The purpose for this highly stressful and intimidating exercise is to strip the recruit of his former identity, which lays foundational work in the transformational process. Upon arrival at the military training command, the recruits are ordered off the bus and commanded to stand in a straight line where the Leading Recruit Receiving Officer gives instructions on how to proceed.

The new recruits are ordered down to the central processing area where they acquire underwear, t-shirts, socks, sweatpants, shirt, and tennis shoes. The recruits proceed to another staging area where they are ordered to strip off their current clothing, place it in a box with their forwarding address, and put on the recruit clothing. From here they are sent to a barbershop where they are made to look like every other recruit. With their hair removed, so is the last of their old identity. They are now broken down to basic components which are able to be molded and crafted into something stronger. From here they are ordered into an adjacent room where they participate in another urinalysis in order to test if the recruits have participated in drug activity. After the urinalysis is complete, they will be sent to another room where they will be divided up into groups of seventy or eighty, which are called platoons or divisions. These platoons are marched to another structure on the military installation. This structure itself is called a barracks and is a long room which is filled with bunk beds from the opening of the room towards the other end. This is where those seventy to eighty individuals sleep, store their gear, shine boots, and undergo intensive training, or IT. After they are placed in their new platoons, the recruits march to their assigned barracks.

The duration of basic training depends upon the specific branch of service. The Air Force recruit receives six weeks of basic training, the Navy provides eight weeks, the Army for ten weeks followed by an additional specified duration depending on their military occupational specialty or MOS, and the Marines for the duration of thirteen weeks plus additional training for their MOS.²¹ The training received by the recruits differs among the branches to some degree. However, for the Army and Marines, a certain type of "conditioning" is needed.

²¹ Jenna Ermold, *Center for Deployment Psychology: Military Cultural Competence*, Bethesda, Maryland [online article] (The uniformed services university of health and services, 2013) November 4, 2016. Available from <http://www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html>.

Col. Grossman addresses this “conditioning” in his book, while at the same time, correcting the “fight or flight” model which is often used to explain man’s instinctual actions when faced with a threat. He states,

The understanding of the fight or flight mentality has been grossly inaccurate. When faced with the threat from an enemy of your own species the soldier has four options: fight, flight, posture, and submit. Adding the posture and submission options to the standard fight or flight model of aggression response helps to explain many of the actions and training for the battlefield. When a man is frightened, he literally stops thinking with his forebrain (that is, with the mind of a human being), and he begins to think with the midbrain (that is, with the portion of his brain that is essentially indistinguishable from that of an animal). In the mind of an animal, it is the one who makes the loudest noise or puffs himself up the largest which will win.²²

The standard mode of training across the board for all military branches consists of numbingly repetitive drills. “The leader’s goal is to turn a soldier into a small cog in a machine that will stand and fire at the enemy. Therefore, drill is the primary tool for ensuring that the soldier will do his duty on the battlefield.”²³ Col. Grossman refers to J. Glenn Gray, a former professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado, concerning the reason for the drill methodology. “In his book *The Warriors*, he states that while soldiers may become exhausted and ‘enter into a dazed condition in which all sharpness of consciousness is lost,’ they can still ‘function like cells in a military organism, doing what is expected of them because it has been automatic.’”²⁴ Elaborating on this type of conditioning, Col. Grossman quotes military historian Gwynne Dyer, “‘*Conditioning*, almost in the Pavlovian sense, is probably a better word than *training*, for what was required of the ordinary soldier was not thought, but the ability to load and fire their weapon automatically even under the stress of combat.’”²⁵ This type of conditioning is not unique to the military; it is often used when an individual is trying to learn another language or when a student is studying for tests.

The Pavlovian conditioning which US troops underwent in the past dates back to the colonial militias during the Revolutionary War. According to Col. Grossman, “The militia leaders imitated the war tactics that they learned as former members of the British Army. They

²² Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 7-8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

would march in battle lines and, at the given command, the first line would fire their muskets. Then the opposing side would fire their muskets, and this type of volleying would continue back and forth along with the addition of artillery.” However, Col. Grossman describes modern conditioning this way,

Modern training uses what are essentially B.F. Skinner’s operant conditioning techniques to develop a firing behavior in the soldier. This training comes as close to simulating actual combat conditions as possible. The soldier stands in a foxhole with full combat equipment, and man-shaped targets pop up briefly in front of him. These are the eliciting stimuli that prompt the target behavior of shooting. If the target is hit, it immediately drops, thus providing immediate feedback. Positive reinforcement is given when these hits are exchanged for marksmanship badges, which usually have some form of privilege or reward associated with them.²⁶

The stimulus which Grossman mentioned has evolved over the ages. During the Revolutionary War the targets were scarecrow figures dressed in British standard uniforms. During World War I and World War II the stimuli were actual circular targets or bullseyes. However, this did not give troops adequate training for real-time combat. After World War II the stimuli changed because the training was changing. Circular targets were replaced by black cardboard cutouts in the shape of a human being. In this way, the perception of the enemy would be altered because “soldiers are trained to dehumanize the enemy, which declares that killing the enemy civilian or combatant did not really count.”²⁷ This type of conditioning has a negative effect on the Christian soldier’s identity because it challenges the value of human life in his own mind as well as his purpose as a Christian soldier. To emphasize the severe shift in the soldier’s perception of the enemy, Col. Grossman quotes an interview with an unnamed source, who worked alongside former US Navy psychiatrist Dr. Narut,

He (Narut) was developing techniques for the US government in which classical conditioning and social learning methodology were being used to permit military assassins to overcome their resistance to kill. The method used, according to Narut, was to expose the subjects to “symbolic modeling,” involving ‘films specially designed to show people being killed or injured in violent ways. By being acclimatized through these films, the men were supposed to eventually become able to disassociate their emotions from such a situation.’ The men were taught to shoot but also given a special type of “Clockwork Orange” training to quell any qualms they may have about killing. Men are shown a series of gruesome films, which get progressively more horrific. The trainee is forced to watch by having his head bolted in a clamp he cannot turn away, and a special

²⁶ Ibid., 177.

²⁷ Ibid., 190.

device keeps his eyelids open. The government denies these claims but information was able to be obtained from outside corroboration which stated that Dr. Narut had ordered violent films from him.²⁸

According to Col. Grossman, “desensitization is a vital aspect of killing empowerment techniques used in modern combat programs.”²⁹ This type of conditioning still exists within the Army and Marine training facilities. The military no longer tolerates Dr. Narut’s desensitization techniques, but for decades it was “a key mechanism for desensitizing and indoctrinating adolescent males into a culture of violence in basic training.”³⁰ Grossman maintains that the Army’s current conditioning system employs violent films and images, which are shown to recruits, in order to help them disconnect from such violence so that they are able to dehumanize their enemy.

Col. Grossman elaborates on the science behind the Army’s combat conditioning program by explaining that,

Classical (Pavlovian) conditioning can be done with earthworms, and operant (Skinnerian) conditioning can be conducted on rats and pigeons. But there is a third level of learning that pretty much only primates and humans are capable of, and that is what is called social learning. This third level of learning, in its most powerful form, revolves primarily around the observation and imitation of a role model. Unlike operant conditioning, in social learning it is not essential that the learner be directly reinforced in order for the learning to take place. This means that you can learn behavior, and form attitudes and beliefs, by seeing a role model get rewarded for a behavior. What is important in social learning is to understand the characteristics that can lead to the selection of a specific individual as a role model.³¹

The process that makes someone a desirable role model includes vicarious reinforcement, similarity to the learner, social power, and status envy. By vicarious reinforcement, Grossman means that when the recruit sees someone rewarded for a certain behavior or performance the recruit will seek to imitate them so that he can have the same reward. The boot camp instructor serves as a prime example of a role model in the mind of a young recruit. According to Col. Grossman, the image of the drill instructor is often portrayed through the words of Drill Sgt. G. from Fort Ord, “From this time on I will be your mother, your father, your sister, and your brother. I will be your best friend and your worst enemy. I will be there to wake you up in the

²⁸ Ibid., 310-311.

²⁹ Ibid., 311.

³⁰ Ibid., 312.

³¹ Ibid., 321.

morning, and I will be there to tuck you in it night. You will jump when I say ‘frog’ and when I tell you to s***, your only question will be ‘what color?’ Is that clear?”³²

Throughout history the armies of the world have understood the role that social learning plays in developing aggression. The venue has been basic training and their instrument has been the drill instructor. Grossman expands on this idea,

The Drill Sergeant is the role model. He is the ultimate role model. He is carefully selected, trained, and prepared to be a role model. He will instill the warrior values of aggression and obedience. He is the reason that military service has always been a positive experience for young people coming from troubled homes and disadvantaged backgrounds. He is invariably a decorated veteran, and the trainees deeply envy and desire the glory, recognition, and power bestowed upon their Drill Sergeant.³³

The image that the Drill Sergeant portrays is that manhood is associated with physical aggression, and in order to solve the problems soldiers face on the battlefield violence is highly effective. Yet, it is also important to realize that he is teaching the recruit the value of obedience, and according to Col. Grossman, “if we want our sons and daughters to survive future battles, the Army needs appropriate role models.”³⁴

Survival is possible through the example of the Drill Sergeants, along with the intense and drastic conditioning described above, which all soldiers, both Army and Marines, receive in basic training. This conditioning encompasses the basic combat training, no matter what MOS the recruit holds. Only those who hold an infantry or specialized MOS, such as Ranger, Delta Force Marine Recon, or the Navy’s Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) unit, receive additional mental and physical combat training.

All branches and MOSs undergo physical, mental, and psychological training to some varying degree. Along with such training, all recruits participate in the study of the military history concerning their specific branch of service. All recruits receive small arms training, chemical weapons training, and survival training which they are required to pass.

The transformation process encompasses the complete breakdown and removal of the old identity and the construct of the newly-made soldier. The culmination of the transformational process is the soldier’s final exam. Each barracks from every branch of service participates in a

³² Ibid., 322.

³³ Ibid., 322-323.

³⁴ Ibid.

final exam. The exam includes portions from every area of training the recruit has experienced throughout his entire initiation process. Each branch has its own final exam. The final exam for the Air Force has been changed from Warrior Week to the Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training, or BEAST. The Navy final exam is Battle Stations, the Army is Victory Forge, and the Marine final exam is the Crucible.

If the recruit is able to finish the final exam he moves on to graduation week, which signifies that his transformation from civilian to soldier has been completed. If the recruit fails the final exam he will be pushed back to another barracks and offered another opportunity to finish the process. After basic training, there may be additional training still required for certain MOSs across every branch of service. However, the recruit's old identity, the civilian identity, will have been broken, and the new identity will have been forged through blood, sweat, and tears. Along with this new identity comes a variety of cultural changes.

Part Two: The Assimilation

The Identity Crisis: War on the Psyche

Misperception of military culture is often influenced by mass media. The general populace hears over and over again the phrase, "We are at war." Yet in reality we are never at peace. Military life has two phases: the first is pre-deployment and the second is deployment. Deployment can last anywhere from six months to eighteen months. In the pre-deployment stage, soldiers continue the Pavlovian training methodology of repetition. Pre-deployment serves the purpose of keeping troop readiness, because at a moment's notice, anyone could be deployed. Pre-deployment does not just involve soldiers who have never seen combat, but it is also the current role of the soldier who waits to return to the battlefield with his squad.

After the soldier completes his specialized training for his MOS, he is assigned to a specific location and into a specific squad. Sometimes individual soldiers are accompanied to their new squad with fellow soldiers that they shared similar training with during boot camp or their specialty school. This can help with the assimilation of a soldier into his new squad, because this stage is not done alone. When a soldier arrives at his new duty station there are often mixed feelings, such as excitement, fear, anxiety, worry, doubt and uncertainty. To combat the reality of the lack of control over his surroundings, the new soldier quickly finds other people within his brigade, and specifically within his squad, with whom bonds of friendship are formed.

The soldier's new identity evolves through this bond of brotherhood. Concerning this evolution, Edward Tick says, "Identities, transformed by training and service, need continued evolution."³⁵ The new identity of a soldier is changed by his assimilation into a new subgroup. To put it into scientific terms, the genus is the identity of the soldier in relation to his branch of service, while his species is the soldier's identity in relation to his specific squad. The soldier's evolving identity is so tightly bound to his bond of brotherhood that many soldiers reenlist or redeploy in order to stay connected to the fellow members of the group which make up his identity. Through the bond of brotherhood the soldier identifies where he fits in. The soldier's identity within the squad is quickly established by embracing the customs and practices of his particular squad.

While the soldier adjusts to military life within his squad, there are a variety of aspects to being a soldier that the individual continues to learn. Yet, those same customs, practices, and aspects to the soldier's squad that can serve as negative triggers, which could also compromise the spiritual life of the Christian soldier. Negative triggers are the situations which could cause the soldier to seek comfort and peace in something which is harmful to his spiritual life. Situations such as performing all night drills can leave the soldier mentally drained from lack of sleep. Another one would be the soldier having his head chewed off by his superior because of his poor performance. One might conclude that if the culture of the military is so dangerous to the spiritual life of the Christian soldier, perhaps it's best that the Christian not serve in the military. However, as Betsy Perabo states, "The formal relationship between the soldier and the US military is not generally problematic, but Christians should be concerned about the development of a kind of 'military religion' and how that might compete with Christianity."³⁶ The identity of a soldier in connection to his "military religion" which Perabo mentions is not only the identity of soldier, but how the military environment reconstructs the terminologies which make up the soldier's branch of service. Take the Marines for example. The Marine Corps code is *Semper Fidelis*, always faithful. Faithfulness, according to Sgt. Simmons, doesn't pertain to the soldier's moral beliefs, his personal God, or his fidelity to his spouse. Faithfulness is in connection to the mission above all things. Simmons states, "*Semper Fi* is understood to be country and Corps."

³⁵ Edward Tick, *Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul after War* (Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True Inc., 2014), 231.

³⁶ Betsy Perabo, "How Soldiers, too, Can Be Saved: Allegiance and Idolatry in the US Military," *Political Theology Journal*, Western Illinois University (2010): 248-249.

These culturalisms of the military are not inherently opposed to the Christian soldier's identity in his God, but they can be dangerous when those culturalisms challenge the soldier's identity in Christ. This is possible, given the effect of the transformational process the Christian soldier endures from boot camp throughout his entire career in the military, as well as his assimilation into an organization that is inherently secular. This does not mean a secular military culture is naturally at odds with the Christian, but it can present a problem. According to Lance Corporal Cronick, the military identity assumes control of the soldier's life and his identity in connection to Christ becomes idle or non-existent. LCpl. Cronick echoed Perabo and Sgt. Simmons by stating, "the environment in and of itself is not bad, but there are elements which can make it dangerous for their spiritual life."³⁷

Language is an aspect of military life which the soldier adjusts to very quickly. The military jargon is comprised of many acronyms such as PCOS, which means permanent change of station. This occurs when a soldier is transferred permanently from one duty station to another. Temporary duty yonder, or TDY, is where a soldier and his squad are temporarily reassigned, usually for training purposes, but also for deployments. The acronym NCO stands for non-commissioned officers, or the general term for enlisted personnel. However, jargon is not the only linguistic change for a soldier. Profanity is treated as a soldier's first language. Often soldiers use profanity to such great lengths that it becomes second nature to them. It happens so regularly that it appears there is no conscious decision when the words are used. It can even be viewed as a badge of honor among the brothers in the soldier's squad. The use of such words intensifies the manliness of a soldier or amplifies his general prowess. Profanity is generally understood to be a part of military culture, so much so that those who use excessive profanity in a civilian setting may be described as having "a mouth like a sailor." This doesn't mean that when the Christian soldier uses profanity his identity in Christ is lost. However, there is more than one way to shatter the windshield of a car. A large boulder doesn't necessarily need to fall through a windshield to cause it to shatter. Small pebbles that are flung at the windshield can cause an initial crack which can eventually spider out, weakening the surface that will eventually collapse.

³⁷ Cronick, Luther (Lance Corporal, United States Marine Corps). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date October 12, 2016.

Another large aspect in the process of assimilating into military life is the Christian soldier's work schedule. Generally speaking, while "stateside," the soldier works abnormally longer hours. Typically what occurs is that when the soldier is on duty he can work anywhere from twelve to fourteen hours a day and sometimes longer. The number of days in which the soldier may work in a row may differ depending on the scheduling set by the squadron commander. Yet, many soldiers tend to work anywhere from 2 to 4 days in a row with one day off, and then they return to work. If we follow the statistics by Dr. Jenna Ermold, the majority of troops are Caucasian American males ranging from 19 to 25 years of age. Many young adult males are not accustomed to working such extensive schedules which require physical labor, unless they grew up on a farm. They may come from middle-class families in urban areas. The typical work week for many Americans is 37 to 40 hours a week, which is roughly 7.5 to 8 hours per day.³⁸ The challenge is not inherently in the number of hours worked, nor does the strenuous schedule purposefully damage the Christian soldier's faith. The prolonged schedules can affect the soldier's sleep schedule, workout routine, food intake, and his time devoted to spiritual welfare. This in turn can cause a Christian soldier to deprioritize his faith life, which over a certain period of time could cause damage to the soldier's identity in Christ.

Tied in with the soldier's work schedule is also the absence of control over his or her personal life, and how that may impact his or her family. Capt. Rodgers, one of the men interviewed for this paper, stated that, "Train up time in the field is intense. Soldiers are very busy and there is not a lot of time with family, who you are about to leave."³⁹ Capt. Rodgers continues by explaining that, "Spouses also understand the challenges of their military spouse leaving every other year for 9 to 12 months. That comes with its own struggle, even in a noncombatant environment. It places dramatic stress on relationships." Capt. Rodgers describes the effect this stress has had on his home life while waiting to deploy by admitting that, "On a personal level, the wife (and sometimes kids) start to pick fights and distance themselves. Based on conversations, it is a coping mechanism where they think it will be less emotional if they

³⁸ Jenna Ermold, *Center for Deployment Psychology: Military Cultural Competence*, Bethesda, Maryland [online article] (The uniformed services university of health and services, 2013) Accessed November 4, 2016. Available from <http://www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html>.

³⁹ Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

distance themselves earlier.”⁴⁰ A military spouse can cause stress in a situation where a family member is sick and the spouse needs to take care of the person who is ill. The soldier cannot get away from training exercises or drills in order to help him or her, or provide relief for the spouse that is left behind.

The married soldier has the challenge of attempting to manage his military life along with his personal home life, and those two aspects take up the majority of his time. However, it is not just the married Christian soldiers who have to deal with the dramatic stresses which occur because of a lack of control over their life, and many troops deal with those stresses with a variety of coping agents. Downtime gives the single soldier an opportunity to engage in activities that give the illusion of control in an uncontrollable environment. For instance, Col. Mustard clarified that,

For many young soldiers there is a culture shock from the life they knew before the military. While they were civilians, many had no money and no freedom, because they may have lived at home with their parents after high school and had no job. Or perhaps, they were under the microscope of parental influence or guidance from their church. Yet, now they're far away from home. There is no one to watch over their activities when they are not at work and even if that were the case, the attitude of those looking after them is not one of concern for their spiritual well-being. As a soldier, they are now given freedom to engage in a lifestyle they choose as long as it does not bring negative attention on the command structure or their squad or the core values of their branch. Along with that unsupervised freedom they are paid well, and they can spend that money on a variety of vices, especially when they are TDY to an area that permits unsavory activity.⁴¹

Coupled with having no control over when he is deployed is also the fact that he has no knowledge of where he is going prior to the work-up for deployment. While the soldier is undergoing physical and mental training, possibly in another location, there are things the soldier needs to take care of before deployment. Capt. Rodgers listed some of these needs that have to be addressed before deployment. “There is the normal stress of updating all the wills and emergency information every time before deployment, as well as having all the same conversations with your spouse again about, ‘what happens if I die.’ After a couple of

⁴⁰ Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

⁴¹ Mustard, James (Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 12, 2016.

deployments of near death, the conversation gets a little more serious and emotional.”⁴² Capt. Rodgers said that without Christ, the stress of a pre-op deployment would eventually tear his marriage apart. The basic necessities which need to be addressed in a pre-deployment scenario are not all that different for either the single soldier. There’s still the matter of wills, power of attorney, and updating emergency contact information, making sure the finances are in order, as well as passing along to friends and loved ones the general disclaimer that while he is deployed the soldier is not able to give them specific information about his operation or location.

After the soldier returns from combat, he is generally allowed a certain amount of leave, which is paid time off, in order to decompress from his recent deployment. Generally, that time is spent trying to re-adjust to home life whether that is in the barracks for the single soldier or home for the married soldier. To this point, Edward Tick describes the state of the returning soldier by saying, “In psychological, social, somatic, and spiritual identities, the war survivor has become someone else. Combat transforms how we attach, relate to, love, or connect with others.”⁴³ This is an aspect of the constantly evolving identity through training and service. Many soldiers find it difficult transitioning from a deployed scenario to life back at home with loved ones. Certain films have shed light on the challenges of disassociating life in the field with life at home, such as the 2008 film, *The Hurt Locker*. The film displays how the soldier may feel overwhelmed by the amount of choices he has when it comes to mundane activities such as shopping in a grocery store. There also may be feelings of guilt for the actions he performed while he was deployed, or for the fact that he made it home while others did not. This transitional period after returning from deployment generally lasts anywhere from two weeks to four weeks, depending on the amount of leave approved by the soldier’s chain of command. In most units this is told to the soldier before deploying.

However, when the soldier returns to duty he is elated to be back with the brothers with whom he can identify the most, because they have “chewed the same dirt and shed the same blood,” or in other words, they have shared similar experiences. While in a pre-deployment status, the cycle of training persists with the same stressors, such as when the next deployment will occur, if he will be able to perform his duty faithfully and to the best of his ability, if he will make it home and if the brothers in his squad will return with him. If he has seen combat, shame

⁴² Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

⁴³ Edward Tick, *Warrior’s Return: Restoring the Soul after War* (Colorado: Sounds True Inc., 2014), 145.

and guilt may also be a contributing stressor in a pre-deployment setting. These stressors challenge the soldier's identity in connection to Christ. Doubt can creep in about the soldier's performance in the field. The soldier might contemplate whether or not his performance resulted in the death of a squad mate. These contemplations can affect the soldier's ideas concerning his value in the eyes of God, or it can lead the soldier to question whether God has forgiven him or not.

The stress of the pre-deployment environment can trigger flashbacks to a previous deployment and perhaps the soldier remembers his or her mental state while overseas. Capt. Rodgers testified that one of his struggles was rage and anger. He said, "When you are in the middle of combat and being shot at, the boundaries start to disappear, logic comes and goes, and it takes everything you have not to operate on only passion. The more you get shot at, the calmer you become in bad situations, but the angrier you get that you are in the same place yet again."⁴⁴ Seemingly normal and ordinary activities such as going to a grocery store to pick out cereal for the family can stress the soldier out. The scenario isn't difficult but the soldier can be overwhelmed because there are too many choices. In the field it is simple for him. You eat what you eat and you shoot when you shoot. The situation can cause the soldier's anger to flare up and rage can quickly set in over something as normal as picking out a cereal brand.

Capt. Rodgers also described his evolving identity by sharing that a soldier can "begin to feel invincible and more powerful than he is because he has survived death perhaps multiple times, and he starts to credit himself, or the tactics, or his teammates. The soldier may forget that the credit is due to God." This attitude of invincibility stems from a sense of pride in one's training, natural abilities, squad, and country. The pride of a soldier can also develop into a superiority complex toward brothers within a battalion, which some in the special forces division have attested such as Captain Rodgers and Col. Mustard. Certain troops will begin to look down at one another because a soldier might have a shortage of experience in combat, or achievements, awards, or distinguished service. Capt. Rodgers expresses this reality in this way:

No matter what you go through as an Army soldier though, the first impression is made by what you are wearing on your uniform. Questions go through your mind like, "Did you deploy, did you get shot at, how long were you deployed for, did you earn a combat action badge or combat infantry badge, did you get shot at and engage in combat, or are

⁴⁴ Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

you Ranger qualified?” It is less than 1% that has all of that but it is what many strive for or look up to – definitely in combat arms.⁴⁵

This superiority complex impacts how some of the new members of the squad or battalion are treated and some even feel isolated. This is especially true between combat soldiers and noncombatant MOSs. Tick sheds light on how combatants view noncombatants:

Military personnel and noncombatant supportive services also go through an initiatory change from civilian into soldier. But they participated at a lower level of engagement. Noncombatants do not earn the same “bragging rights” as combatants do; they are veterans without coup. Spared from facing the ultimate, they tend to devalue their service as inferior or unworthy. Yet they, too, have undergone the transformational process into the military. Even though theirs is a lesser degree of transformation, they, too, are veterans.⁴⁶

There is going to be a natural distinction between combatants and non-combatants. They all belong to a brotherhood, but there are a set of standards which mark combatants as a cut above the rest, at least for combat arms as previously stated by Capt. Rodgers. There are certain situations where higher standards are necessary. The most obvious is the standard of the military officer versus the standard of the enlisted soldier. By and large, officers are held to a greater moral, ethical, and overall standard of conduct than their enlisted subordinates. Yet, just like in many vocations, not everyone meets those standards equally since everyone has a sinful nature.

Col. Mustard acknowledges that, “It is easy for me to see how the junior NCO might cave to the pressures of their culture because they’re not held to the same standard as those appointed over them.”⁴⁷ Therefore, the squadron leader/commander, company commander, and section leader play an important role because they have, in effect, become the Junior NCO’s new role model, having taken the place of the soldier’s former Drill Sergeant. The general principle that most officers subscribe to is, “*Mission first, soldiers always.*” Thus, it is always the commander’s duty to support and help his subordinates to the best of his abilities without jeopardizing the mission.

⁴⁵ Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

⁴⁶ Edward Tick, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation’s Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 2005), 176.

⁴⁷ Mustard, James (Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 12, 2016.

The chain of command knows and understands the stresses that their Junior NCO's face. They take a head-on approach by educating their subordinates on possible problems. First and foremost, the chain of command reminds their troops of the issues which need to be addressed while they are in a pre-deployment status before they are actually TDY. The chain of command, in addition, provides points of contact so that their troops can get assistance in addressing the issues or concerns before they become serious problems. Yet, the responsibility ultimately falls on the individual soldier, with the understanding that it is not possible to eliminate every avenue of stress that he will face. There will always be situations that come up where stress floods the mind and anxiety fills the heart of the soldier because he is unable to deal with the problem so far away from home.

When this happens, the chain of command does whatever is in their power to do in order to help their Junior NCO's manage the stress. When asked how soldiers generally cope with the stressful situations that are beyond their control and how he encourages troops to deal with difficulties, Capt. Rodgers said,

Some simply suppress the stress, while others attempt to fix the stress by talking about it with their peers. There are also resources for soldiers to deal with stress, but they don't always use them. Personally, very intense workouts and busy days are my best stress relief. In my mind it works best to put them to bed tired so that they don't have time or energy to be stressed.⁴⁸

Col. Mustard adds to that assessment, saying that, "The squadron commander and company commander need to be understanding so that they do not push their troops to the breaking point. When the soldier has an idle moment, the devil goes to work."⁴⁹ Although it is important to get the necessary amount of sleep, it does not solve the problem; it only addresses a contributing factor. Sleep is not the only factor to consider. It is important to consider healthy nutritional standards and a disciplined routine to maintain physical fitness requirements. That being said, nutrition, sleep, and exercise are some of the physical components associated with stress. Dealing with those factors cannot prevent the devil and the sinful flesh from crushing the new man, but that is not the primary concern for the chain of command (COC). They are

⁴⁸ Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

⁴⁹ Mustard, James (Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 12, 2016.

concerned with the mission and the overall physical and mental readiness of their troops. If one of their troops vocalizes a spiritual concern, the COC refers them to the base or unit chaplain.

As previously stated by Capt. Rodgers, many of the Junior NCO's do not utilize the resources that the military offers to help them deal with stress. Instead many soldiers deal with stress by participating in the activities that the military culture has been associated with. Col. Mustard explained that, "While drinking in a social setting is often encouraged by the chain of command to deepen the bonds of brotherhood within a platoon or squad, many soldiers go beyond casual drinking and engage in drunkenness."⁵⁰ Many young soldiers, after days or weeks of drilling certain scenarios where you or a squad mate have been killed or injured, the general consensus is to lighten the mood and the reality by going to the local bar and drinking a few adult beverages. However, many soldiers choose not to stop at one or two alcoholic beverages and purposely become intoxicated. This is a preferred method to dealing with possible outcomes of future deployments and the stress of getting the soldier's personal life in order before departure. This method of coping with anxiety and stress is generally understood by the populace, so much so that all a person needs to do to verify this is walk around the military structure and count how many troops are in the local restaurants or bars.⁵¹

Col. Mustard mentioned that in the past soldiers would handle the stress of not knowing where they're going and for how long they will be gone with activities such as gambling. For many soldiers it was more reasonable and understandable to lose something as trivial as a little money over the possibility of losing one's life in an upcoming deployment. The act of gambling alone is not sinful or wrong. God never says "you shall not gamble," but he does say the root of evil is the love of money (1 Ti 6:10). Elsewhere Jesus speaks of storing treasures in heaven (Mt 6:19-20) as well as how a person cannot serve two masters (Mt 6:24). However, the dangerous aspect of gambling is when the soldier puts his trust in this method of coping with situations that are beyond his control, because in doing so he turns gambling into his idol. Gambling becomes his idol because he trusts that the activity of gambling will provide him relief for what troubles him, resulting in peace of mind.

⁵⁰ Mustard, James (Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 12, 2016.

⁵¹ Jennifer Hlad, "Stars and Stripes: US Military's Alcohol-Soaked Culture Taking Toll on Service Members" [Online article] (Published Dec. 26, 2012) Accessed November 18, 2016. Available from <http://www.stripes.com/us-military-s-alcohol-soaked-culture-taking-toll-on-servicemembers-1.201959>

Along with gambling and alcohol, one of the most common assumptions about the military is the sexual depravity of soldiers. Unfortunately, this is the sad reality, and it is the greatest threat to the spiritual life of the Christian soldier. No matter if the soldier is stateside or deployed, a vast number of troops know where the strip clubs or prostitutes are located. Soldiers typically deal with stress through sexual escapades, whether that's the use of pornography, either in video format or magazines, strip clubs, prostitutes, or websites that promote the opportunity for a one night sexual encounter. In a way, this method of dealing with stress is partially true because the brain releases chemicals like dopamine and serotonin which makes the soldier feel good. These chemicals relieve his stress temporarily while at the same time turning the soldier into an addict.⁵²

Similarly, just as the soldier is trained to recognize the enemy as an animal and something other than human, the soldier's use of pornography or sexual intimacy trains his brain to view and treat another person as an object for sexual gratification. These objects are no longer worthy of respect. The soldier's identity crisis is further escalated because the level of porn use never stays the same. The frequency gradually increases in order to meet the requirement so that the soldier feels better. The difference between a one-night stand and porn addiction is accessibility. While the soldier is TDY they may lack the time or means to seek out a partner, but that is not the case when it comes to porn. The soldier can access porn through images from magazines or from adult films in order to give them relief.

When the soldier returns from TDY he or she may seek relief by finding a partner to help him or her release his or her stress and bring up an illusion of normalcy. To help understand this coping method, Edward Tick says,

At one of my training sessions, a civilian therapist criticized an Iraq veteran as being an abuser because he wanted daily sexual relations. The vet answered, "I don't want to hurt or disrespect anyone. But I need you to understand that after three combat tours, sex is the only way I feel human. It doesn't last, but at least I feel it while we're touching. Please don't deny me the one doorway to humanness I still have."⁵³

The situation above pertains to a soldier who has experienced numerous deployments. Even so, a soldier does not need to experience three combat tours to get to this level of dependency. The

⁵² Sam Black, "the Porn Circuit: Understand Your Brain and Break Porn Habits in 90 Days" [Online article] (Copyright 2013) Accessed November 22, 2016. Available from <http://www.covenanteyes.com/resources/heres-your-copy-of-the-porn-circuit/>

⁵³ Edward Tick, *Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul after War* (Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True Inc., 2014), 146-147.

situation may differ but the problem and symptoms are the same, an identity crisis accompanied by moments of stress and the desire to have relief.

Of course, all this is also understood to be a violation of God's gift of sex in the confines of marriage. Yet the military neither discourages nor promotes such activity. In general, this aspect of military culture is often overlooked as long as it doesn't become a hindrance to the mission. No doubt many soldiers share the assessment of LCpl. Cronick who believes that "the military is not a hostile environment. There is hostility within the military and there are elements present that are bad and harmful to the Christian soldier; however, the culture itself is not inherently bad."⁵⁴

The chain of command is aware of the stresses which soldiers carry and the coping mechanisms that soldiers employ on a daily basis. However, this is not something that they can monitor or police even if they believe that the tools which soldiers use to cope are harmful. They supply training resources and chaplains to help soldiers deal with stress, but they cannot force the soldier to utilize those resources. The structure and culture of the military may be secular, yet those in authority do recognize that some of their troops are spiritual, and as such, have spiritual needs. In recognition of the spiritual needs the soldier may have, the chain of command provides its troops with opportunities to visit with the command chaplains. However, the Chaplain Corps is sometimes viewed by certain groups as a complicated and often convoluted source of comfort. This is due to the dual nature of the role the chaplaincy plays in the soldier's life and the tendency to comfort the soldier by helping him focus on the mission and his duties.

The Cultural Role of the Military Chaplaincy

When speaking of the chaplaincy, according to Paul Mathre, it's important to understand that it is a part of an occupational group, meaning, the chaplain serves members of a specific occupation from within the occupational structure. The chaplain is an employee hired by the federal government to work with other employees. He wears the same uniform as those he serves. Yet, he is an ordained clergyman as well as a commissioned officer.⁵⁵ The chaplain, in the role of the military officer, is expected to make a worthwhile contribution to the maintenance of a combat-ready military force. "He is to work with all personnel in areas of morals, morale,

⁵⁴ Cronick, Luther (Lance Corporal, United States Marine Corps). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date October 12, 2016.

⁵⁵ Paul G. Mathre, "The Military Chaplaincy: An Occupational Ministry." *Lutheran Quarterly*: May 2, 1966, 145.

and welfare. The chaplain, in the role of a pastor, is to provide opportunities for worship and religious instruction. He is to counsel the troubled and comfort the sick and sorrowful among those whom he serves.”⁵⁶ In other words the chaplain serves two masters, government and denomination.

According to the official documents concerning the Army Chaplain Corps activities, “From the beginning, the Army has turned to chaplains in order to nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the fallen.”⁵⁷ Yet it is also important to understand that,

In the pluralistic religious setting of the military, the Chaplain Corps performs or provides religious support for all soldiers, family members, and authorized Department of Defense civilians from all religious traditions. Chaplains cooperate with each other, without compromising their religious tradition or ecclesiastical endorsement requirements, to ensure the most comprehensive religious support opportunities possible within the unique military environment.⁵⁸

Immediately, the WELS military contact pastor can already see that there is a fundamental problem with the chaplaincy according to the biblical doctrine of church fellowship. The military recognizes the chaplain as a government agent who is to work with and alongside of other people of other faith groups in order to provide worship for everyone, even those who are not Christians. The specific religious support which chaplains are to include are “providing essential elements of religion to include worship, religious rites, sacraments and ordinances, holy days and observations, pastoral care and counseling, and religious education,” and this is for all faith groups.⁵⁹ In section two of chapter three, concerning the roles, status, and responsibilities of the chaplains, paragraph A states,

All chaplains provide for the nurture and practice of religious beliefs, traditions, and customs in a pluralistic environment to strengthen the religious lives of soldiers and their families. Chaplains conduct the religious programs and activities for the command and provide professional advice, counsel, and instruction on religious, moral, and ethical issues.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Ibid., 145-146.

⁵⁷ *Headquarters of the Department of the Army*, Army Regulation 165-1, “Army Chaplain Corps Activities” [Electronic Article] (Department of the Army, 2015), *Paragraph 1*, Accessed November 5, 2016.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

It is clear to see that the role given to the chaplain by the United States government, no matter what his denominational affiliation, violates the biblical principle of church fellowship and borders on the concept of Caesaropapism⁶¹ in connection to the religious role of the chaplain in the lives of his troops. Capt. Rodgers voices strong personal feelings about the Army chaplaincy.

The chaplaincy is a mixed bag and I am not sure what it will look like in the future. Be careful about only reading the chaplain handbook which the Army puts out. There are plenty of hidden regulations and culture that dictates how chaplains are allowed to act. Consider this viewpoint, “As a Christian leader, am I going to send a soldier with stress to see a Muslim Imam serving as a chaplain or a Rabbi? Or do I just send them to the MFLC (Military Family Life Consultant) so I don’t have to worry about religion coming into it, which kind of defeats the purpose of a chaplain.” Now, with transgenders and homosexuals openly serving, how can an individual be a chaplain and serve an entire unit? Honestly, you can’t or you can until you are fired, which defeats the purpose since now you have a boss (other than a Synod) that tells you what you can or can’t say.⁶²

He illustrates this point by discussing an issue which occurred because a Christian chaplain discussed scriptural principles during resilience training among a group of Army Rangers to assist on the topic of suicide prevention. The outcome for this chaplain was a letter of reprimand, which is currently being contested.

Given the dual role of the chaplain as military officer and pastor, a military chaplain is not capable of effectively dealing with the identity crisis of the Christian soldier serving in the Armed Forces. The crisis the soldier faces is the challenge to remain true to his identity as a Christian soldier without being compromised by his cultural identity in the military. It does not appear that the chaplain can faithfully and thoroughly tackle this challenge for a couple of reasons. The first reason is because he is an officer in the United States military who is subject to the orders of those appointed over him, and he must abide by the oath he took upon his commissioning into the Armed Forces. His unofficial priority, and to some extent the official policy of the Army, is to counsel and guide the troops that he serves so that they are able to complete the mission. No matter what the Army regulation states, the motto is “mission first.” The second reason is because his denominational affiliation does not teach the true counsel of God.

⁶¹ Caesaropapism is the concept of a secular authority ruling over the church in matters of ecclesiastical matters.

⁶² Rodgers, Steve (Captain, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 19, 2016.

Since many chaplains do not proclaim either law or gospel effectively, they cannot appropriately address the identity crisis of the Christian soldier. In response to this problem, a better solution is for the WELS military contact pastor to help the Christian soldier stay connected to his or her identity in Christ. One way to do this is to utilize Paul's armor of God as a positive coping mechanism.

Part Three: The Restoration

The Soldier at My Door: A Glimpse through the Eyes of the Apostle Paul

From the book of Acts⁶³ God sets the scene for Paul's imprisonment in Rome. As the apostle Paul approached the city of Caesarea, accompanied by his companions, he ran into a prophet of God named Agabus. The prophet approached the apostle, took Paul's belt and tied it around Paul's hands and feet, and announced to Paul that the Spirit declared that is what would happen to the apostle at the hands of the Gentiles. After meeting with James and the others in Jerusalem, Paul was made aware that certain Jews would react harshly toward him. He was accused of preaching that the law of God was of no value. So, in order to spare a conflict and hurt feelings, he participated in a purification rite.

After it was completed, he went to the temple in order to pray and praise God, and while he was there Jews surrounded him. They were screaming and attacking him. They listened to the reports of certain Jews from Asia Minor concerning accusations which James and the others warned Paul about. The Roman commander, along with his troops, surrounded Paul and rescued him from being torn apart.

Not long after this occurred, the apostle was taken before Governor Felix. As Paul testified to the truth of Christ and the resurrection from the dead, the governor became fearful and left him in jail while waiting for Paul to bribe him for his release. It was his successor, Festus, that would question the apostle at the insistence of the high priest and Sanhedrin whom he met in Jerusalem. Though the governor found no reason to keep him locked up, nor was Paul guilty of any crime worthy of death, the apostle used his status as a Roman citizen to make his appeal to the Emperor in Rome.

While in Rome, Paul was given a rented house and a personal guard that would watch over him while he remained under house arrest for two years. Yet, within those two years, he

⁶³ Chapters 21-28

was given limited opportunities to share the testimony of Jesus Christ with others. While the apostle Paul was in Rome, he received reports of serious spiritual concerns from a few different congregations in Asia Minor. Along with sending a letter with Tychicus addressing the spiritual matters with the congregation of Colossae, he also took this opportunity to send a letter of admonition and request to Philemon, in addition to a letter of encouragement to the area of Ephesus.

Perhaps as the apostle Paul penned the letter to the Ephesians, addressing the spiritual struggles that they would endure, he gazed upon the Roman soldier. Maybe as he looked upon the one who now served as his personal jailer and guard Paul was reminded of another soldier, a warrior, the Divine Warrior, whom the prophet Isaiah wrote about. That is the warrior who was guarding and watching over the apostle. The Divine Warrior is the soldier whose armor reminded Paul of the importance of his imprisonment, and who truly had the power to set Paul free. This is the Divine Warrior whose strength Isaiah wrote about and whom the apostle Paul trusted in.

The Divine Warrior: Looking through the Lens of Isaiah 59

An understanding of Isaiah 59 is helpful in grasping Paul's point instructing the Ephesians, to "Put on the full armor of God (Eph 6:11)," and more importantly, so the military contact pastor can utilize it in the context of the 21st century soldier as a source of comfort and strength, it is necessary to examine its usage in the context of Isaiah 59.

In his book *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, Tom Yoder Neufeld believes that the motif of the Divine Warrior is modeled after Isaiah 50:2 with regard to the Lord's effectiveness: "When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you?" He concludes that the LORD is asking these questions because God's people are treating him as though he is too weak to liberate them from their suffering.⁶⁴ The LORD addresses this point again in verse 1 of chapter 59, "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear." The fact of the matter is that the LORD is not the problem. The issue of inability is not connected to the work of the LORD in reference to his salvation,

⁶⁴ Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 17.

righteousness or justice, which is a continued theme throughout Isaiah. The problem is with the inability of the people to be just and to be righteous. Neufeld states that, “Isaiah 59:7-16a is not about the wickedness of the world around his people, that is a given, the wickedness God is addressing through his prophet is that of Israel.”⁶⁵

God’s own people, whom he instructed saying, “You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own” (Lv 20:26), were now falling into sin. In fact, the LORD is pointing out how the actions of his people were active and willful sinning. His people were not walking around imitating their holy God, rather, “Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways” (Is. 59:7). “They were not just guilty of sins of omission but they were guilty of rebellion, willful rejection of God and his law. The lament in verses 9-11 records the first person plural confession of the persecuted minority who turn from their transgression and are saved.”⁶⁶

Neufeld believes the figure of the Divine Warrior is clearly celebrated in the war hymns of the Old Testament such as in Exodus 15:3, “The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name,” or Isaiah 51:9-10, “Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?” Neufeld summarizes the war hymns stating,

Present in most if not all of these texts (Ex. 15:3, Dt. 32 & 33, Jdg. 5, 2 Sa. 22:3 & 36, Ps. 18:2, 30 & 35, Ps. 68 & 77, Hab. 3:19, and Is. 51:4-6, and 9-11) is a mixture of general metaphors of strength in combat, attendant emotions attributed to Yahweh, occasional references to weapons such as sword or bow, and more often references to phenomena such as storm, flood, or plague. Having their origin within ancient near Eastern mythologies, in which many were once war deities in their own right, they function now as symbols of the comprehensiveness and the overwhelming vehemence of Yahweh’s warfare.⁶⁷

In connection to the confession and repentance of the minority, the LORD looks at the state of his people and announces, “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a

⁶⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁶ R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 56-66* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014) 171.

⁶⁷ Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 25.

distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns becomes prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene” (Is. 59:14-16a). Since there was no one to help, the LORD, the Divine Warrior, brought his wrath and salvation, “So his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him” (v. 16b).

Now, the Divine Warrior will take the battle to his enemies by gearing up for war in his armor and stepping onto the battlefield. “He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal is in a cloak. According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes” (v.17-18). Concerning the armor of the divine warrior, Neufeld explains,

Ancient armor, it should be remembered, served not only to protect but to impress and intimidate. The elements of Yahweh’s armor are already familiar from what has preceded in chapter 59 itself. Before they appear as armor they are encountered as personifications of Yahweh’s initiatives toward his covenant people, as Yahweh’s messengers or surrogates.⁶⁸

Taking that into account, Neufeld estimates that, “When *tsedekah* and *yeshua* are practiced, accompanied by whatever disruption and conflict warrants their appearance, Yahweh is active as the Divine Warrior.”⁶⁹ Paul’s encouragement to the Ephesians to “*Put on the full armor of God*” (Eph. 6:11a) is first a declaration, namely, that the Lord of Armies has displayed the initiatives of each piece of armor in the Christian’s life when he achieved victory for his people. Paul’s second encouragement is in the form of an exhortation. The Divine Warrior accompanies his troops into battle in order to fight the enemy with his troops. The Christian soldier enters the battle not in some regular soldier’s armor, but in the armor of the Divine Warrior. This is the reason for Paul’s instruction to the Ephesians. More importantly, it is the source of comfort the military contact pastor can utilize when addressing the spiritual struggles of the Christian soldier. It, along with other passages in Ephesians, reestablishes in the mind of the soldier the identity he has in Christ.

The Restoration of the Soldier’s Christian Identity

⁶⁸ Ibid., 29-30.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 37.

In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul continually reminds God's people of who they were before they were given their identity in Christ, and who they are now that they are in union with him. That identity held by the Ephesians is the same identity held by a Christian soldier. Paul brings out this comforting reality by using contrasting terms along with vivid imagery to describe the Christian soldier's rank in God's kingdom, along with employing metaphoric reminders of the weaponry the Christian soldier has been issued by God.

This process began with a radical transformation. Just as the civilian enters boot camp, is broken down, and remade into a soldier, so also each individual experiences a similar transformation. This transformation involves the destruction of his old identity and the reconstruction of his new identity in Christ. That old identity is one associated with the customs and ways of the wicked. Paul brings this out clearly in chapter 2 of Ephesians. "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved" (vv. 3-5). The soldier has been transformed. The Lord has brought the soldier to faith, and he has raised him from spiritual death to spiritual life. This is the key to the Christian soldier's identity; this is the place where he finds peace and rest, knowing that it is all about God's grace to him. The Lord made it clear to his new recruits, "You were once darkness, but now you are light" (5:8). The new soldier in Christ is no longer evil, doing wicked things all the time, but is good and righteous and holy. All this is according to the soldier's new status, but it is understood that the soldier's sinful nature still clings to him. Yet, the Lord has given the soldier a new self that is equipped to fight against the unholy three. But it will be a struggle.

The bond of brotherhood that the Christian soldier has goes beyond the armies of this world, for Paul says, "Remember that at one time you were separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (2:12, 13). That bond of brotherhood in Christ is a true familial bond building its foundation on the promise of Jesus Christ. It is more faithful than any military regulation or creed, because it's drilled in through the words of the apostles and prophets (2:20). The purpose for the soldier in Christ is to complete the mission that the Lord has assigned him in

his current vocation (2:10). As sons of God (1:5), the Lord inspires his troops to be imitators of their commanding officer (5:1), because in him they have a true role model that displays bravery, courage, goodness, righteousness and faithfulness. The Christian soldier has his identity made firm in Christ. God exhorts him, “Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:24).

Since the soldier’s identity in Christ has been made firm through Jesus’ blood along with redemption, life, salvation, and forgiveness from sin, the soldier receives a final word of comfort from Paul. He says, “finally be strong” (6:10). God is instructing the Christian soldier to be strong because though the war has been won and victory made certain, battles are still coming.

Many soldiers have learned from experience that after several months of deployment, when exhaustion sets in, it’s easy to let the mind waver and to loosen the standard of readiness. Yet no matter how hard the Christian soldier tries, he can never do enough PT to strengthen himself to resist the assaults of the enemy. However, that’s not where God wants him to seek his strength. Not at all. Rather, God invites the Christian soldier to be strengthened “*in the Lord*” (6:10). It’s in the Lord that the Christian soldier will find his strength because it’s not his own strength that empowers him, but the power and might of the Lord of Armies.

The power and might that the Christian soldier has is being united with Christ and through that union the soldier has been invited to put on “τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ” (6:11). That armor of God is not some old and rusty piece of equipment which he picked up from a military surplus store or Marine Exchange, but it’s God’s own armor (genitive of possession). Every time the Christian soldier “puts on the full armor of God” he is not only “putting on the new self,” as Clinton Arnold says in his commentary on Ephesians 6:11,⁷⁰ but they are essentially “putting on” God himself. God as the Divine Warrior is fighting on the soldier’s behalf. The Christian soldier needs the armor of God if he desires to withstand the onslaught of artillery fire from the overwhelming μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου (6:11). To this point F.F.Bruce comments,

The Christian soldier must not dream of entering on this spiritual warfare at his own charge or with his own equipment. Let him cry with David “It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of

⁷⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 443.

bronze. You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great” (Ps 18:32–35).⁷¹

Over and over again the apostle Paul uses the terminology, “So that you might be able to stand” (verse 11), or “You are prepared to stand” (verse 13), or “Stand firm” (verse 14). The Christian soldier might just get the idea that the only power, might, and strength that the armor of God gives him is the ability to stand there and take shot after shot to various parts of his body, with the result being that all the armor is doing is softening the blow or deflecting the damage. However, the armor of God is not just a defensive suit, it has offensive functions. Each piece of the armor has its defensive and offensive purpose so that the Christian soldier can make full use of the armor in his fight against the spiritual forces of the devil. The forces which the Christian soldier struggles against are not “αἷμα καὶ σάρκα (verse 12), blood and flesh,” but rather the evil spirits in the heavenly places (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). That includes all the lies, doubts, insecurities, anxieties, and temptations, such as drunkenness and sexual immorality, that the devil’s troops fire in the direction of the Christian soldier. The military culture can be a spiritual danger to the Christian soldier. It is the devil’s evil forces working through the military culture to bring harm and destruction to the identity of that soldier in Christ.

Again the apostle Paul encourages the Christian soldier, “On account of this, take up the complete armor of God” (verse 13). That evil day (verse 13) is not just one day, it’s not just that particular day of the week, but it is every day until the Lord Jesus returns. The Christian soldier should not be deceived, as every day is going to have its struggles and the armor of God is good and perfect for each and every day. However, the Christian soldier should just take those struggles and fight one day at a time.

With that in mind, the apostle Paul instructs the Christian soldier, for the third time, to “Stand firm” (verse 14). In other words, be ready because your enemy is coming. Put on that armor and get ready to engage. In order to do that, the soldier needs to put on “the belt of truth (περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ).” The Greek implies tying or wrapping a girdle or an apron around the waist and lower body. The type of girdle which was often used in military equipment was a broad leather band which was placed under the armor, and was meant to protect

⁷¹ F.F. Bruce, *the New International Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians and Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1972), 142.

the body and carry equipment. It was also used to distinguish between ranks.⁷² For the 21st-century Christian soldier, this type of equipment is the very uniform they wear every day. It is the camos or the overalls which serve as the basic uniform of the day. It is the piece of a soldier's armor that serves as the starting point for every other piece of equipment the soldier wears, so that he is squared away or having everything in order, ready and equipped to perform his mission. It doesn't matter if the soldier is wearing camo, khakis, dungarees or a wetsuit, this is what he girds around his waist and serves as his "belt of truth."

The "truth" which the soldier puts on his body is both knowing and appropriating his new identity in Christ within his cultural dynamic by speaking and living that truth of Jesus no matter if he is deployed or training for deployment. God not only makes it possible for believers to stand, but he expects them to do so by depending on his divine resources.⁷³ This truth is something that comes from outside the Christian soldier (objective truth). This girdle that is strapped around the Christian soldier's body in the form of his uniform is Christ himself, for Jesus said, "I am the way and **the truth** and the life" (Jn 14:6). It is this truth of Christ and the truth of the soldier's identity in Christ that the devil will use all of his schemes to try to tarnish. Yet it is the truth wrapped tight, around the soldier's body, in connection to all the other pieces of armor, which helps the Christian soldier resist the lie that the devil whispers in his ear.

After having placed the uniform of truth upon his body, the second piece of armor the soldier places on himself is the "breastplate of righteousness." If this righteousness was from within himself, the slanderous assaults of the devil would crush him, and the guilt from his sins would obliterate his identity and hope. The "breastplate of righteousness" is the piece of armor which the Divine Warrior put on as he addressed the wickedness and injustice around and among God's people. Through his breastplate the Divine Warrior brought forth righteousness, salvation, and justice on the people. Those same virtues are what the Christian soldier is draped in, both in identity and in purpose. Concerning this righteousness Arnold says,

The gift of righteousness they (the soldier) receive renders them free of all guilt on the day they will eventually stand before God at the end time judgment, but right now they live in the freedom of that already realized verdict (Rom. 5:1). They have been completely forgiven of all their sins on the basis of Christ's blood (Eph. 1:7), been

⁷² Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 704.

⁷³ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 450-452.

reconciled to God as friends (2:16), and enjoy your (*sic*) new status as sons and daughters (1:5). Righteousness for the Christian soldier is not just the forgiveness of sins, the freedom from guilt and the redemption from slavery to wickedness and rebellion, but it is full knowledge and appreciation of his or her new identity in relation to Christ's righteousness.⁷⁴

In theological terms the righteousness that the Christian soldier wears as his breastplate is *imputed* righteousness, meaning Christ's transferred righteousness (justification/sanctification in the broad sense).

In the 21st century, the piece of armor covering the heart of the soldier is not a garment of leather with a piece of metal covering, but a bulletproof vest. For the soldier, the "breastplate of righteousness" is the Kevlar vest that they wear over their thorax that protects their neck, shoulders, and groin. The Kevlar vest facilitates a physical and visible illustration of the spiritual righteousness that defends the soldier both on the battlefield and at home through the righteousness of Christ. Thus, the Kevlar vest serves as a positive trigger to combat the assaults of the devil in the soldier's environment. The one who has dressed the soldier in his "breastplate of righteousness" enables the soldier to live righteously among his brothers in the squad he serves.

This righteousness is not just a quality of Christ, but it is Christ himself. For Christ is our righteousness, according to the apostle Paul, "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness (ὅς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη), holiness and redemption" (1 Co. 1:30). The conditions which surround the life of the Christian soldier among the brothers of his squad will not always be righteous, and it will not be easy for the soldier to refrain from participating. However, just as the soldier puts on his Kevlar vest to protect himself from harm in the field, so also, the "Kevlar vest of righteousness" guards the soldier's identity in Christ, whether at home or abroad. When the soldier "puts on" his "Kevlar vest of righteousness" he is "putting on" the new man (Eph 4:24). The "Kevlar vest of righteousness" protects the soldier by guarding against the slanderous attacks of the devil and the extreme struggles between the sinful nature and the soldier's righteous identity in his Savior.

The third piece of equipment the soldier puts on is "feet bound with the readiness which comes from the gospel of peace." The soldier's feet are extremely important to the mission. The soldier's boots serve to protect his feet from environmental hazards, such as heavy objects which

⁷⁴ Arnold, 452.

might fall, or shrapnel, or other sharp material that might cause harm. Footwear was a necessary part of the Roman soldier's uniform and, as such, they are an essential part of the believer's armor.

As the soldier starts his day, no matter where he is, he is not to leave his tent or barracks without his boots. The soldier's government-issued military boots are connected to the wonderful imagery of "feet bound with the readiness which comes from the gospel of peace." It might seem awkward to speak of peace when gearing up for battle. Yet, remember the soldier's battle is not against "blood and flesh." It is spiritual. The readiness to march on is not so that the soldier proclaims peace amongst the evil spiritual forces of the world, but it's the peace of Christ that makes him ready to do battle against the evil forces of the heavenly realms. The peace that the soldier proclaims is to those lost soldiers in the enemy's army who are being used by those evil spirits.

As the Christian soldier ties his boots, either in preparation to stand watch or to partake in activities during rest and relaxation (R&R), he stands ready for the malicious attacks of the enemy. Those are the opportunities which the enemy will use to weaken the soldier's resolve so that the soldier will be easily defeated through doubt, shame and guilt. When returning from drills and the brothers in the squad decide to go to a bar to get drunk or visit a strip club to ease their stress, the boots that reside by the soldier's bunk can remind him that Jesus Christ is his peace (Ephesians 2:14). The peace that the soldier has in Christ is sufficient, but the devil still attempts to utilize waves of anxiety and temptation to pollute and destroy the peace the soldier has in connection to his identity in his Savior. The soldier's boots are a necessary piece of equipment in order to accomplish the mission, just as the gospel of peace is essential in order to stay connected to Christ, the soldier's source of peace.

The drills in which soldiers participate in during TDY are meant to prepare the battalion for every possible scenario that may happen in the field, but no amount of practice, rehearsing, or drills can prevent chaos and destruction from occurring. It is for this reason that the apostle Paul encourages the Christian soldier to "take up the shield of faith (*θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως*)." The ancient shield was an interesting piece of armor. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states,

The *thyreós* is the ancient four-cornered long shield. The long shield comes in various shapes, but the reference is to the rectangular Greek shield which is almost a portable

wall, which *covers the whole person* (my italics), and which poses the hard problem of reconciling strength and lightness. The Romans take over a later form of the long shield around 340 B.C. and retain it until the days of Constantine, who reverts to the round or oval form.⁷⁵

Before taking a look at what piece of equipment the 21st century soldier possesses that can serve as a positive trigger in their spiritual fight, it's necessary to discuss what Paul means by "faith." Some theologians have taken the genitive to be appositional (the shield which is faith). Other theologians hold that the genitive is used in an objective sense (i.e. what Christians believe). Yet there are other theologians who hold to the subjective meaning of faith (e.g. the act of believing). In order to understand what is meant, it is necessary to consider the purpose of the shield. Paul says the purpose of the shield is that the soldier "will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph 6:16). Therefore, if that is the stated purpose of the shield, one could say that both objective and subjective faith could fit. The question is not, what is right and what is wrong? The question is what is the best answer that fits the context. The best answer would be objective faith. The soldier who picks up "the shield of faith" has Christ as his defense against the flaming arrows of the evil one. The soldier has the knowledge, comfort and defense that his eternal well-being is not in himself but in the one who conquered death and rose from the grave. This is the shield which the soldier is to seek refuge in.

Livy, in his History of Rome, wrote how "the Carthaginians would light their arrows on fire. As the arrows were launched at the enemy the flame would be stoked as they flew through the air. When the arrows struck the Roman shields they would be lodged in the shields and the soldiers would panic, throw their shields down, and leave themselves defenseless against further attacks from their enemies."⁷⁶ Concerning the shield, Hoehner states, "Before battle the shields were immersed in water, soaking the leather cover and canvas beneath the water, which also aided in extinguishing the flaming missiles."⁷⁷ This would be disastrous for the Christian soldier if he picked up any other shield than the shield of faith, or if the Christian drops his shield. It would mean he is giving up the fight and giving up the faith.

⁷⁵ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 706.

⁷⁶ Benjamin Oliver Foster, "Titus Livius (Livy), The History of Rome," Titus Livius (Livy), *The History of Rome*, Book 21, chapter 8, accessed October 19, 2016, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Liv.21.8>.

⁷⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, *An Exegetical Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 846-848.

What is putting out the flaming arrows is Christ and his vicarious atonement. The shield which the Christian soldier holds up against the flaming arrows is Christ's work on the cross. It is Christ who prevents those arrows from piercing the spiritual life of the Christian soldier, potentially causing his spiritual and eternal death. The flaming arrows the devil fires are numerous. They could be the false teachings among the chaplaincy which encourage the soldier to seek solace in his duties or his mission. The arrows could be negative coping mechanisms that are part of the culture in the military, such as alcohol, drugs, gambling or sexual immorality. Either way, Christ is the soldier's refuge and shield. Christ is the soldier's defense and he puts out the flames and deflects the arrows.

Looking at the equipment of the 21st-century soldier it might not be easily seen as to what part of equipment could serve as a shield. There are certain MOSs which do carry shields, such as military police, in connection to riot gear. However, there are other pieces of equipment which could fit a positive image in connection to the "shield of faith." When asked about the typical equipment that a soldier is issued in the military, Col. Mustard stated, "A soldier is required to wear protective goggles or glasses in order to protect the eyes from shrapnel produced by an IED as well as hearing protection to guard the eardrums."⁷⁸ Essentially a soldier's goggles are used as a safety shield to protect the eyes just as hearing protection is used to guard the ears. Along with those pieces of equipment, others which can function as a shield are the armored vehicles the military uses, such as the armored Humvee, an M2 Bradley, an M1 Abrams, or a Stryker armored vehicle. No matter what piece of equipment is used in connection to the "shield of faith," the effect is still the same. No matter what arrows are fired or how many, nothing will pierce the "shield of faith" which stands on the work of Christ.

In this portion of Paul's exhortation, the verb changes from "put on" to "take up." Paul says, "Take up the helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17). The Greek word for helmet could be understood as "head covering."⁷⁹ However, in a military context it is understood to be helmet. Earlier cultures used leather head coverings with metal plates. Greeks wore bronze helmets, as did the Romans. The helmet featured a strap which would be placed under the soldier's chin in order to secure it to the soldier's head. The helmet would hang on the soldier and then be placed

⁷⁸ Mustard, James (Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army). Interviewed by Justin Lee Shrum. Interview date September 12, 2016.

⁷⁹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 706.

on his head before battle.⁸⁰ The “helmet of salvation” is a reference to Isaiah 59. Salvation is what the Lord provides for his people, namely, the deliverance from wickedness, unrighteousness, and sin. Paul uses the term “salvation” in Ephesians to express its connection to the believer’s identity as a forgiven child of God: “*For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith*” (2:5, 8). Thus Arnold says, “Putting on ‘salvation’ means to realize and appropriate one’s new identity in Christ, which gives believers power for deliverance from the supernatural enemies on the basis of their union with the resurrected and exalted Lord. The helmet of salvation also conveys assurance of future salvation because of this union with Christ, but this is here overshadowed by the present dimension of salvation.”⁸¹ Irwin Habeck agrees with Arnold and says, “Salvation refers to the salvation which Jesus has won for us. It rescues from the guilt and punishment of sin, with eternal glory as its outcome. If we hold to it, it will serve us as a helmet serves a soldier and ward off the assaults of the devil.”⁸²

The standard issue helmet for the soldier is the MICH TC-2000 and serves as a modern-day equivalent to the helmet discussed in Ephesians. It’s fairly obvious that the purpose of a helmet is to protect the head from damage. Whether it is rock, stone, or brick that is falling from buildings due to explosions, or whether shrapnel is flying in the direction of the soldier, the purpose remains the same. However, fear, doubt, insecurities and guilt prick the mind of the Christian soldier. Perhaps the devil causes the Christian soldier to question motives for a certain action that was performed while he was deployed in the past. Perhaps the guilt of making it back home, when others did not, weigh heavily on the mind of the Christian soldier as he sits in the living room with his family on leave. Maybe the Christian soldier questions if God really exists in light of all the evil around the world. The “helmet of salvation” connected to the MICH TC-2000 reminds the Christian soldier of God’s protection over him and his sure salvation through Christ. The soldier’s helmet can serve as more than just a reminder of the helmet of salvation which is part of the armor of the Divine Warrior, but it also serves as a reminder of the crown of thorns that pierced the head of the One who provided that salvation. Upon his brow, the soldier’s sins have been washed away, his insecurities have been removed, and his fears have been quieted with the simple phrase, “It is finished.”

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 459-460.

⁸² Irwin J. Habeck, *Ephesians* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2012), 133-134.

Finally, the apostle Paul brings into focus “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” μάχαιρα was originally a knife used in sacrifice, cooking or gardening. However it eventually became known as a “small sword,” or a dagger. The word is often associated with the swords of the guards as they came to arrest Jesus (Mt 26:47, 55). It can also be used figuratively, as it is in Rev. 6:4 in reference to the pale rider.⁸³ Paul announces how the metaphor of the sword is understood as, “The word of God.” The definite article (τοῦ) does not make sense if it is applied to the Spirit because then it would mean that the Holy Spirit is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God but he is not the word. Jesus is the Word made flesh so he is the Word of God, but in this context “the word of God” is referring to the Scriptures. In connection to the Scriptures, Arnold states,

Paul urges believers to know and make use of the Scriptures as a means of defense against every form of demonic attack. At the same time, this weapon represents an appeal to the church to make known the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, an action that amounts to a major form of aggression against the kingdom of evil. The Spirit has not only supplied the Scriptures to God’s people, but dynamically empowers the words for maximum defense of an offensive impact.⁸⁴

This passage, along with Hebrews 4:12, is the only reference to the Word of God as a sword. However, in Hebrews 4:12 it is understood as more of a “priest’s knife” than a sword. The offensive nature of the sword is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. The defensive aspect of the sword can be seen in Christ’s interaction with the devil as he is tempted. A connection can be seen between the “sword of the Spirit” and “the belt of truth.” The apron is what was around the soldier’s body on which other things were fastened, such as weapons. Typically a Roman soldier would have had a sword attached to his girdle and then it was drawn for combat. In this way the Word of God, which is the truth of God, serves as the soldier’s defense against any enemy attack.

When it comes to the 21st-century weapons that a soldier carries, there can be a variety, depending upon the specialty of the soldier. In general, however, many soldiers carry a Beretta M9 as their sidearm, and the rifle which they use is an M4. When a US soldier’s weapons are considered, it doesn’t appear that there is anything but an offensive purpose. Yet could the mere

⁸³ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 572-573.

⁸⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 461-463.

presence of the weapon act as a deterrent for attack? Either way, the greatest weapon the Christian soldier has is the Word of God. If the Christian soldier is an imitator of Christ (Eph 5:1), then the Word of God serves as a defensive tool to combat the onslaught of evil forces that surround the Christian soldier on a daily basis in the military. It is also the tool to proclaim the faith that the soldier holds, the salvation that has been achieved through Christ, the truthfulness which is at the core of the promise of the Savior, which in turn has made God's people righteous in his eyes and moves the soldier to preach peace to the nations.

The soldier is never to enter combat without his weapon. Likewise, the Christian soldier should always seek to take the Word of God with him in every situation. The soldier's rifle or sidearm constructs the image of the two purposes of the double-edged sword of the spirit. The Word creates and destroys. It brings freedom, but it also destroys the bonds of slavery. This is the visible and physical reminder for the soldier to wield the Word of God wherever he goes.

Conclusion

This paper is designed to provide information about how equipment that is worn and seen by military personnel can serve as imagery and positive triggers against temptation in the military. Serving as a Christian in the military is no easy task. Among the long hours, unexpected drills and/or deployments, and the separation from loved ones, the Christian soldier finds himself in a difficult spot. Take into account the lack of spiritual guidance on and around some military installations and it is easy to see the need for the armor of God in the daily life of the Christian soldier. However, in order to be used effectively, the military contact pastor would be well served to construct his own curriculum with the armor of God as its theme in order to meet the precise needs and challenges facing the military personnel he serves.

That being said, this is an aspect of military ministry which will constantly need to be developed. No matter what ideology the military drills into the minds of their soldiers, not every soldier is the same. They are all unique. The armor of God is meant to help facilitate the possibility of addressing these challenges in a pre-deployment setting, because the soldier can relate to the imagery used by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6.

Training and drills make up the majority of time spent in the military. It is during TDY, temporary duty yonder or a temporary deployment assignment, that some of the soldiers who were interviewed for this paper voiced their concern. During deployment a soldier is

overwhelmed with his or her environment so he has limited means and opportunity to find negative ways to alleviate stress, guilt or shame. Yet, after the soldier returns from TDY, means and opportunity to engage in sinful actions are readily accessible. The soldier goes from being busy and focused on the mission, to being overwhelmed by the assaults of the devil, the temptation of his squad-mates and his pursuit for relief from his stress. If the Christian soldier employs the training that his military contact pastor provides he will be better equipped to face the challenges that come his way.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

These are only my personal opinions and do not represent an official statement of my branch, service, or the Department of Defense.

This is a written summary of an audio interview.

Rank: Lt. Col.

Name: James Mustard

Branch of service: Army

MOS: Air Defense Artillery

Years of service: 22

1. Were you a Christian before your entry into the Armed Forces? If so, what denomination were you affiliated with?

Yes, Wisconsin Lutheran Synod.

2. Were you raised in a Christian household?

Yes.

3. What were your reasons for joining the military?

I wanted to protect my country from godless communists and to protect the right to preach the gospel.

4. Comment on the cultural differences between military and civilian life.

There is a brotherhood among the troops.

The military mindset is "mission first, soldiers always."

There is constant training, drills and exercises, and there is a lot of time spent away from family.

MOS does not affect struggles which soldiers can have.

The military is disciplined and regimented.

5. What are some of the fraternal culturalisms that exist in the military (i.e. if you don't participate you are viewed as not really part of the whole)?

Drinking is encouraged to strengthen bonds.

There is an overall respect for one another.

6. What are some of the stresses associated with military life in a pre-deployment environment?

Being away from family is one of the biggest for married people. Another one is not knowing where you are going or for how long. The fear that you might not make it back or your friends won't come back. Soldiers work long hours and must be ready to pick up and leave at a moment's notice.

7. What are some of the ways in which the soldier deals with stresses?

Drinking is one of the biggest. There is a high statistic of alcoholism associate with the military.

There is what is referred to as "huffing," this is where soldiers get high on fumes from paint.

There is, of course, sexual misconduct and I don't know if it exists anymore but when I was in the service gambling was a problem. It provided people with the idea of control over something.

8. What are ways in which the chain-of-command encourages troops to deal with stress?

Talk to someone. Go see a chaplain if you need to get things off your chest. We also provided information on things which need to get done before deployment.

9. What are some of the spiritual struggles that the soldier faces or may face in a pre-deployment situation?

Money is a problem. There is money sitting in an account and sometimes spouses spend it without notifying their spouse who is deployed. They also don't have any idea of how to set up a power of attorney.

There is always the pressure to get the job done because people's lives are depending on them.

There is the stress of being separated from your family, your friends, and your church.

There is the guilt of failure when the objectives are not met.

There is the temptation to neglect your worship life.

10. What is the greatest spiritual threat to the life of a Christian serving in the military, either in a pre-deployment scenario or while deployed?

The sinful nature is the greatest threat. It is easy to become complacent and negligent in attend to spiritual matters.

For the enlisted men there are more challenges than for the officers because of the higher standard for the officers.

11. Comment on the chaplaincy. What are positive/negative aspects of the chaplaincy program?

There is no WELS chaplain and the only chaplain that may come close to what you were raised with is the Missouri Synod chaplains and with them you don't know what you are going to get.

There is mutual respect for beliefs.

There are always doctrinal questions.

These are only my personal opinions and do not represent an official statement of my branch, service, or the Department of Defense.

Rank: CPT (P)

Name: Capt. Steve Rodgers

Branch of service: Armor, Army

MOS: 19A

Years of service: 10

1. Were you a Christian before your entry into the Armed Forces? If so, what denomination were you affiliated with?

Yes, I was a Christian. I was, and still am, a WELS Lutheran.

2. Were you raised in a Christian household?

Yes. My father was a WELS Lutheran Pastor.

3. What were your reasons for joining the military?

Initially I was a police officer. While looking to advance my career in law enforcement, I decided to join the military. It was going to be for three years and then I was going to return to law enforcement with a more robust resume. However, I found myself enjoying the military, making good money, being cared for with benefits, and so the natural thing was to stay in the Army until at least 20 years for a pension.

4. Comment on the cultural differences between military and civilian life.

There is a large cultural divide right now, perhaps now more than in the past. Many in the military know what civilians do and what their life is like. Either we held civilian jobs prior to the military or a relative is in a civilian job. Not many people understand what we do in the military, what a daily life is like, or what it is like to go to combat or even deploy for training or other missions.

The military typically has a much larger appreciation for foreign affairs and what is going on in the news. Personally, when I see something in the news, I see ten stories or more within one. Nothing is simple and many times the news is incorrect, has been fed incorrect information, or doesn't tell the whole story. If I ask the average citizen about ISIS, South China Sea, or Russia they don't really know or care. The most they care about is ISIS coming to attack them at a shopping mall – which is a very unrealistic concern, despite what they may believe from media.

Military also has its own language. Acronym soup and stories after stories that civilians just don't get. The same for spouses. A military spouse has an instant bond with another military spouse as they swap stories about a PCS where TDY pay didn't come soon enough through DFAS and so their husband had to submit a pay inquiry on ayou get the point. Spouses also

understand the challenges of their military spouse leaving every other year for 9-12 months. That is its own struggle, even in a non-combat environment. It places dramatic stress on relationships.

5. What are some of the fraternal culturalisms that exist in the military (i.e. if you don't participate you are viewed as not really part of the whole)?

I don't know if there is any culturalism across all of the military. Everyone has to do basic training in any branch of the service.

However, there are unofficial little nuance cultures that I observe in the Army.

Have you deployed? How many deployments did you do and for how long? Did you earn a Combat Action Badge or Combat Infantry Badge...in other words, did you actually get shot at and engage in combat? If yes, where were you deployed and where were you deployed since that will tell me how rough you had it.

Then there are even smaller cultures such as: Are you Ranger qualified? Are you Special Forces? Have you gone to Airborne School?

Within units, there is also pride and culture. If you are a Cavalry Soldier, have you done a Spur Ride? If you are Infantry, have you gotten an Expert Infantry Badge?

There are all types of these cultural things that exist. Some are bad and isolate new soldiers (i.e. deployments) where as some are healthy and promote excellence (Expert Infantry Badge, Ranger, etc).

No matter where you go through as an Army soldier though, the first impression is made off what you are wearing on your uniform. Did you deploy, did you get shot at, are you Ranger qualified? It is less than 1% that has all of that, but it is what many strive for or look up to – definitely in combat arms.

6. What are some of the stresses associated with military life in a pre-deployment environment?

Train up time and time in the field is intense. Very busy and not a lot of time with family, who you are also about to leave.

On a personal level, the wife (and sometimes kids) starts to pick fights and distance themselves. Based on conversations, it is a coping mechanism where they think it will be less emotional if they distant themselves earlier.

7. What are some of the ways in which the soldier deals with stresses?

Everyone handles it different. Certainly alcohol and tobacco products are a large part of the culture, although the Army is working very hard on discouraging it.

Some stress is simply suppressed; some is fixed by talking about it with peers that are in the same situation. There are also resources for soldiers to deal with stress, but they don't always use them. Personally, very intense workouts and busy days are my best stress relief. Put me to bed so tired that I don't have time or energy to be stressed.

8. What are ways in which the chain-of command encourages troops to deal with stress?

Some of the same things I already mentioned. Hard workouts, relationship counseling, marriage retreats, send them to the Chaplain or MFLC (Military Family Life Consultant). Chain of command does everything they can to steer them away from drugs, alcohol, etc.

9. What are some of the spiritual struggles that the soldier faces or may face in a pre-deployment situation?

I don't know that I had a personal spiritual struggle. I firmly believe my Savior knows the day he is calling me home, so it doesn't matter what bullets are flying, my time is chosen.

But there is the normal stress of updating all the wills and emergency information every time, as well as having all the same conversations with your spouse again about "what happens if I die?" After a couple of deployments of near death, the conversation gets a little more serious and emotional.

Without Christ...it would eventually tear my marriage apart.

10. What is the greatest spiritual threat to the life of a Christian serving in the military, either in a pre-deployment scenario or while deployed?

Again, personally it is during deployment where the greatest danger existed for me. There is a rage and anger I cannot begin to describe when you are in the middle of combat and being shot at. Boundaries start to disappear, logic comes and goes, and it takes everything you have to not operate on only passion. The more you get shot at, the calmer you become in bad situations, but the angrier you get that you are in the same place yet again.

You also start to feel invincible and more powerful than you are. You survived death multiple times and start to credit it to yourself, tactics, or teammates. You start to forget that credit is due to God.

Also, not sure who said there are no atheists in a foxhole, but trust me...plenty of them out there and death isn't going to change their mind. Only the Holy Spirit.

11. Comment on the chaplaincy. What are positive/negative aspects of the chaplaincy program?

This is a mixed bag and I am not sure what it will look like in the future. Be careful about only reading the Chaplain handbook the Army puts out. There are plenty of hidden regulations and culture that dictates how Chaplains will be allowed to act.

As a Christian leader, am I going to send a soldier with stress to see a Muslim Imam serving as a Chaplain or a Rabbi? Or do I just send them to the MFLC so I don't have to worry about religion coming into it...which kinda defeats the purpose of a chaplain.

Now with transgenders and homosexuals openly serving, how can you be a chaplain and serve an entire unit? Honestly, you can't...OR...you can until you are fired, which defeats the purpose since now you have a boss (other than a synod) that tells you what you can or can't say. There was a Chaplain in Ranger Regiment who was doing resiliency training with Rangers and told them how he used scripture to deal with stress. He got a letter of reprimand in his file...pretty much a career ender and clear message not to talk Scripture.

Depending on the political scene, I could envision Chaplains going away in the next 10 years, although no one has said that.

12. What spiritual advice would you give to teens interested in military service?

Unlike college where you have freedom and no money, the military gives you tons of freedom and lots of money. For the junior enlisted coming in, I think there is a large temptation with sex and alcohol, especially if they go to a country with legal prostitution.

Due to training and deployment schedules, it is also very difficult to stay active in the Word. We travelled an hour or more at our last three duty stations to get to a WELS Church. If we go to Germany next year, we will only see a pastor once a month.

Now, that is a WELS fellowship challenge since only LCMS has Chaplains and plenty of debate about where and when to worship. Plenty of chaplains available for those not worried about fellowship. But...who knows what you are going to hear in the message from the large variety of chaplains.

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/12/09/chaplain-punished-for-sharing-his-faith-in-suicide-prevention-class.html>

These are only my personal opinions and do not represent an official statement of my branch, service, or the Department of Defense.

Rank: SPC – E4

Branch of service: Army

Name: SPC Summers

MOS: 98G Voice Interceptor

Years of service: 1997-2002

1. Were you a Christian before your entry into the Armed Forces? If so, what denomination were you affiliated with?

No.

2. Were you raised in a Christian household?

No. Nominally Catholic.

3. What were your reasons for joining the military?

- 1) Get to see the world a bit
- 2) Needed some discipline
- 3) Money for college sounded like a good deal
- 4) Training in a foreign language

4. Comment on the cultural differences between military and civilian life.

Greater sense of oneness and mission in the military

In the civilian sector there is greater liberty given for self-expression

Uniformity in the civilian sector is often undervalued

Expectations in the military context were often stated explicitly, while the civilian sector relies more on implicit compliance

5. What are some of the fraternal culturalisms that exist in the military (i.e. if you don't participate you are viewed as not really part of the whole)?

I'm not sure what you are looking for here. An example please.

6. What are some of the stresses associated with military life in a pre-deployment environment?

There are always the unknowns: where will I be deployed? What will be the circumstances in that locale? Will I be adequately prepared for the task? What are the chances of not making it back? How much do I tell my family? Etc. Etc.

7. What are some of the ways in which the soldier deals with stresses?

Calling home
Playing spades, videogames, that sort of thing
Drinking and partying
Taking advantage of R&R when it comes your way

8. What are ways in which the chain-of command encourages troops to deal with stress?

Exercise
Leave of absence
In extreme cases, mental health evaluations could be given
Game rooms and general places for recreation were provided (i.e. coffee shops, pool rooms, gyms)

9. What are some of the spiritual struggles that the soldier faces or may face in a pre-deployment situation?

Not sure. Pre-deployment was never a big deal for me. I was a single man with not a great deal of attachments beyond immediate family. I would imagine pre-deployment for someone with a fiancée or spouse and/or family would be far more stressful. Deploying was part of the adventure for me.

10. What is the greatest spiritual threat to the life of a Christian serving in the military, either in a pre-deployment scenario or while deployed?

Interesting question...yet I feel the threats are typical of 20-30 year olds in general. Military life being high-paced and stressful can lead to using poor methods of coping. I especially have in mind alcohol abuse. Pornography was also very prevalent when deployed. These things can quickly trap you and should be avoided.

Yet...while I list some things to avoid above the biggest threat are the people you are deployed with. We become more like those people that surround us. If you surround yourself with people who are unbelievers and become more and more open to their ideas you slowly can drift away. It doesn't have to be a specific instance of sin, a specific moment where you chose to walk away, often it is a gradual drifting from God's Word.

I think the same sort of thing could be observed in someone who moves from a small Midwestern town to the big city/university. The environment and people change you in small incremental ways.

11. Comment on the chaplaincy. What are positive/negative aspects of the chaplaincy program?

Chaplaincy was offered for many people.
During my time in the army I never utilized these services but I know that many people felt they were well-served this way

12. What spiritual advice would you give to teens interested in military service?

Read Scripture

Pray

Show them where they request support through WELS.net and the Lutheran Military Support Group

Watch preaching through the internet: MLC, WLS, Time of Grace, or your home church's Internet feed

If you are uncertain about things don't be afraid to reach out to your old pastors

If you are in need of prayer don't be afraid to ask for help from your home church

See if there is a WELS church near your duty station

Be proactive and try to find WELS servicemen and women in your unit, can you get a big enough group so a pastor could perform a service?

These are only my personal opinions and do not represent an official statement of my branch, service, or the Department of Defense.

This is a written summary of an audio interview.

Rank: SGT.

Name: Sgt. Simmons

Branch of service: Marines

MOS: Military Police

Years of service: 4 (currently in reserves)

1. Were you a Christian before your entry into the Armed Forces? If so what denomination were you affiliated with?

WELS.

2. Were you raised in a Christian household?

No.

3. What were your reasons for joining the military?

Family military history

4. Comment on the cultural differences between military and civilian life.

National pride over entitlement.

There is a sense of duty.

5. What are some of the fraternal culturalisms that exist in the military (i.e. if you don't participate you are viewed as not really part of the whole)?

There is a brotherhood and an aspect of elitism.

There is the idea that you're word if you don't drink or go to the strip clubs. I was called "preacher-boy."

6. What are some of the stresses associated with military life in a pre-deployment environment?

There is the doubt concerning the mission (is this the right thing to do), concerning my abilities (can I get it done), concerning purpose, and God (how can he be out there with all this crap happening).

There is the anticipation for deployment.

There is the ideal to make a difference yet not being able to.

7. What are some of the ways in which the soldier deals with stresses?

Sarcasm and humor

Alcohol/drugs

Pre-marital sex, porn, all kinds of perversion

8. What are ways in which the chain-of-command encourages troops to deal with stress?

Drink or go work out

9. What are some of the spiritual struggles that the soldier faces or may face in a pre-deployment situation?

Shame and guilt were not something I suffered from but it never stopped him from trying.

10. What is the greatest spiritual threat to the life of a Christian serving in the military, either in a pre-deployment scenario or while deployed?

Means and opportunity

Secular and immoral environment

11. Comment on the chaplaincy. What are positive/negative aspects of the chaplaincy program?

They were more like cheerleaders and a face for positive exposure than a face for Christ.
They served more of a counseling role than a spiritual leader role.

12. What spiritual advice would you give to teens interested in military service?

Make the Bible your moral compass.

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This is a written summary of an audio interview.

Rank: Lance Corporal
Name: Luther Cronick
Branch of service: Marines
MOS: Military Police
Years of service: 4

1. Were you a Christian before your entry into the Armed Forces? If so what denomination were you affiliated with?

Yes. WELS.

2. Were you raised in a Christian household?

Yes.

3. What were your reasons for joining the military?

Army Father
Stick it to my dad
Escape bad elements

4. Comment on the cultural differences between military and civilian life.

Ideals not promoted
National pride
Brotherhood (there was a trust and dependence on the one next to you.)

5. What are some of the fraternal culturalisms that exist in the military (i.e. if you don't participate you are viewed as not really part of the whole)?

MPs were looked down on
There is a class system
There is the pressure to drink or you are "that guy"

6. What are some of the stresses associated with military life in a pre-deployment environment?

Looked down on because of my MOS
Long hours
I was away from everything familiar

7. What are some of the ways in which the soldier deals with stresses?

Alcohol (a lot!!!)

Forced to go to religious services that were not faithful to the Word of God because that is all that there was available

Sexual immorality like porn and strip clubs

8. What are ways in which the chain-of-command encourages troops to deal with stress?

None.

9. What are some of the spiritual struggles that the soldier faces or may face in a pre-deployment situation?

Lack of motivation to go to church

No connectivity to a church

Ignorance of WELS churches that might be near me

10. What is the greatest spiritual threat to the life of a Christian serving in the military, either in a pre-deployment scenario or while deployed?

Spiritual laziness

11. Comment on the chaplaincy. What are positive/negative aspects of the chaplaincy program?

There is a unionism of religion

They were nice and supportive

12. What spiritual advice would you give to teens interested in military service?

None.

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This is a written summary of an audio interview.

Rank: Petty Officer third class

Name: Jason Petty

Branch of service: Navy

MOS: CS

Years of service: 6

1. Were you a Christian before your entry into the Armed Forces? If so what denomination were you affiliated with?

No

2. Were you raised in a Christian household?

No, but I believed in a God because of the influence of my grandparents.

3. What were your reasons for joining the military?

Army grandfather on both sides

Because of 9/11

Escape bad elements

4. Comment on the cultural differences between military and civilian life.

National pride

Brotherhood/shipmates

Long hours and little sleep

Secluded from society

A firsthand look at the garbage of the world

A place of egos and elitism

5. What are some of the fraternal culturalisms that exist in the military (i.e. if you don't participate you are viewed as not really part of the whole)?

There is a class system/ "choose your rate, choose your fate"

There is the pressure to drink or you are "that guy"

If you are outspoken about your faith you are labeled a "Jesus freak" or a "Bible thumper"

A girl in every port is a legit stereotype

Hypocrisy of the upper chain of command

Little respect for officers in the Navy because they don't work but they take credit.

6. What are some of the stresses associated with military life in a pre-deployment environment?

Long hours
I was away from everything familiar
Isolation on the ship

7. What are some of the ways in which the soldier deals with stresses?

Alcohol (There is a reason sailors are known for frequenting bars)
Sexual immorality like porn and strip clubs and prostitutes
Some drugs

8. What are ways in which the chain-of-command encourages troops to deal with stress?

Go talk to chaps
Suck it up!

9. What are some of the spiritual struggles that the soldier faces or may face in a pre-deployment situation?

Lack of motivation to go to church
No connectivity to a church
Laziness
Idleness
Alcohol and sex are the content of the majority of conversations.
High levels of adultery and divorce
Girls are always trying to hook up with you because of the uniform

10. What is the greatest spiritual threat to the life of a Christian serving in the military, either in a pre-deployment scenario or while deployed?

Idleness

11. Comment on the chaplaincy. What are positive/negative aspects of the chaplaincy program?

More like counselors
Friendly

12. What spiritual advice would you give to teens interested in military service?

Study up on the branch of service you are interested in
Speak to veterans who have served
Don't believe everything the recruiter tells you
Talk with your pastor about how you can stay connected to the church
Pray