

THE SPIRITUAL FITNESS MANUAL

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THE SPIRITUAL FITNESS MANUAL

FOR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

The Meaning of Spiritual Fitness

By Chaplain (Major) Mark R. Johnston, United States Army, Editor

“BE RIGHT WITH GOD. BE RIGHT WITH
OTHERS. BE RIGHT WITH YOURSELF.”

COMMENTS MADE BY COLONEL TOBIN GREEN TO IRONHORSE
SOLDIERS IN IRAQ BEFORE GOING ON MISSION

This purpose of this Manual is to assist us with understanding Spiritual Fitness as “being right” with God, with others and with oneself.

“Being right” means that we are “who” we should be at any given moment in time, that we are true to our own values and convictions, and that we seek to positively grow and mature as members of our military community.

“Being right” indicates that we are comfortable and at peace within ourselves, that we are satisfied with our personal participation in the many relationships of life. This satisfaction includes having peace with God.

When we are “right with God” we are in harmony with our values, our faith and our beliefs. People who are right with God are happier and more satisfied with life than those who are out of step with God’s Spirit. Such “rightness” is maintained through the relationship we have with God, which is often reinforced through the spiritual disciplines which include prayer, meditation, worship, fellowship and Bible reading.

“Being right with others” is an extension of our rightness with God. It is the relationship we have with our neighbors, friends and families. When we are right with others we are concerned about their well-being and become available to walk alongside them in their own spiritual-life journey.

“Being right with ourselves” requires an appropriate balance for successful living. Balancing our activities such as work, play, friendship and service allows us to be better equipped to serve God and our Nation while pursuing our own personal goals.

This is the essence of what it means to be spiritually fit. A Warrior for our Nation and a Worshipper of God is a high calling requiring intense training and conviction.

Spiritually fit persons are leaders who make a positive difference in what they do. They have a defined quality of life that allows for service to God and Country. The spiritually fit Soldier, Sailor, Marine or Airman has the personal ability to worship and walk with God while honorably serving Nation, family and oneself.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This Spiritual Fitness Manual assumes the definition of Spiritual Fitness as “Being Right” with God, others and oneself. To communicate the essence of this definition we need the appropriate model that assists us with becoming and “being right.”

The model for communicating the ideas of Spiritual Fitness comes from the Bible’s use of the Armor of God found in the New Testament Book of Ephesians Chapter 6, verses 11-18:

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places...”

Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...” (Ephesians 6:11-18).

Within these verses of Scripture we are given a model for Spiritual Fitness. Through the use of the different pieces of the armor, we can approach Spiritual Fitness through a holistic program of instruction that addresses the heart, mind and soul of the person serving in a Military environment. Each piece of armor is presented with thoughtful insights to assist the military service member in maintaining a level of Spiritual Fitness that is both practical and possible. The individual pieces of armor reflect important principles for spiritual fitness that we can “put on” and “wear.” The armor is discussed from the point of view that if we “wear” the principles symbolized by each piece of the armor we will be spiritually strengthened.

Each chapter of the Manual begins with reference to a piece of armor considered necessary for spiritual fitness. There is a group of relevant words and concepts that opens these chapters and can provide expanded discussion regarding the meaning of Spiritual Fitness.

Outlines and devotionals are included in this Manual to engage the reader with perspectives that can inspire and instruct. These short Bible studies and stories can be shared and discussed as a means of spiritual encouragement and strengthening. There are supporting Scripture verses from the Bible that can also be studied and memorized along with each outline and devotional.

Relevant questions follow many of the outlines and devotionals and are intended to be used for group discussion or personal reflection. This Manual is also full of relevant quotes, important creeds and ideas that inspire and support our service to God and country. It is the hope, prayer and intent of this Manual to engage every serving man and woman at the spiritual, emotional and intellectual levels consistent with being right with God, others and themselves. Spiritual Fitness makes for successful living and service!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What does it mean to be spiritually fit?
- What does spiritual fitness look like?
- Who can be spiritually fit?



A SOLDIER'S SPIRITUAL FITNESS

BY CHAPLAIN (MAJOR GENERAL) DOUGLAS L. CARVER,
CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS, UNITED STATES ARMY

"The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Defense or the Army."

A Soldier's experience is demanding, particularly during wartime. One of the greatest Soldiers in our history, General of the Army George C. Marshall, once said, "The Soldier's heart, the Soldier's spirit, the Soldier's soul are everything. Unless the Soldier's soul sustains him he cannot be relied upon and will fail..." In other words, spiritual fitness is critical. As Saint Paul wrote, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." On the other hand, when you make sure you exercise spiritually as you do physically, then you will be prepared and will know how to draw upon God's strength to overcome challenges and weaknesses. Early each morning Soldiers wake up and go to physical fitness training to maintain their physical strength. Just like we have physical workouts, we must engage in spiritual workouts to ensure the resilience, endurance and strength of our souls. Here are some points to remember as you develop your spiritual fitness.

ASSESS YOUR SOUL WITH GOD: A physical fitness test reveals your true physical condition.

1 John Chapter 1, verse 8 teaches us that the greatest form of self-deception is to believe we never act in ways God doesn't approve of (such actions are often called sins), but the next verse reminds us that when we ask for forgiveness God is "faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness". By honestly lifting up our true condition to God, we build our spiritual fitness and maintain fellowship with the true Source of spiritual power, God.

AFFIRM YOUR SPIRITUAL POSTURE: Many of our physical exercises build strength by practicing the right posture of the body. In short, good posture equals good performance. 2 Corinthians Chapter 5, verse 21 teaches us that we are to be in a posture of righteousness. We stand before God in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Knowing we are perfectly postured before the Father liberates and empowers our spiritual fitness to serve Him.

HARD RUNS REQUIRE PRAYER: The harder you run the deeper you breathe. Because prayer is like oxygen to the believer's soul, God calls on us in 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5, verse 17 to pray all the time. Prayer is how we call upon God's power to meet our needs and the needs of others. See James

Chapter 5, verse 13, Philippians Chapter 4, verse 6, and Mark Chapter 11, verse 24. Prayer builds the spiritual fitness of the soul, just as running builds the aerobic capacity of the body.

THIS BOOK YOU'RE HOLDING IS SPIRITUAL PROTEIN: Deuteronomy Chapter 8, verse 3 says "It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Our souls cannot maintain their strength without the spiritual nutrients they receive from the Bible. As protein builds physical muscles, God's Word will build spiritual fitness. Scripture often refers to the life of faith as a "race" and God's Word contains directional resources for the believer to both build our character and guide our path. See Psalm 119, verse 105.

THERE'S GREAT PROTEIN IN THE PROMISES: Health and fitness stores are filled with all sorts of protein and vitamin supplements that are supposedly beneficial to an athlete's stamina and performance. The Holy Bible contains powerful spiritual protein, the promises of God, which are essential for our lives. God told the great warrior Joshua that He would "never leave nor forsake him" and He commanded Joshua to "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go!" At the end of his life, Joshua looked back at the journey he'd traveled in the strength of the Lord and declared "not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled." See Joshua Chapter 21, verse 45. When confident in His promises you will cross the finish line, you'll stay inspired to accelerate towards it. Running in the confidence of God's promises builds your spiritual fitness.

Remembering these points will help you build spiritual fitness that endures while you're accomplishing all that God and the military call you to do. As a Soldier, you will face many tough challenges for your body and soul. Spiritual fitness will support success and excellence in both domains. As you exercise spiritually, you will develop strength of body, mind and soul. You will also develop strong morals and ideals, your sense of meaning, and your ability to positively contribute to the lives of others. Stay spiritually fit and remain bold in the service of God and others. A fit Soldier is a spiritually fit Soldier who is destined to finish strong in life's journey!

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GOD AND TRUTH?
 “God is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy Chapter 32, verse 4).
 “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John Chapter 4, verse 24).



THE BELT OF TRUTH WEARING THE ARMOR OF GOD

To wear the Armor of God is to choose to live a certain way of life. By taking each piece of the Armor and applying it to our daily routines, we become spiritually strong.

We begin by intentionally dressing ourselves with TRUTH. “Putting on the belt of truth” requires us to be people who speak truth, who live in truth and who reflect truth in all we do.

Truth is the key to becoming a real person! Truth is the principle that successfully ties and fastens the principles of life together. Wear truth like a belt and hang your questions, problems and concerns upon it. Through truth, every concern is exposed in the light of God’s goodness and hope.

The power of truth is that it frees those who receive it from the bondage of deceptions, falsehoods and lies. Truth allows people opportunity to realize, actualize and visualize their own potential alongside God’s intended will for living life. Truth is the means by which our world view is sustained and workable.

People who live in something other than a worldview established in truth are not really living. They exist as slaves to those limitations that only truth can break.

As a Warrior for our Nation and a Worshipper of God, the Spiritually Fit service member is best equipped to overcome difficult obstacles when committed to TRUTH. These are people who wear the Belt of Truth and suspend every value from its broad band. They live out the truth they wear in their behaviors and actions. There is no contradiction between what they claim to believe as guiding values and the way they live their lives.

Such people are incredible leaders who challenge injustice by their very presence. They dismantle the power structures of evil through their words and deeds. They reinforce hope, faith and love as they live out those cherished Values that distinguish them and make a place for their leadership!

CONCEPTS:

Honesty
 Conviction
 Values
 Power
 World-view
 Freedom

“To argue from mercy to sin is the devil’s logic.”—JAMES JANEWAY

Scriptures to Study:

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John Chapter 8, verse 32).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Why is truth so hard to define?
- Can you think of an example where you were afraid to speak the truth?
- Have you ever been lied to?
- Can you describe how you felt after finding out about the lie?



Sometimes “wearing truth” is hard to do. Great leaders choose to take off the false masks and be genuine, regardless of the cost. Such truthfulness, honesty and genuineness are signs of being spiritually fit!

“FROM THE WITNESS OF OTHERS”

He lived a double life.

During the day he seemed to be an upstanding Christian, but at night, his gambling and drinking took precedence over his life. Then, being challenged to a contest memorizing Scripture, he accepted the challenge to win the contest!

But the witness of Scripture began to work in his mind and heart, and soon, Dawson Trotman gave both his days and nights to the service of the Lord! Founding the Navigators in the 1930's, he impacted the world with a witness to “know Christ and make Him known,” the Navigator's guiding motto!

In 1956, while hosting their annual summer conference at Schroon Lake in upper New York State, Trotman saw a young woman fall from a speed boat and swam to her aid. Holding her up until others could reach her, he fell silently below the surface to his death, even though he had managed to keep the woman afloat.

Time Magazine's obituary of this great servant of God included his photo with the single quote; “Always holding someone up.”

Because he held others up before the Throne of Grace, testimony abounds in our time!

The testimony to truth now guides the Navigator ministry throughout the entire world!

From the witness of others, we can trace the ministry of God's love for all the world to see.

The world is drowning all around us! Let's rescue others with the message of God's love!

Your witness can change the world!

Scriptures to Study:

“For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth”
(Psalm 33, verse 4).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Have you ever been tempted to live a “double life”?
- If so, how did you resolve this dilemma?
- What does Jesus saying “the truth shall set you free” mean to you?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS?
 “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever” (Isaiah Chapter 32, verse 17).
 “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’ ” (Romans Chapter 10, verses 10,11).



THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WEARING THE ARMOR OF GOD

The “breastplate of righteousness” is the iron defense we wear. This “breastplate of righteousness” is made from our cherished beliefs and values. When we wear our values, we live what we believe.

Rightness always displaces wrongness. Right-standing forever towers above guilt. Righteousness points our hearts Godward!

There is something wonderful about having a clean conscience and a pure heart! Those who experience both are somehow advantaged to live a better, happier and more satisfying life. They do not carry the heaviness of a conscience weighed down with guilt, regret and shame. People who are burdened with a bad conscience have a very difficult time enjoying any quality of life.

The Breastplate of Righteousness is a piece of Armor that allows us to live an unburdened life free from guilt and shame. We wear this Breastplate to protect our hearts from the arrows of accusation and condemnation. We do not surrender the protective covering of our cherished values or expose our hearts and minds to the poison-tipped spears of evil compromise.

When we patrol a battlefield that has the enemy potential for causing us wounds, we make sure that our protective gear is correctly worn. Similarly, when we wear our values the right way, we protect ourselves from any emotional wounding that can be caused by a compromise of those values. By having a clear conscience and a pure heart we may encounter the most difficult circumstances and be able to walk away knowing that we have been “right” within ourselves while performing our sacred duties.

War is never without moral compromise, but our cherished values will assist us with surviving the worst that war brings, the wounding of the heart and mind. Whereas the body can recover from horrific wounds, the slightest violation of a clean conscience or a pure heart is much more difficult. Let us guard our hearts through wearing our values, our codes of ethics and our sacred beliefs the right way!

CONCEPTS:

Purity
 Conscience
 Right-standing
 Values
 Protection

“Nothing is more contrary to a heavenly hope than an earthly heart.”
 —WILLIAM GURNALL

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24, verses 4, 5).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What value means the most to you? Why is it important?
- Describe an experience where you saw someone violate an important value?



God can reach us in any circumstance, any prison, any mood...will we take his hand?
The spiritually fit person begins the journey of a spiritual life by holding to the hand of God!

SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND MILITARY VALUES “ABOVE ALL”

BY CHAPLAIN (MAJOR GENERAL) CECIL RICHARDSON,
CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

1. Above all, I will be an Airman of integrity.
Scripture: “Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4, verse 23 NLT).
2. I will fly high spiritually, physically, intellectually and emotionally while depending on God’s grace.
Scripture: “But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint”. (Isaiah Chapter 40, verse 31).
3. God’s embrace endures the hardships of combat, deployments, temporary family separations, and it drives out fear.
Scripture: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans Chapter 8, verses 38, 39).
4. God’s unconditional love knows no limits.
Scripture: “Your loving kindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies” (Psalm 36, verse 5, KJV).
5. With patience and understanding, I will honor and care for my wingman.
Scripture: “Do for others what you would like them to do for you” (Matthew Chapter 7, verse 12, NLT).
6. I will make every effort of thought and expression; regardless of the surrounding environment, to encourage my team and myself.
Scripture: “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength” (Proverbs 17, verse 22, NLT).
7. From the desire of being praised, preferred above others, approved and esteemed more than others, deliver me, Lord Jesus.
Scripture: “So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you” (I Peter Chapter 5, verses 6, 7, NLT).

Commitment:

Above All, I will be an airman of integrity. I will fly high spiritually and endure all hardships. I will be cheerful and in doing so, encourage others. I will be patient and understanding with all people. I will seek to walk humbly with my God. I accept God’s unconditional love.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What is integrity?
- How does living an ethical life contribute to serving on the battlefield?
- Is God’s love something you must earn?

ARMY VALUES: L.D.R.S.H.I.P.

LOYALTY: Bear true faith and allegiance to the United States Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers.

DUTY: Fulfill your obligations.

RESPECT: Treat people as they should be treated.

SELFLESS SERVICE: Put the welfare of the Nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own.

HONOR: Live up to Army values.

INTEGRITY: Do what's right, legally and morally.

PERSONAL COURAGE: Face fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral).

NAVY VALUES

HONOR: "I will bear true faith and allegiance..."

COURAGE: "I will support and defend..."

COMMITMENT: "I will obey the orders..."

AIR FORCE VALUES:

Integrity First

Service before self

Excellence in all we do...

“RELIGION IS FOR THOSE WHO DON’T WANT TO GO TO HELL. SPIRITUALITY IS FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH IT.” —ANONYMOUS

Obedience to legitimate authority sometimes requires selfless service. Such obedience and service reflect spiritual fitness!

“OBLIGED BY OATH”

There’s a true story of a Prussian soldier who was asked why he was standing guard in a particular place. “I don’t know,” he replied, “I’m just following orders.” This question was passed up the chain until it reached the King. “Why do we post a sentry at that particular spot?” he was asked. Not knowing, the King summoned

his wise men and asked them the question. The answer came back that one hundred years before, the Queen, Catherine the Great, had planted a rosebush and had ordered a sentry placed there to protect it!

The rosebush had been dead for eighty years, but the sentry still stood guard!

Fortunately, military intelligence has evolved a bit!

Whereas we're not automatons as uniformed service members, we are obliged by oath to serve our nation by obeying and following orders. This is essential for good order and discipline.

A Commanding General of Second Marine Division was once asked, "Sir, who are our enemies?" He replied, "Marines don't have enemies. We obey orders!"

Obedience to legitimate authority is kin to faith in God.

Paul instructs us to obey proper authority because this honors God, our Ultimate Authority. Obedience to properly appointed authority opens

Heaven's door for supernatural intervention and the extension of God's Kingdom in this world.

This was demonstrated by a Roman Centurion who requested that Jesus heal his sick friend. Jesus offered to travel to the Centurion's home, but the soldier said, "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, 'Go' and he goes; and to another, 'Come' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this' and he does it."

Amazed at the Centurion's understanding of the authority and power of God's word, Jesus said, "I haven't found such great faith even in Israel!" We're informed that the sick man was healed that very hour!

Healing and peace in this world will come when we all place ourselves under the authority of God's word.

Let's start by honoring and obeying those appointed over us.

Obey legitimate authority!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it. When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Matthew Chapter 8, verses 9-10).

"Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work" (Titus Chapter 3, verse 1).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Is it ever right to disobey someone in authority?
- Under what circumstances could such disobedience rightly occur?



“ALL HUMAN LIFE”

Here's the dilemma: You have a prisoner you know has killed fellow Americans. He may have information about a plot to kill hundreds, perhaps thousands more. But he refuses to cooperate.

Do you resort to torture?

More than just an ethical puzzle, uniformed personnel who are committed to defending freedom and protecting innocent lives face this real world problem. But in the clouded mist of war, there are few issues that are just black or white.

When it was learned that American soldiers subjected captured Iraqi insurgents to physical humiliation and psychological torture, it shocked our nation and disappointed the free world!

The irony that this was occurring at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, the centerpiece of the former Iraqi dictator's empire of fear, points to the universal reality of the evil resident in all humanity.

Mark Kimmitt, then deputy director of coalition operations in Iraq, noted, “If we can't hold ourselves up as an example of how to treat people with dignity and respect...we can't ask that other nations do that to our soldiers as well.” He adds, “So what would I tell the people of Iraq? This is wrong. This is reprehensible. But this is not representative of the 150,000 soldiers that are over here.” He says, “I'd say the same thing to the American people... Don't judge your army based on the actions of a few.”

The New Testament addresses the military profession alongside other social institutions. John the Baptist instructed soldiers to “not intimidate or falsely accuse” as a guide to honoring their commitments to God and society. Scripture provides the basis for values that assist with “the management of violence” as the military profession is sometimes called, and Americans expect those sacred values to be enforced through chaplains who are commissioned as non-combatants.

While all human life is precious in God's sight, it's easy to forget this important truth in the midst of combat.

As we pray for our nation and military, let's pray for those who must make difficult decisions and let's look to the Scripture as a guide for values.

God's Word establishes our values!

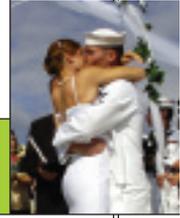
Scriptures to Study:

Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?”
So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely,
and be content with your wages” (Luke Chapter 3, verse 14).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Is it ever right to take the life of another person, even though they are “enemies”?
- What is the difference between killing and murdering?
- What does the Bible mean when it says in the Ten Commandments, “Thou Shalt Not Murder”?

Spiritual Fitness is evidenced through a renewed way of thinking.
The Word of God transforms the minds of men!



SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND MARRIAGE

BY REVEREND DREW AND ELENA WILLIAMS, TRINITY CHURCH, GREENWICH, CT

- 1** Good marriages don't just happen and no marriage is indestructible. You both have to build a marriage—be proactive.
“Two are better than one, in that their cooperative efforts yield this advantage: if one of them falls, the other will help his partner up—woe to him who is alone when he falls and has no one to help him up” (Ecclesiastes Chapter 4, verses 9-10).
“Moreover, an attacker may defeat someone who is alone, but two can resist him; and a three-stranded cord is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes Chapter 4, verse 12).
- 2** Keep romance alive—plan to spend quality time together
“I belong to my love, and he belongs to me” (Song of Solomon Chapter 6, verse 3).
- 3** To forgive is not an option.
“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians Chapter 3, verse 13).
- 4** Don't bear grudges.
“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians Chapter 13, verses 4, 5).
- 5** Be kind to your parents and in-laws but your spouse must always comes before them.
“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Ephesians Chapter 5, verse 31).
- 6** When there are differences to be settled, don't go to bed without first making peace.
“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians Chapter 4, verse 26).
- 7** Understand and learn to cherish each other's differences. Ask questions about the other's activities, concerns, interests, worries, hopes and plans.
“Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other” (Psalm 85, verse 10).
- 8** Get good at talking about how you feel. Write down three or four things that have happened to you over the course of your day—and write down what you feel about them. Take this list to dinner with you and your spouse and use it as a conversation guide.
- 9** Seek first to understand—then to be understood.
“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James Chapter 1, verse 19).

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians Chapter 5, verses 25-27).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PEACE?

“Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy”
Proverbs 12, verse 20).

“There is A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace”
(Ecclesiastes Chapter 3, verse 8).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew
Chapter 5, verse 9.)



SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND LEADERSHIP

COLONEL DAVID ABRAMOWITZ, FORSCOM INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Ten Commandments of Spiritual Leadership

1. Acknowledge that there is a God and we are accountable to Him
2. Leadership is first and foremost a responsibility to truth
3. Leadership seeks the light over the darkness, the hard right over the easy wrong, and is ethical in every way
4. Leadership never displaces the basic needs of those that follow, and is self-sacrificing when necessary
5. Leadership promotes the good
6. Leadership is compassionate and fair
7. Leadership is not self-seeking or vain
8. Leadership recognizes achievement
9. Leadership builds teamwork
10. Leadership strives for peace

“Military power wins battles, but spiritual power wins wars.”
—GENERAL GEORGE CATLETT MARSHAL

ARMY NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS CREED

No one is more professional than I.

I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of soldiers. As a Noncommissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "The Backbone of the Army". I am proud of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the Military Service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my soldiers. I will strive to remain tactically and technically proficient. I am aware of my role as a Noncommissioned Officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!

NAVY NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS CREED

I am a Petty Officer in the United States Navy, the strongest Navy in the world. I have the distinct privilege of being a leader of the finest Sailors anywhere. As such, I owe my Sailors leadership that they can depend on, trust, and follow. I will neither fear nor shun responsibility and I am always responsible for my actions. I am always fair and impartial when dealing with my Sailors; remembering not to accept full credit for "A Job Well Done" without proper recognition of my Sailors first. I am loyal to my subordinates, peers, and those officers appointed over me. I cannot favor either; my integrity must be beyond reproach. I will fully support all Navy Regulations and Articles of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I have the duty to correct and report all violations of these regulations that govern my Navy. I instill Esprit de Corps throughout the Petty Officer grades in the Navy; bearing allegiance to each other. I owe all of the above not to just myself, but to the United States, to my Navy, and to the Sailors who work for me.

AIR FORCE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS CREED

I am a Senior Noncommissioned Officer in the United States Air Force. I hold allegiance to my country, devotion to duty, and personal integrity above all. I wear my rank of authority with dignity, I promote the highest standards of conduct, appearance, and performance by setting the example. I seek no favors because of my rank. I am devoted to the concept of service rather than personal gain. I uphold the traditions of senior noncommissioned officers who precede me. I manage resources under my control with astute efficiency, and lead the way with the highest level of competence. I always strive to merit the respect of my fellow senior noncommissioned officers and of all with whom I come in contact.

...shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace...

THE SANDALS OF PEACE

“It is not the glorious battlements, the painted windows, the crouching gargoyles that support a building, but the stones that lie unseen in or upon the earth. It is often those who are despised and trampled on that bear up the weight of a whole nation.” —JOHN OWEN

The sandals of peace are the means for serving God and others while carrying out the mission of life. What we stand upon as our life mission and calling will determine how we walk through life. If we walk with a calling that is beneath us, that does not fit our temperament, then we may never realize our true potential. But if we are correctly, or “rightly” fitted to the calling we each, individually have, then our walk will occur naturally.

Sometimes we walk within our calling and don’t realize that we have worn holes into our sandals. Our feet become dusty and bruised by the many paths we have traveled. Our sandals don’t seem capable of carrying us up the next hill, let alone the daunting mountains of military service! We sometimes feel that we have given as much as we can, and we become exhausted and worn out. It is then that we need help from someone to wash and bandage our feet. Such people who come and assist us are the messengers of God!

Sometimes these messengers will help us to see our need to stop and rest, and simply loosen our sandals for a short while. This can allow us insight into how we wear and ‘walk out’ our calling to serve, while refreshing our commitment to perform our mission.

Preparation for any journey requires some consideration of the route we will travel and the rest-stops we must take. Wearing the shoes of peace may require that we walk a hard path. But with God’s Spirit, and the help of God’s people, we will never walk alone!

CONCEPTS:

Mission
Calling
Vocation
World-view
Spiritual Walk
Spiritual Rest

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet, for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you” (John Chapter 13, verses 12-15).

“Spiritual rest maketh no man idle, spiritual walking maketh no man weary.” —NATHANIEL HARDY

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What is the calling or mission you have in life?
- How would you help someone else discover their mission in life?
- What do you think happens to a person who denies their sense of calling?
- Can a person prepare for their calling or life mission?
- If so, how does such preparation happen?
- Can military service be a calling?



HOPE FOR DEPLOYERS

SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND DEPLOYMENT

BY CHAPLAIN (BRIGADIER GENERAL) DAVID H. CYR,
DEPUTY CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

HOPE BEFORE A DEPLOYMENT

When we receive notice that we are going to be deployed, a number of things run through our minds. We may begin to be anxious, especially if we know we are going into harm's way. If we are young and single, we may think about separation from friends or significant others. And if we are married, we think about being separated from our spouse and children. We may even be concerned about being well-prepared. To keep it real, we may think about our own mortality. Perhaps the best thing we can do at this point is to slow down, take a few deep breaths, whisper a prayer, get with close friends and family and go before the Lord together. He cares about you and your loved ones.

Scripture: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Romans Chapter 15, verse 13).

HOPE DURING A DEPLOYMENT

Now that you find yourself in a deployed location, you need to trust in your training and preparation, your leadership, and your comrades, especially in a combat zone. But most importantly, trust in the Lord and His providence. Know that the will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.

Scripture: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3, verses 5-6).

HOPE AFTER A DEPLOYMENT

Every re-deployment has its unique set of challenges. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges is having to readjust to friends, significant other, spouse, family and unit. However, relationship challenges can be overcome using the right approach and often the right resources. Don't forget to take advantage of single or marriage and family reintegration retreats which are helpful in restoring healthy relationships. Know that God cares deeply for you and those you love and will bless your efforts to rekindle that love.

Scripture: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (First Corinthians Chapter 13, verse 13).

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

No matter what you face on your life's journey, God is with you. We may not know what the future holds, but we can know and trust the promises of the One who holds the future. And the future is as bright as the promises of God.

Scripture: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah Chapter 29, verse 11).

Commitment:

I will trust in the Lord! I will seek His face and direction each moment of each day, because I know He loves and cares for me.

“I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its stupidity.” —DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, 34th President of the United States (1953-1961)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Why is hope so important for people to have?
- What is the hardest issue with deploying?
- How can our calling change through the difficult circumstances of military service?

“A man may be theologically knowing and spiritually ignorant.”
—STEPHEN CHARNOCK

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT FAITH?

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”
(Hebrews Chapter 11, verse 1).

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”
(Romans Chapter 10, verse 17).



THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Spiritually fit people know how to shield themselves from the arrows of moral compromise. Sometimes our faith in the values we cherish are tested, but they will remain as a shield of protection if we trust in them.

The life-boundaries we set form the protecting shield to our character and reputation...

We all have boundaries that define who we are. Those boundaries may be life-lessons we learned while growing up, or principles that we value and believe to be guiding truths to successful living.

Boundaries have the effect of being a shield from those things that might otherwise trespass our personhood. Boundaries can be temporary, changing conditions that determine who we are at a given point in time. However, there are many boundaries that we each possess that we will never change because we believe them to be a part of who we are as human beings.

Such life-long boundaries can serve to protect us, and in some cases, such boundaries can also limit us. By responsibly extending ourselves beyond our comfort zones we can stretch and grow spiritually. God often takes us beyond our own self-imposed boundaries in order to introduce us to such growth.

Whenever growth begins there is a sense of vulnerability that also occurs. This is because we are faced with uncertainty and, in some cases, fear. This is where faith in the goodness and love of God is important.

When our shield of faith is used to protect us from harmful intrusions and trespasses, we remain safe as long as we stand behind that shield. But when the Lord takes us through experiences that are challenging and maturing, we rely upon the protection of God's faithfulness.

Let's carry the shield of faith as military members into every circumstance. In so doing, we will experience safety and growth in every area of life!

CONCEPTS:

Boundaries
Protection
Values
Character
Trespassing
Identity

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (Psalm 32, verse 8).

“Faith, without trouble or fighting, is a suspicious faith; for true faith is a fighting, wrestling faith.” —RALPH ERSKINE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are some of your boundaries?
- Can any of these boundaries be changed?
- How does faith help you to define your “shield” for protection?

“WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!”

REAR ADMIRAL ROBERT F. BURT,
NAVY CHAPLAIN CORPS CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS



Is there anything too hard for God? Spiritually fit people believe that with God, all things are possible!

THE BIG PICTURE

I was asked a few years back what my favorite verse in the Bible was... I explained that Scriptures were often seasonal and my favorite was based on the events of the day. If I was fighting Temptation—First Corinthians Chapter 10, verse 13; Fear—Second Timothy Chapter 1, verse 7; Questioning the Presence of God—Joshua Chapter 1, verses 8-9; Needing Inner Peace—John Chapter 14, verse 27. I could go on but the guy I was talking to didn't want the seasonal verses, he wanted to know my very favorite verse in the Bible. Finally I quoted the words of Jesus found in Matthew Chapter 19, verse 26, "...with God all things are possible." Note that it doesn't say some things, most or almost all things, it says "all things" are possible!

That would include: healing, a great family, promotion, eternal life, forgiveness, restoration of a relationship (with God and man), wisdom and discernment, and on and on the list goes. This is why we can go through life and circumstances with the utmost faith, confidence and optimism that things will work out when we put them into God's hands!

THE MIRROR

I then said I had a second favorite verse that was right on the heels of the first...Philippians Chapter 4, verse 13, "I can do all things through him (Christ) who gives me strength." While the Matthew verse is the "Big Picture", the Philippians verse is me looking in the mirror at myself. "I can do all things..."—again, not some things, most or almost all things, but I can do "all things" through Christ! This verse became very special as I would fight personal battles with weaknesses, addictions or habits. When I faced personal challenges in physical, financial, professional, relational or emotional arenas, I was reminded that the Word of God said "I could do all things through Christ" and I would!

THE JOURNEY

As I prepare to retire after 36 years of Naval service and 46 years of serving the Lord, I look back on my journey and I see the living proof of my third favorite verse. Romans Chapter 8, verse 28 says; "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Believe me when I say that there have been times when I questioned how any good could come from a situation I would find myself in. But somewhere down the road, I could always look back and see how the hand of God was upon my life even during the most difficult times, and God was, in fact, working for my good, not just in some, most or almost all things, but in "all things" he is constantly working for my good.

When we get discouraged or even distressed, it's always a good time to remind ourselves that somehow, in some way, by some angle that only God can work, the end result will ultimately reveal that the plan of God for me, and for you, was always in action.

THE CONCLUSION

With God, all things are possible—No exceptions!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Can you describe any personal experience that might be considered a miracle in your life?
- Is there anything too hard for God?
- Can you relate a story from the Bible that demonstrates a miracle from God?



A spiritually fit person draws living water from the eternal well of God's Presence...

SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND SINGLENES

BARBARA K. SHERER, CHAPLAIN, UNITED STATES ARMY

Loneliness is a battle for every single person. Coming home to an empty house at the end of the day can become overwhelming for many. Always remember, you are never alone!

When you open yourself to the Presence of God, you will find God in the most unsuspecting and unusual places.

Scripture: "Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice" (First Kings Chapter 19, verses 11-12).

You must be comfortable with who you are, who God created you to be. Don't try to be someone you are not, or try to make yourself in someone else's image. You are created in the image of God.

Scripture: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis Chapter 1, verse 27).

Remember that you do not have to do everything on your own. Accept help from others. It is more of a blessing for them than for you. Establish Battle Buddies. It was through the faith of his friends that the paralytic was able to be healed.

Scripture: Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you" (Luke Chapter 5, verses 17-20).

Reach out to help others who may feel alone, afraid, and you will be blessed in return.

Scripture: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matthew Chapter 25, verses 37-40).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What is the difference between 'being alone' and 'being lonely'?
- Is singleness a calling for some people?
- How can it be an advantage for serving God?

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

"If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me..." (Psalm 139, verses 8-11).

Courage is a brick in the foundation of character. The spiritually fit person is concerned about building good character!



“A COURAGE THAT ANSWERS”

David spent many years watching over his father's flocks in the mountainous terrains surrounding Bethlehem. It was in that rough, but beautiful schoolhouse of nature that he learned responsibility. And it was there that he was tested in the anxious moments of life and death, protecting his sheep from the claw of the bear and the fang of the lion!

Responsibility, when rightly accepted, demands and builds courage!

That courage is often required when there's no one around to notice.

We can imagine David performing many unreported acts of courage to protect his flock.

Sometimes obscurity becomes the proving grounds for an effective witness that will, one day, manifest to the world!

But while we may be invisible to the world, our God, the Chief Shepherd, sees us! Because God watches over us, we can trust in His guidance and protection!

This realization must have filled the heart of David with worship regarding the God of Israel, his Protector! How many hours did David sing of God's love and deliverance to the sheep grazing

under his vigilant watch? There's little doubt that his voice soothed their fears!

Jesus said that sheep know and trust in their shepherd's voice. They won't follow a stranger!

There's a difference between the shepherd who loves his flock, and the hireling who simply works for monetary gain. The shepherd will know and defend his flock, sometimes with his own life. The hireling remains distant and will abandon his charge with exact calculation.

When Israel's first King, Saul, departed from the Way of God, he couldn't lead God's people with the spiritual courage and integrity demanded by his office.

The Lord searched Israel and found the shepherd boy who wrestled with wild beasts while defending his lambs, to become the new king of Israel!

Like David, we're also called to display a courage that answers the roar of that prowling lion who seeks to devour souls! And with our courage will come our song of praise for the Great Shepherd, Who delivers all who trust in Him!

Be courageous with your responsibilities!

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23).

The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it.
—HENRI J. M. NOUWEN



Money itself is never the measure of a person's character. It is the use of money that reflects character.

SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND MONEY MANAGEMENT "FINANCIAL FITNESS"

BY DR. JOHN M. TEMPLETON, JR., PRESIDENT,
THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

For those who have ears to hear, let them then hear" (Matthew Chapter 11, verse 15).

"The life of a nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful and virtuous." —Frederick Douglass

"Beware of little expenses. A small leak will sink a great ship." —Benjamin Franklin

"Teach economy. That is one of the first and highest virtues. It begins with saving money."
—Abraham Lincoln

"...the prosperity of the Nation really must depend on the thrift of the people... the sunshine of prosperity can always be depended upon when the people are thrifty." —S.W. Strauss

"In the end—no person and no nation can prosper who tries to 'get something for nothing'." —Anonymous

"Without thrift, there can be little or no generosity."
—J.M. Templeton, Jr.

"Through good times and tough times, entrepreneur-type people will seek new frontiers to explore and to enhance. They will gladly accept and challenge, because through risk and challenge, we grow both in worldly wisdom and spiritual strength."
—Sir John Templeton

"Freedom fosters the kind of constructive competition that makes progress possible. When the creativity, ingenuity and competitive efforts of individuals are set free, the result can be progress and prosperity beyond anything ever before imagined." —Sir John Templeton

"Your gratitude creates a love in your heart for that something or person that makes you want to share that blessing with others." —John M. Templeton, Jr.

"That what you have is actually held in stewardship for someone else or being (God)" —J.M. Templeton, Jr.

Be careful not to make money and possessions the most important things in your life. They will control you and severely disappoint you.

"Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke Chapter 12, verse 15).

Be honest in your dealings with money. Don't cheat on your taxes. Don't cheat others out of money and stay out of debt; it can ruin you.

Jesus said, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke Chapter 16, verse 10).

Work hard and start saving while you are young. It is amazing how money can accumulate over a long period of time.

"The desires of the diligent are fully satisfied" (Proverbs 13, verse 4).

"Diligent hands bring wealth" (Proverbs 10, verse 4).

"He who gathers money little by little makes it grow" (Proverbs 13, verse 11).

Be giving with your money and your possessions to the poor, to the needy and to the less fortunate. God is the Almighty Giver and he will bless you and prosper you for it.

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine" (Proverbs 3, verses 9-10).

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians Chapter 9, verse 7).

Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke Chapter 6, verse 38).

"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor" (Proverbs 22, verse 9).

Jesus said, "When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret" (Matthew Chapter 6, verses 3-4).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How important is it to have a spiritual understanding of money and other resources? Why?
- Can a person be spiritual and poor at the same time?
- What is spiritual poverty?
- Is it always right to give money to those that need it? Why or why not?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT VISION?
“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29, verse 18).



THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The way we think will make a difference in the way we live!

When we wear the Helmet of Salvation we are doing two things of importance. First, we are professing a belief or a world-view that gives us an understanding of who we are in relationship to God and others. This vision for life becomes a filter for our understanding of the world around us. The spiritually fit person wears a helmet that is designed with a sense of selfless service, duty, respect and commitment.

The second principle of every helmet is to protect our heads or minds. We are what we think. If we allow destructive imagery or messages into our minds, we can become negative people. Instead of a bright outlook on life, negative thinking presents a dark vision. People sometimes experience terrible events in combat. Because of this fact, they can become depressed and suicidal. Sometimes medical intervention is necessary to assist a person who is in a dark place where there seems to be no hope for light. There is no shame in receiving the needed help of counselors and medical assistance to overcome such darkness. The scars of war are not always the visible wounds of combat.

Dressing the emotional and mental wounds that military servicemen experience in combat might include following a well designed program that addresses Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from a holistic perspective. Sometimes prayer and Scripture reading can greatly assist us in attaining the necessary balance required for healthy thinking and feeling. Time is always a factor as well as patience in dealing with the traumas of war.

When we place the helmet of salvation onto our heads, we are not only suggesting that there is a God who loves us, who cares for us and who will intervene into each of our lives when we invite such intervention, but we are also saying that we have a vision of hope and life that, if worn properly, will protect us from those destructive images that often attempt to force their way into our minds and thinking.

Let's put on the helmet of salvation with a confession of God's love for each of us. Let's not unnecessarily expose ourselves to those dark images that only serve to bring compromising thoughts and negativity. Let's read the Bible and pray to the One who can heal us. In so doing, we can better serve as warriors for our Nation and worshippers of our God!

CONCEPTS:

Vision
Protection
World-view
Mental health
Positive Attitude

“It is an unfortunate fact that we can secure peace only by preparing for war.” —JOHN F. KENNEDY, 35th President of the United States (1961-1963)

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians Chapter 4, verse 8).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How should a Bible Study be conducted?
- What is a good way to read the Bible?



SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE “YOU ARE POWERFUL IN GOD!”

BY RICHARD GLICKSTEIN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL BIBLE ASSOCIATION

A positive mental attitude is a key to being right with God, being right with your war buddies and right with yourself.

1. You are what you think... so think positively!

Scripture: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23, verse 7).

2. Having a positive mental attitude is a daily battle. Victory is achieved one day at a time!

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew Chapter 6, verse 34).

3. Love is always positive in its outlook, keep loving. Scripture: Love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (I Corinthians Chapter 13, verse 7).

4. God loves you and he will be with you in your greatest hours of need. Choose to believe it.

Scripture: “Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you” (Deuteronomy Chapter 23, verse 5). “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you” (Isaiah Chapter 43, verse 2).

5. A positive mental attitude of praise will give you inner strength.

Scripture: “Then he said to them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah Chapter 8, verse 10).

6. Find something to laugh about in your circumstances each day; it is healing to you.

Scripture: “A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 5, verse 13).

7. A positive mental outlook about God and His Word will produce His peace in you.

Scripture: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians Chapter 4, verses 8, 9).

8. When all hope seems to be lost and destruction seems logically imminent, “Keep moving!” God will make a way.

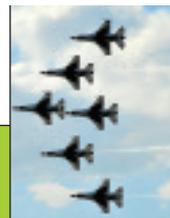
Scripture: “So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon. And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?’ For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” And the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward” (Exodus Chapter 14, verses 9-15).

9. You are powerful in God! Lay hold of that in your mind and practice this truth in your life!

Scripture: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians Chapter 4, verse 13).

“If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace, but God can create peace in trouble.” —THOMAS WATSON

The human eye is a gateway into the mind and soul...



“THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH”

The serpent's deception, recorded in Genesis Chapter three, included the promise that the eyes of our first parents “would be opened”, and like God, they would “know good and evil!”

How ironic that we now live in a world where, as Paul says, the truth is often exchanged for lies, and evil is often called good while good is called evil! Spiritual blindness exists because the first humans embraced the lie as though it were truth!

The importance of spiritual vision is found in every major religion. Many Hindu believers paint a “third eye” on their foreheads to signify their life-long devotional search for enlightenment. They believe that if one can but see another who is enlightened with divine truth, they also become enlightened.

The “eye” is the means for discovering light while recognizing darkness. Christians sing about finally “seeing the light” when salvation occurs. Darkness is the enemy of both physical and spiritual vision, and “light” is the conquering power over darkness, as the Apostle John says.

The value we place on “seeing” is never so appreciated as when we enter a darkened room

unable to see, or perhaps, when we permanently lose our sight.

This happened to Betty Krone of Fifty Lakes, Minnesota. Because of complications with diabetes, she went blind. She said losing her vision was the worst thing she could ever lose, because she couldn't see her grandchildren. She remembers holding one of her grandsons when he was a few days old, kissing him, but not being able to see him.

But after a series of surgical eye treatments she could see again! She regained her vision!

The 69-year-old grandmother held her youngest grandson, Zachary, and for the first time she saw the toddler's face!

“It's a miracle!” she said.

Seeing for the very first time, especially when it is through the eyes of faith, is also a miracle!

Because of God's love for you and me, we are given an opportunity to regain our vision, and with the saints, sing,

“I once was blind, but now I see!”

Turn your eyes upon the Lord!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; “but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis Chapter 3, verses 1-5).

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John Chapter 1, verses 4, 5).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What is vision?
- Where does a vision for life come from?



Behind every great cloud of darkness, there is still a greater light to be found.
When despair overshadows you, turn your face towards the God of Hope!

SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide is never the right answer. But when people have experienced prolonged depression, illness, hurt and despair, the temptation to end all of it through suicide seems to be an option!

The importance of suicide prevention in our current climate of persistent conflict, deployment and hard duty cannot be over-stressed. The military has many programs and people available to help in the darkest of times. These are caring individuals who will listen and walk with you should you be struggling with thoughts of harming yourself. Your chaplain, chain-of-command, battle buddy and friends are there for you. So is God!

The answer to suicidal thinking is in knowing that you are not alone and that you are loved. God stands with His arms open to you. His touch can heal your deepest wounds. Call out to Him and await His salvation. Suicide can solve nothing because YOU are someone valued by others!

A SONG OF HOPE IN A TIME OF DESPAIR

O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You.

Let my prayer come before You; Incline Your ear to my cry.

For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave.

I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength,

Adrift among the dead, Like the slain who lie in the grave, Whom You remember no more, And who are cut off from Your hand.

You have laid me in the lowest pit, In darkness, in the depths.

Your wrath lies heavy upon me, And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah

You have put away my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut up, and I cannot get out;

My eye wastes away because of affliction. LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You.

Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah

Shall Your loving-kindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?

Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

But to You I have cried out, O LORD, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.

LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?

I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught.

Your fierce wrath has gone over me; Your terrors have cut me off.

They came around me all day long like water; They engulfed me altogether.

Loved one and friend You have put far from me, And my acquaintances into darkness.

—Psalm 88

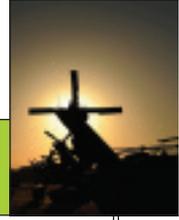
SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews Chapter 13, verse 5).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How do you think you would react to a battle buddy who was suicidal?
- What would you do?
- In your opinion, what is the best remedy for depression?

God can reach us in any circumstance, any prison, any mood... will we take his hand?
The spiritually fit person begins the journey of a spiritual life by holding to the hand of God!



“THE WHY AND THE HOW”

He had just enough time to hide the important manuscript in the lining of his coat as the Nazis broke into his apartment and arrested him!

At the infamous death camp called Auschwitz, psychiatrist Victor Frankl seemed to lose everything. Disconnected from family and friends, dispossessed of all worldly possessions, he questioned whether or not his life had become completely void of meaning, especially when he was stripped of all his clothing, including his coat. With that coat, the important research written over a period of years disappeared forever.

Sometimes we are severely challenged by forces outside our control. We may feel trespassed upon, assaulted, imprisoned and even stripped of our identity. Our sense of purpose is minimized or disappears.

The great preacher, Charles Spurgeon had a plaque hanging in his bedroom with Isaiah 48:10 inscribed on it: “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” It’s in the furnace that God reveals the mysteries of His choice and love for each of us. It’s by the fire that gold and silver are purified from the dross.

Victor Frankl was made to wear recycled clothing handed to him by the prison guards. He soon discovered a piece of paper in one of the coat pockets. It was a single page torn out of a Hebrew prayer book, containing the most important prayer of Israel, the Shema:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one God. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might!

This inspired him with the determination to overcome the awful challenges of that camp. Years later he would write, “There is nothing in the world that can so effectively help one to survive as the knowledge that there’s a meaning in one’s life. He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.”

Take time out today to examine the “why” of your life, it will help with the “how!”

Be full of His purpose!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy Chapter 6, verses 4-5).

“How soon are we broken on the soft pillow of ease! Adam in paradise was overcome, when Job on the dunghill was a conqueror.”
—THOMAS WATSON

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How important is forgiveness to spirituality?
- Is there anything that God will not forgive?



To be forgiven is to be set free by another... to forgive is to set ourselves free...

“WHERE HEALING BEGINS”

She shared a small, one-room house with her daughter in a poor village. Her job as a maid bought little more than food and clothing, and her 15-year-old was old enough to get a job and help out. But like so many young people, she had other ideas. She longed for the excitement of the city—a thought that horrified her mother. Her mom knew what a desperate woman might do to make a living in a big city.

Then the morning came when her daughter was gone!

There was no indication where she would eventually travel, except to a strange world where her very survival would be tested. Without hesitation, this mother quickly went to a drugstore and spent all she could on passport-sized photos of herself. Then she boarded a bus for the long ride into the city.

At every bar, hotel, and nightclub she taped her picture on a bathroom mirror, bulletin board or phone booth. Before long, her money ran out, and this mother returned home, heartbroken and exhausted.

A few weeks later the young 15-year old descended the stairs of a hotel, no longer feeling like a young woman. Tired, broken and fearful, she longed to trade these countless hotel rooms for her warm bed back home.

Then she saw a familiar face!

Taped to the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother! Her eyes welled when she turned the picture over. Written on the back was a note that said, "Whatever you've done, whatever you've become, it doesn't matter. Please come home."

The broken life can be restored when we know the meaning of forgiveness, acceptance and love. It often begins when we recognize that Someone has been searching for us. With the gentleness of a mother, the Holy Spirit is calling each of us home. The picture of God is posted in every conceivable way through countless expressions of grace and love.

Like the prodigal son, this daughter found her way home to her mother's open arms and open heart.

Regardless what you've done or what you've become, it doesn't matter. God invites all of us to come home and be restored as His daughter or son. This is where healing begins!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How important is forgiveness to spirituality?
- Is there anything that God will not forgive?

Only through the fires of affliction can the gold be separated from the dross...



“WINE, OIL AND FRAGRANCE”

The story of Job is famous throughout the world. A righteous man, he loses everything on what looks like a wager between God and the devil. Compounding the tragedy of personal loss, his wife and friends add to his suffering as they reason with him and even encourage him to “curse God and die!”

The question is, “Why does a righteous God permit those who follow Him, obey Him and even serve Him to suffer?”

The fact that suffering is universal, affecting all of us in this world of “toil and sin” should not deter us from an answer. Yet, as Job discovered, who is it that can reason with God? What argument do we put forth in the courtroom of heaven? Who can justify the ways of flesh and blood to the Creator of all life?

Suffering often earmarks the life of faith. The Apostle Paul said, “If we’re afflicted, it’s for your consolation and salvation” and he speaks about the “fellowship of suffering” he has with Christ, who is the Wounded Healer. Suffering is something no one should want, but it is something we can utilize in comforting others who suffer.

Suffering can promote creative solutions to problems and be a catalyst for success.

In Cradles of Eminence, 300 successful persons were studied to discover what made them successful. The findings indicated that most suffered hardships in life such as poverty, and about 25% suffered from physical handicaps to include blindness, paralysis and deafness. The study concluded that these people compensated for their weaknesses in one area by excelling in other areas.

Someone has pointed out that it is the pressed grape that brings forth the wine, the squeezed olive that births the oil and the crushed flower that breathes out the fragrance. There can be no real joy without knowledge of real sorrow.

When we suffer, let’s look for those hidden gifts that can enrich our lives, and the lives of others. Then, let us look to the Lord for our healing!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips (Job Chapter 2, verse 9).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Why do some people seem to suffer more than others?
- Why does God allow suffering?



God can reach us in any circumstance, any prison, any mood... will we take his hand?
The spiritually fit person begins the journey of a spiritual life by holding to the hand of God!

“AT THE POINT OF A BROKEN HEART”

Many who have endured the terror of some evil ask, “Where was God?” and every problem seems to confirm their suspicion that God is either non-existent or uncaring!

Someone once noted that “If you live in a graveyard too long you stop crying when someone dies.”

In his book *The Stranger*, Albert Camus tells of a fatalistic atheist who lived life without caring about anyone or anything. His heart was hardened to all that was decent and right. Just before he was to be executed, the chaplain enquires, “Don’t you believe in God?”

“No” the man replies.

“How do you know God doesn’t exist?” the chaplain asks.

The condemned man answers, “Whether he exists, I don’t know. I do know that I don’t care either way.”

Suffering interpreted through the vain philosophies of this fallen world often ends with only emptiness and meaninglessness for life, hardening the heart against all that is good and of God! Dwelling in the graveyards of such world views deadens the soul.

Faith, the pilgrimage of the heart, doesn’t always equate to effortless and painless existence. While no one should desire to suffer, the heart in pilgrimage will suffer. God’s prophets suffered. Paul was beheaded and Peter was crucified upside down. And we do well to remember that in heaven, all are healed and tears are wiped away by God.

Scripture claims that we’re at war in this world with the very forces of evil. As a spiritual people we need to be conscious of the suffering our faith in God might invite. Preventing the hardening of the heart requires an honest relationship with God. And that relationship may occur at the point of a broken heart, when things have gotten really bad, and we finally abandon the seductive shadows of this world and enter the living light of the new world to come.

Let’s interpret our lives from Heaven’s perspective, not the world’s philosophies, and in so doing, allow the pilgrimage of our hearts to occur in the faithful hands of God!

Your walk with God is a pilgrimage of the heart!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And
though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though
its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with
its swelling” (Psalm 46, verses 1-3).

“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun
shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst
of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains
of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”
(Revelation Chapter 7, verses 16-17).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Can suffering cause people to lose their faith?
- How are people able to benefit from suffering?

A LETTER FOR HEALING AND HOPE CONCERNING PTSD

Dear Warrior,

Thank you...for your sacrifice on behalf of your fellow man, your nation, and your God. You are truly the “exoderm”—the outer skin—of our country. You protect the internal organs; you insure the freedoms and way of life which make us America. At best, your life in the military is a significant challenge: hardship, separation and selfless service around the world. As a warrior for our nation, you often get bruised, cut... you bleed... and yes, many of your comrades in arms pay the ultimate sacrifice. Your family and loved ones also sacrifice greatly. To each of you I say, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” To each of you a grateful nation extends its utmost respect and appreciation.

The reality of war is that everyone gets wounded. Some wounds heal rapidly, but some last for a lifetime. Some wounds can be seen. Some wounds are invisible... inside the heart, soul and spirit of the Warrior. These unseen wounds are often the most difficult to heal—they must heal from the inside out. Our national institutions are working hard to help wounded warriors from past battlefields of WWII, Korea, Vietnam; and wounded warriors from current conflicts in the Persian Gulf and around the world in the ongoing Global War on Terror.

In particular, the Armed Forces and the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as numerous civilian organizations, are working feverishly to help with healing the wounds of war. The reality, however, is that the wounds of heart, soul and spirit have a spiritual component—an incredibly relevant faith component—that is not being adequately addressed. Despite the valiant efforts of many organizations and the commitment of billions of dollars to address these issues, there remains a serious gap—the faith gap.

The following principles come from the Combat Trauma Healing Manual which offers spiritual solutions for your struggles with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). By helping you construct an environment that will give God optimal access to your wounded soul and by combining the latest insights of the medical and psychiatric communities with the timeless principles of God’s Word, the manual outlines a step-by-step program that will help Combat Trauma sufferers. These principles include;

- A) Understand your trauma—spiritually, psychologically and physiologically
- B) Adopt therapeutic spiritual disciplines to bring you closer to God
- C) Process your loss and grief
- D) Experience the freeing influence of giving and receiving forgiveness
- E) Rebuild your identity based on what God says about you
- F) Strengthen yourself spiritually against future attacks
- G) Connect with those who will support you in many ways
- H) Define plans to fully reintegrate into society as a strengthened man or woman of God

These principles are extensively engaged within the Combat Trauma Healing Manual.

Finally, I want to encourage you to “go for it.” There is HOPE. There is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a path to higher ground far above the valley in which you may now feel trapped. God challenged the great warrior Joshua:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua Chapter 1, verse 9).

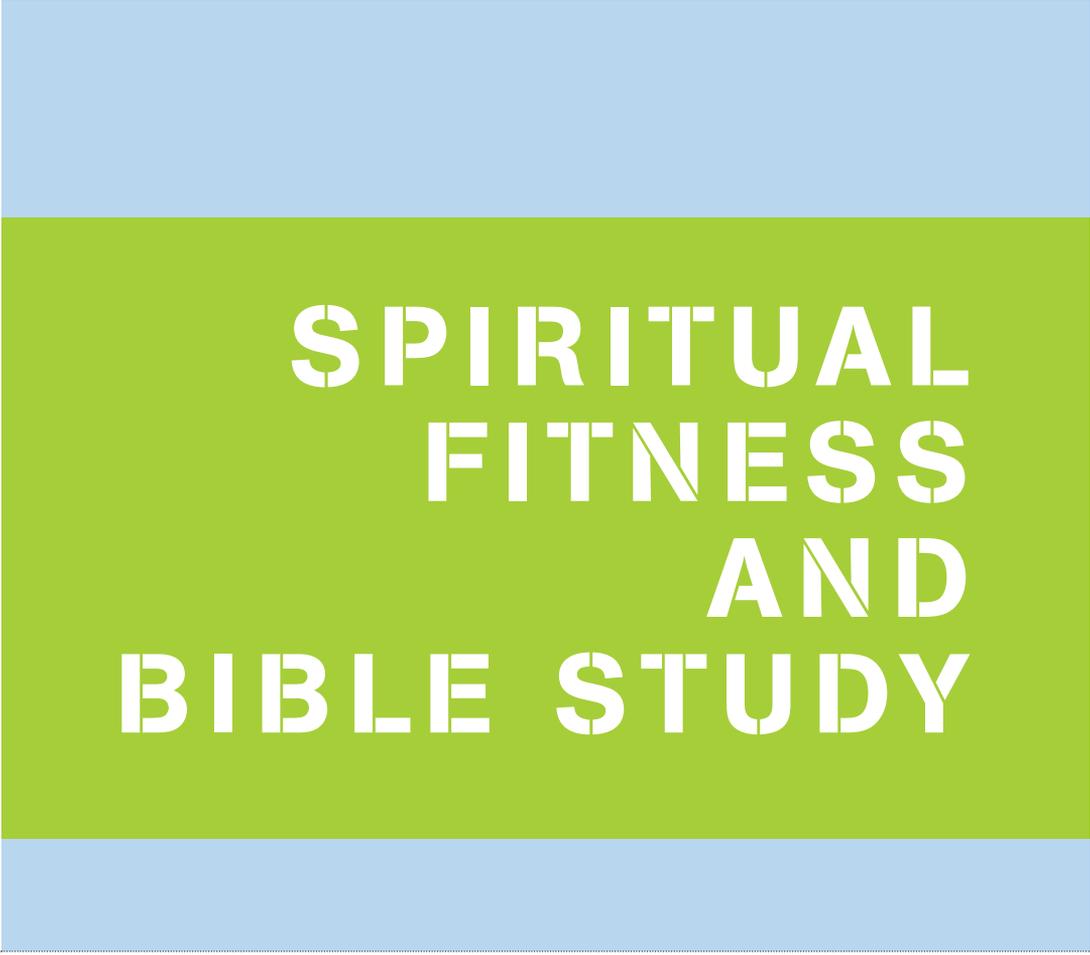
May you also be strong and courageous in the knowledge that God goes with you; committed to your full restoration as a Warrior, a person, and a child of God.

With my great respect for your service,

Robert F. Dees
Major General, U.S. Army, Retired
Executive Director, Military Ministry

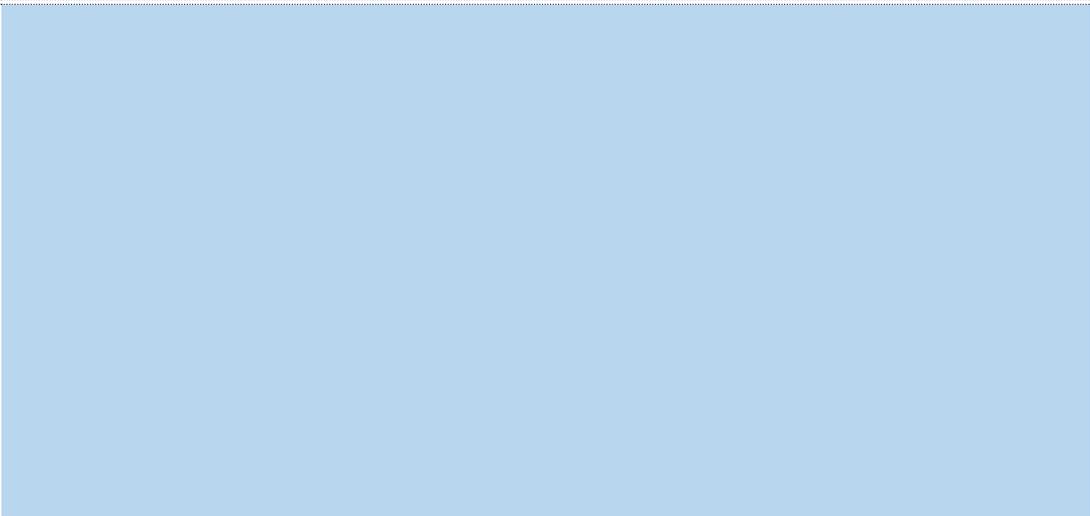
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What could you do to help someone suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?
- What are some of the symptoms of PTSD?



SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND BIBLE STUDY

The Bible is sometimes called the “Sword of the Spirit” because it has the power to touch our hearts at the very deepest levels.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BIBLE STUDY?

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (Second Timothy Chapter 2, verse 15).

The Word of God is sometimes called the “Sword of the Spirit” because it is a weapon that we can use to fight against spiritual forces that oppose God, truth and the general welfare of humanity. The Scriptures can cleanse us, heal us, protect us and guide us upon the journey of life. The Bible should be read for instruction and edification. God’s Word reveals the truths of the human heart through the light of heaven, and grants us hope and grace in the matters of sin and salvation!

The Bible is a collection of books written over a period of some 1400 years by more than 40 different people. These people were inspired by God’s Holy Spirit to write and record the great works of God within our world.

The Bible speaks about the creation of the world and of humanity, the beginning of nations and the remarkable history of the Jewish people and nation called Israel. The Bible is divided into an Old Testament and a New Testament and each records the work of God to bring the Savior into the world.

The Old Testament is comprised of the Law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets and the poetry of the Psalms and Proverbs. The New Testament opens with the four Gospels which detail the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also includes the first history of the Christian Church called the Book of Acts and letters from the Apostles Peter and Paul. The New Testament ends with the Book of Revelation which points to the future judgment of the world and the redemption God brings to people.

To read and study the Bible is one of the most important disciplines of spiritual fitness. This is because within the Bible are found the essential principles for understanding God’s plan of salvation and our way out of eternal death. As we read the Bible we can hear the voice of God through His Word, and we receive light for living successfully in this world. We also learn about the real meaning of love and our responsibilities towards others.

CONCEPTS:

God’s Word
Bible Study
Spiritual
Discipline
Truth
Sword

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (Second Timothy Chapter 3, verses 16-17).



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

1. Begin by using a Bible that is written in modern English. It is important for you to read and understand what you are reading.
Scripture: "So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?'" (Acts Chapter 8, verses 30-31)
2. Read systematically through one of the Books of the Bible by starting with the opening words of the first chapter and finishing with the last word of the final chapter. Try not to skip around from place to place in the Bible as you first start reading. When you have become familiar with the contents of the Bible you will be able to compare and contrast various Scriptures and Books of the Bible, but it is best to begin with familiarizing yourself with the contents of the Bible that comes through a systematic reading.
Scripture: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (Second Timothy Chapter 2, verse 15).
3. As you begin to read the Bible, take a moment and pray. Ask the Living God who is the Author to enlighten your understanding as you read.
Scripture: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32, verse 8).
4. Write out notes and questions as you begin to read. You can take these to someone who is familiar with the Bible and they can assist you with answers and observations.
Scripture: "So the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him" (Acts Chapter 8, verses 34-35).
5. When you read the Bible, read for the blessing. What this means is that as you read systematically through one of the Books of the Bible, you will soon receive an insight that causes you to stop and ponder. When that happens, take a few moments to think about what you have read, and see what lesson you can take from that reading. Some people like to stop with their daily reading when they receive such blessing and insight, and then begin the next day by picking-up their reading from the place they stopped. In this way, the Bible takes on a living role and testimony in our lives.
Scripture: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119, verse 105).
6. When you receive an insight from the Bible, stop a moment and give God thanks. Then ask the Lord to help you apply what you have learned to your life.
Scripture: "Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119, verses 33-44).
7. Share what you have learned with someone throughout your day. Talk to others about your reading experience. When you share what you have learned, you reinforce your understanding of God's Word in your own life.
Scripture: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (Second Timothy Chapter 4, verse 2).

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"
(Psalm 119 verse 105).

HOW TO CONDUCT A BIBLE STUDY



Bible studies can be done with others or by yourself. Usually, a Bible study examines a topic, like the topic of marriage or perhaps the proper use of money. There are thousands of topics in the Bible that can be studied. The Bible can be studied for doctrines and teachings as well as by Book and Author. If a person wants to study the writings of Saint John, they can read the Gospel of John and the three Epistles ascribed to John as well as the Book of Revelation. These writings traditionally assign John as the author and there are common themes found in each of them, such as God's love, light and life. There are numerous ways to examine or "search the Scriptures" and all are profitable for Spiritual Fitness. The following guidelines will assist you in your Bible studies;

1. Use a good translation of the Bible and have a couple other Bible translations available for comparisons of selected verses. Some of the more popular translations of the Bible are the New King James Version and the New International Version. Most Bibles have very similar wording but sometimes a word is translated from the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts into English using a different word. By using more than one Bible to read the same verse you can get a better idea of what the original language might be saying.
2. Read the full context of the verse you are studying to get a better idea of what it is saying. By reading the verses immediately preceding and following your selected verse of study you can better understand the "context" of the verse and that helps us to better understand the message.
3. Be careful not to over spiritualize the literal meaning of the verse you study. It is difficult to place ourselves into the mindset of those cultures the Bible was originally written in, and we might be tempted to interpret the verse of Scripture with our own cultural prejudices. A good reading of the verse of scripture you study might include familiarizing yourself with the life of the author and the social conditions of the people the verse was originally written for, and this is usually done by looking at a good commentary or bible dictionary for more information on these topics.
4. A good Bible study always begins by observing what the verse actually says (or doesn't say), then attempting an interpretation of the meaning of the verse, then applying the meaning of that studied verse to life. Observation may include counting the number of times a certain name is used, or looking for the action words (verbs) or the subject of the verse. Observation is detective work that gives us the parameters for our eventual interpretation of the meaning. We try to listen to the Word of God in such study as opposed to imposing our own voice upon God's Word. Finally, when we have an interpretation of the verse, we apply it to our lives with a statement, like "I will..." for personal application.
5. Bible study can be greatly enhanced when we have access to a few tools such as a concordance, which lists all the words and their use in the Bible in order. A Bible dictionary is also a great tool, as are encyclopedias and commentaries on the various books of the Bible.
6. Perhaps the most important rule in doing a Bible study is to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth of the Scripture. By praying, we discover that the Word of God is not a dry exercise in academia, but a dynamic experience in living. God's Spirit directs those who seek Him as they study His Word and Will for life.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- How should a Bible Study be conducted?
- What is a good way to read the Bible?



God's power is never limited by man's skepticism...

“WHERE GOD IS”

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, a Russian pastor was riding a train through a remote rural area. As he read his Bible, a man seated across from him began to tell him why the Bible was a dangerous book. For hours, the pastor and the atheist debated the existence of God. The pastor excused himself and stepped to the back of the train to simply pray for the lost atheist. When he returned to his seat, the atheist laughed and pointed to the open window, and exclaimed, “Now where is your God?”

To the shock of the pastor, the atheist had thrown the Bible out the window, and now it was gone forever!

A few years later, the pastor was invited to visit a congregation of Christians. After arriving, he discovered that they had never had a pastor. Amazed, he asked how the church began in that small village. Then an old farmer stepped forward and relayed that some years before, as the Communist government came to an end, he was farming his small plot of land near the railroad. As a train passed by him, a book thrown from one of the car windows landed in front of him. It was a Bible!

Stunned, the pastor took that precious book from the hands of the old farmer and opening the worn cover, saw his own name emblazoned on it! It was the same Bible the atheist had thrown from the train years before!

An old saying, “The devil is God’s sheepdog” refers to the Lord’s ability to turn an evil act into something that will bring good to others. While we know that it’s not the will of God for evil to occur, we also know that the will of God can’t be overcome by evil! The arguments of the atheist fell silent with that Bible falling to the feet of the farmer who discovered the truth of God. Soon, he shared that truth with everyone he knew in his village.

The next time someone asks you where God is, point to the Bible! He can be found there!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah Chapter 55, verse 11).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Why is the Bible considered the word and voice of God?
- How hard is it to understand the Bible?

Spiritual Fitness is evidenced through a renewed way of thinking.
The Word of God transforms the minds of men!



SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

BY REAR ADMIRAL BARRY C. BLACK (RET.), CHAPLAIN, U.S. SENATE

I've reaped great benefits through memorizing scripture and strongly recommend you try it.

Scripture: "I will meditate on Thy precepts, and regard Thy ways. I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word" (Psalm 119, verses 15-16).

Scriptural memorization has energized my prayer life, enabling me to talk to God about things that have impressed me in His Word.

Scripture: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts" (Jeremiah Chapter 15, verse 16).

It's helped me to be more optimistic during tough times—I simply recite God's great promises and they lift my spirit.

Scripture: "This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me..." (Psalm 119, verse 50).

Memorizing the Bible has also given me a weapon to use for battling temptations. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew Chapter 4, verses 1-11), he defended himself by quoting God's Word.

Scripture: "I have hidden your word in my heart so that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119, verse 11).

Finally, I've found that hiding God's Word in my heart has helped me become a more effective counselor. That's most likely what David meant when he wrote the Scripture;

"I have more wisdom than all of my teachers because I meditate on your Word" (Psalm 119, verse 99).

I urge YOU to memorize the Holy Bible!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What is your favorite verse of Scripture?
- How hard is it to memorize verses in the Bible?
- Is it important?
- Why or why not?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PRAYER?

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mark Chapter 11, verse 25).

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart..." (Luke Chapter 18, verse 1).

SPIRITUAL FITNESS AND PRAYER

Spiritual Fitness is maintained through the discipline of prayer.
Prayer is not only speaking to God, but listening to His Spirit.

"He who prays as he ought will endeavor to live as he prays." —JOHN OWEN

Spirituality is often understood through the prayers of people. In the Old Testament, the greatest Prayer is the "Shema" which means, "Hear!" and is addressed to the people of God.

Scripture: "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is One...You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."(Deuteronomy Chapter 6, verses 4-5)

In the New Testament the model prayer is found in Matthew Chapter 6, verses 9-13 (it is also found in Luke Chapter 11, verses 2-4).

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

"Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men... in praise we act like angels." —THOMAS WATSON

HOW TO PRAY

Prayer is the communication between you and God. Prayer can be done in different ways. Sometimes, we pray alone or in a group. We can pray silently or aloud. Prayer can be long or short, depending on what we are praying about. Prayer can be a petition to God for some help or assistance. It can also be a request for helping others. Sometimes we pray to ask for a better understanding of God's will for our lives. In all prayer, there are certain principles that we can follow to better pray.

1. When you pray, speak out loud to God with respect and reverence, and with sincerity. You can begin your prayer by addressing God as your "Father who is in heaven." You might say something like; "Dear God and Heavenly Father, I come to you in prayer and I honor your Name." This was the way Jesus taught his disciples to pray. We begin by addressing God with honor and respect.
2. When you pray, request that God's will be accomplished in your prayer. In so doing, you open yourself to the possibilities God intends for your life.
3. Pray for your daily needs and concerns. God is concerned with each of us and when we pray we exercise faith that honors the Lord.
4. Prayer is best when we are able to pray for others, even those who may have offended us in some way. When we ask the Lord to help those who need God's love and assistance, we are praying the right way. When we are willing to forgive people who have offended us, we also place ourselves in a position where we can petition God for forgiveness of our own wrong doing. God forgives us because he loves us, and we should forgive others as a sign of love.
5. We can request God's protection from evil. To be protected from evil is an important reason for praying.
6. When we pray, we testify to God and to the world that we believe in the possibilities of God's power and love for our lives and the lives of others. Prayer is the connecting power for real Spiritual Fitness as it draws upon the Heavenly promises of God's love for each of us.

CONCEPTS:
Intercession
Petition
Hope
Faith
Power
Supplication



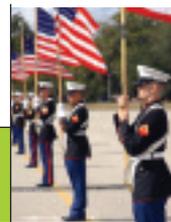
A SOLDIER'S PRAYER

O Lord of Heaven and Earth, and Lord of Life, we turn to You this hour with open hearts and expectation. Hear our prayer!
The darkness of this world wars with Your Light, but the darkness will never extinguish Your Light! May Your Divine counsels be accomplished in each of our lives as we face the uncertainty of war. We acknowledge You as the Divine Judge of all Humanity, and we stand under Your watchful eyes with a sense of humility, knowing that there is none righteous before You. Forgive us our sins, both personal and national, and allow us to abide in Your protective shadow.
Guide us this day in exalting Your goodness over every evil thing, and bring safety to all who trust in Your Name.
Comfort those who mourn, and liberate those who are captive.
Relieve the oppressed, and guard the widow and the orphan.
Feed Your people with the bread of life and not the cup of bitterness.
Help our enemies to acknowledge Your power, and spare the innocent from unnecessary violence.
Deliver all who call upon Your Holy Name, and allow us to remain in the land of the living.
Bring upon our world Your peace, and give our rulers the wisdom and strength to follow You. Help them to make the right decisions.
Have compassion, O Lord, on Your people! We commit our ways into Your hands.
May God Bless our Nation, our military and our families!
Amen!

On May 1, 1777, George Washington prayed the following prayer with his troops:

“And now, Almighty Father, if it is Thy holy will that we shall obtain a place and name among the nations of the earth, grant that we may be enabled to show our gratitude for Thy goodness by our endeavors to fear and obey Thee. Bless us with Thy wisdom in our counsels, success in battle, and let our victories be tempered with humanity. Endow, also, our enemies with enlightened minds, that they become sensible of their injustice, and willing to restore our liberty and peace. Grant the petition of Thy servant for the sake of Him whom Thou has called Thy beloved Son; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.”

“BECOMING PRAYER WARRIORS”



Abigail Adams, the wife of our 2nd President, John Adams, and the mother of five children, including our 6th President, John Quincy Adams, penned the following words to her husband on the eve of the American Revolution:

“I dare not express to you, at three hundred miles distance, how ardently I long for your return. And whether the end will be tragic, heaven only knows. You cannot be, I know, nor do I wish to see you as an inactive spectator; but if the sword be drawn, I look forward to that country where there are neither wars or rumors of war, in a firm belief that through the mercy of its King we shall both rejoice there together!”

An experienced prayer warrior, she later said;

“I feel no anxiety at the large armament designed against us. The remarkable interpositions of heaven in our favor cannot be too gratefully acknowledged. He who fed the Israelites in the wilderness, who clothes the lilies of the field and who feeds the young ravens when they cry, will not forsake a people in so right a cause, if we remember His loving kindness.”

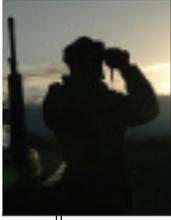
How do you approach the anxieties of war? Let me suggest that you remember the Lord and pray! Here are seven ways to pray during this difficult time:

1. Pray for our President and our military leadership
2. Pray for righteousness in our nation
3. Pray for the safety of our men and women serving in uniform
4. Pray for a quick resolution and victory that will bring lasting peace
5. Pray for the safe return of our POWs
6. Pray for mercy on the Iraqi people
7. Pray for God’s blessing on your family

Deuteronomy Chapter 8, verse 18 says, “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God” and Nehemiah reminded Israel to remember the Lord while at war, for in so doing, God would bring mercy and victory!

Let’s commit to becoming prayer warriors, and fight this war from the vantage point of heaven!

Be a prayer warrior for your family, your nation and your God!



“EXPECT A MIRACLE!”

Threatening to kill him within 12 hours if U.S. forces didn't withdraw from Fallujah, hooded insurgents posed with kidnapped contractor Thomas Hamill, the quiet man from Mississippi, in video footage aired on Arabic TV.

Meanwhile Hamill's hometown of Macon gathered to pray for his safe deliverance, holding a prayer vigil until the deadline the militants mentioned had passed. Then the community covenanted to meet nightly at 7 p.m. at the courthouse while area ministers prayed for the safety of Hamill and other known hostages held by insurgent forces.

“We don't know the rest of them personally,” Pastor Greg Duncan said, “but we do believe in prayer and trust in the Lord... and that through it all His mercy and grace would abound and Jesus would be glorified.”

The answer to those prayers miraculously occurred when Hamill escaped his captors and ran to the safety of American troops who were patrolling the area. Hamill then led those troops back to the house where he had been imprisoned to capture two of the militants responsible for the deadly ambush.

The night before, Hamill's father, Leo, had fallen asleep while praying and searching the television for any news regarding his son. When he awoke Sunday morning to hear that Thomas had safely escaped, he raised his hands heavenward and thanked the Lord, declaring that Sunday was going to be “a beautiful day!”

Answered prayer always makes for a beautiful day!

Scripture recounts the story of Simon Peter who was imprisoned for his faith.

The Church covenanted and prayed “without ceasing” for Peter's release. Accordingly, an angel was sent to that prison and released the Apostle from his captors. The chains that bound him miraculously fell from his wrists, the guards slept and the great fisherman walked to freedom in testimony of answered prayer!

Prayer unlocks prisons, sets captives free and delivers the innocent! Because God answers fervent prayer, every day has the potential of becoming miraculously beautiful!

Let's covenant together to pray for America, and let's expect a miracle!

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY:

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, “Arise quickly!” And his chains fell off his hands.

Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me” (Acts Chapter 12, verses 5-8).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Why is prayer important?
- What are some ways to pray?
- Has God ever answered a prayer for you?

“BECOMING A WARRIOR WORSHIPPER”



CONCLUDING DEVOTIONAL ON SPIRITUAL FITNESS: Be right with God... be right with others... be right with yourself...

Two of the most courageous warriors ever written about are Jonathan and his unnamed armor bearer, two men who took on the entire Philistine army. According to the Bible, these two men made a preemptive attack against the oppressors who greatly outnumbered them. But filled with faith in their just cause, and dependent upon the Spirit of God, Jonathan and his armor bearer decided to take the battle to the Philistines! They approached the enemy camp with this one thought, “it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.”

The Spirit of the Lord validates this strategy by causing a great confusion to envelop the Philistine camp. As a consequence of the supernatural work of God, the Philistines end up fighting each other and destroy themselves. Because of two men who were warrior worshippers of the Most High God, victory came and according to the Scriptures, the only casualties were among the offending Philistines!

We continue to draw lessons from these two men who bravely opposed the evil of their time.

First, we note that evil does exist in this world and there are times when we must take the battle to the enemy. Evil doesn’t just “go away” because good people want peace. Peace often requires a sacrificial decision to war against the ongoing march of evil.

Second, Scripture often details the victory of the few over the many when God is truly involved. When the Lord is invoked through obedience and worship, no enemy, regardless of size, can overcome you!

We’re told in Psalm 144, verse 1; “Blessed be the LORD my strength, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight!” The Lord is a Warrior who fights on behalf of the righteous!

Let’s ready ourselves as worshippers and warriors and look to the Lord for real victory. Let’s maintain our Spiritual Fitness through a walk that is right with God and with others, that is right with ourselves!