

CALL TO DUTY

VOL. 1, ISSUE 3



THIS ISSUE'S THEME: "HERE AM I! SEND ME."

"I heard the voice of the Lord saying: 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'" (Isaiah 6:8)

"LORD, SEND ME ... INTO THE MILITARY"

When asked by God, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah readily replied, "Here I am! Send me." I visualize him shooting (not just raising) his hand into the air in quick affirmation. There has always been a need for qualified volunteers—those who profess a willingness and commitment to do hard things, whether paid or unpaid. Tennessee "became known as the 'Volunteer State' during the War of 1812 due to the key role played by volunteers from the Tennessee militia and ... solidified in the Mexican American War of 1848, when President James K. Polk of Tennessee issued a call for 2,600 volunteers and 30,000 Tennesseans answered." (<https://tennesseehistory.org/volunteer-state>)

The U.S. military became an all-volunteer force after involuntary conscription ended on January 27, 1973 (of course, there have always been patriotic men and women who opt for military service). Since then, to fill the ranks of the Armed Services, military recruiters have relied on those with willing and committed spirits to perform complex and often dangerous missions for their country in the name of freedom. However, not every person qualifies to be a Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, Coastguardsman, or Guardian (e.g., Space Force); one must meet specific and stringent qualifications before entering

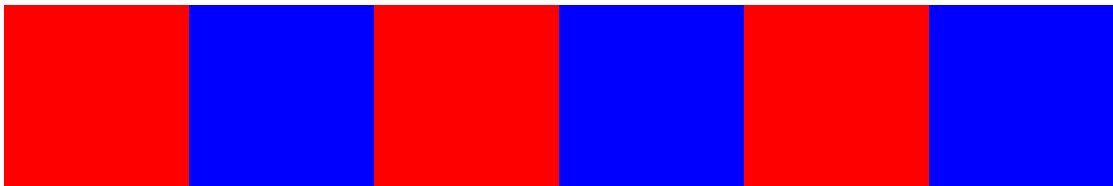
military service. Those who choose to serve their country must prepare physically and mentally. In other words, you must have the "right stuff."

After having a front-row seat of the heavenly scene with the LORD in all His glory on His majestic throne, the multitudes of angelic beings, and being touched by an angel (Isaiah 6:1-7), God had a mission to proclaim His word. His prophet Isaiah didn't stand by idly, waiting for someone else to answer the divine CALL TO DUTY. He was earnest and eager to execute the LORD's demanding and often risky mission in the name of spiritual freedom (vss. 8-13).

With the help of Mel Caraway (MSG, USA Retired), I began this periodic newsletter (previously called the "Military Messenger") in 2005 to help strengthen and encourage our military personnel and their families.

It has and continues to be one of my passions of military ministry (MILMIN). It hasn't always been easy or convenient; sometimes, it has been spiritually draining and discouraging; we haven't been consistent throughout the years. But one thing still stands out: GOD has a mission for you and me!

(continued on page 2)



MILITARY OUTREACH & ENCOURAGEMENT

EDITORIAL

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was a prophet of God. He was called to bring the message to Judah that they had sinned and rebelled from God and that they must repent, or God's judgment would be harsh. He knew that his mission would be difficult and dangerous, yet willingly accepted it. When the Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us," Isaiah replied immediately "Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). He was willing to take the risks to carry out the will of the Lord.

The church is blessed to have many members with this same attitude. When presented with an evangelistic or ministry opportunity, they step up right away and say, "Here am I. Send me." Whether it is in a local congregation, a prison, or in faraway lands, Christians step up to serve the Lord. They truly let their light shine so men can see their good works and glorify God (Matt 5:16).

Some will step up on occasion if they have the time. Competing priorities like sporting events, entertainment, job requirements, or something else captures their attention and gets their time and effort. When they do this it is as if they are saying, "Here am I. Send me when it is convenient."

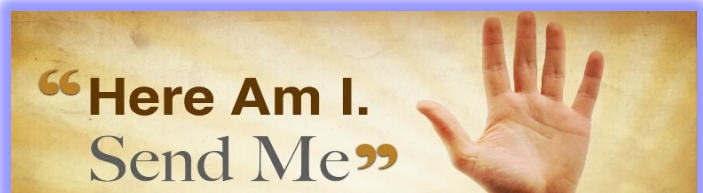
Sadly, some rarely, if ever, do the Lord's work. They

turn a deaf ear to requests for assistance or fail to support their local congregation. Perhaps their attitude is that someone else will do it. In essence, then they are saying, "There they are. Send them."

Service members and veterans, where do you stand? You are especially positioned to preach the gospel throughout the world. Your example can truly shine your light and glorify God. Jesus said that those who abide in him bear much fruit and that those who do not abide in him will be cast out (John 15:5-6). We must all bear much fruit for God. Remember, James said that we are to be doers of the word and not just hearers (James 1:22).

Brothers and sisters, make it a goal to step up and serve the Lord at every opportunity. Be a doer and not just a hearer of the word. Let each of us say, when given an opportunity, "Here am I. Send Me."

~ Tony Turner



"LORD, SEND ME ... INTO THE MILITARY" (continued from page 1)

I started a business last year (InLine Publishers, LLC) to publish our series, "Spiritual Warriors," beginning with our recently released book, "Spiritual Battle Rattle: God's Armor," based on Ephesians 6:10-18. We are now very close to completing and publishing our second volume, "Spiritually Wounded Warriors: An Army of One Another," with more books to come. To concentrate on writing, editing, and publishing additional MILMIN resources, I prayed that God would raise another spiritual warrior to carry on the mission of **CALL TO DUTY**.

Another retired soldier and elder at the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee, **Tony Turner**, dutifully answered that call and said, "Here I am. Send [use] me!" Tony has already recruited an additional cadre of writers and will do an outstanding job conveying the gospel message throughout the world via the U.S. military. Carry on, and God bless you, sir!

 If you have worn, or are wearing, the uniform of the U.S. Armed Services, then you have the "right stuff" and accepted the call to duty. Moreover, being a child of God and a spiritual warrior, you have answered His spiritual call to carry the gospel message wherever He assigns you. It's not always easy or convenient; sometimes, it's downright uncomfortable and yet critical to share the

good news of Jesus to your fellow warriors. Do you have the "right stuff"?

"Lord, here I am, send me... overseas... on the seas... on deployment... or TDY." We are God's Army Strong!

~ Ed Linebaugh

THE RIGHT SPIRITUAL STUFF



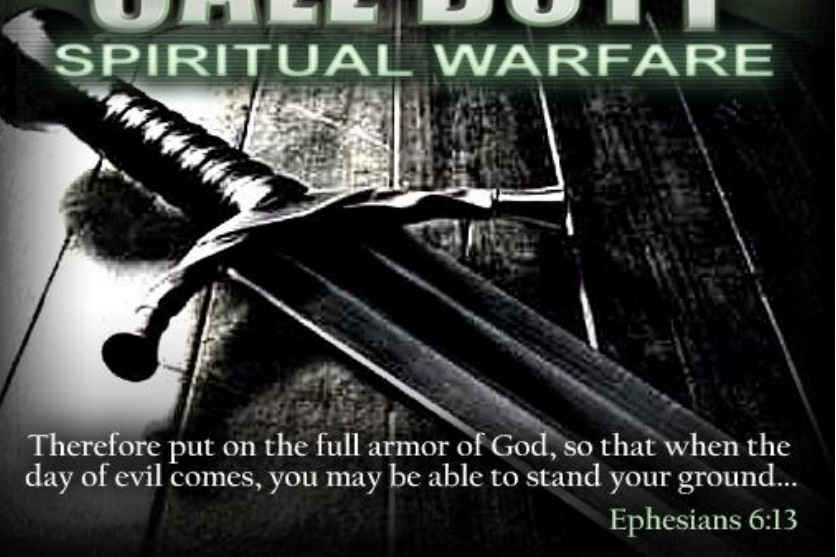
AS YOU WERE...

"... three words spoken quickly by non-commissioned and commissioned officers who choose to drop rank and get to business, is meant to put troops 'at ease.'"



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CALL OF DUTY SPIRITUAL WARFARE



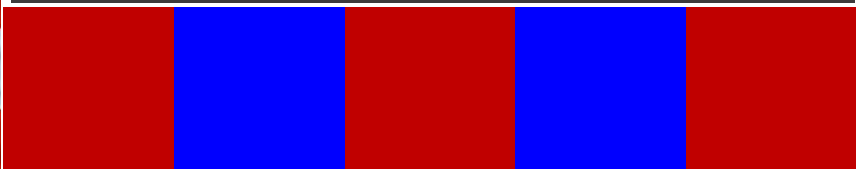
Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground...

Ephesians 6:13

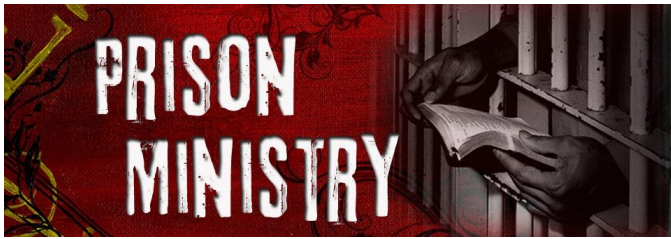
Pray
Through
Stressful
Difficulties
(James 1:2-8)



**HAND-TO-HAND
COMBAT**



HERE AM I ... SEND ME TO JAIL



One of my uncles advised me, "Never volunteer for anything." He was talking to me just before I left for Ft. Benning and basic training. He had been in WW II and told me that volunteering was the worst thing I could do, and then he told me a story.

Their company was in formation and an old sergeant walked up to their platoon and asked, "Who knows how to drive?" Driving wasn't as common then. Thinking they had an advantage, several men spoke up and the sergeant told them to fall out and report to some other location.

After they left, the old sergeant walked across the front of the platoon and pointed to several men as he walked and told them to fall out and follow him. He took them over to a truck and told them to get in because they were going to go learn how to drive! They later found out that the volunteers went to cook's school! My uncle wound up in electronics. He was a high school farm boy from north Alabama. Sometimes we are called to be where we are not comfortable.

In Isaiah 6 we see that Isaiah felt inadequate, but God took care of that. Isaiah was called and then, slapped in the face with the realization that God *knew* what He was doing, he volunteered. Sometimes we are called, but we are reluctant to step up. Like my uncle's experience, someone else may have been better qualified, but that was irrelevant. God wants us to be willing. He knows what He can do with us!

Several years ago our congregation was invited to participate in "jail ministry" at our county jail. No one had any experience, and we didn't have any sort of guide. A dozen or so went through the required training given by the Sheriff's office. It was "dos and don'ts". It was procedure and process, about following the rules and consequences for not doing so. They gave us no guidelines about how we should go about doing "church," as they termed it.

Later we found that we were going into maximum security. What images that conjured up! We were told we'd

have every conceivable kind of criminal among those who would attend "church." Frankly, the specter of going into maximum security was too much for a few. Several dropped out before ever going the first time. My wife had some misgivings about it for me, and, honestly, I did too.

Initially we did just about everything wrong. Six or eight of us went and did something like mid-week Bible study. We started with a prayer, then songs, then a lesson, and then more songs before dismissing. There were about as many of us as of them. We did this for about three weeks and attendance went to almost zero. Being discouraged was an understatement.

We decided to change our format. Two of us started conducting a class. Inmates were interested in studying the Bible, but it really helped to let them know we weren't "pastors" as some of them called us. We felt like they needed to know that we were sinners too. We admitted some of our struggles and dealing with our own sin. That seemed to break a barrier.

We passed a prayer request sheet around and started to connect by praying for their requests, most often for their families first and then the inmates. We taught about sin, personal responsibility, choices, Jesus as the Savior, forgiveness, and obedience to the gospel. Our attendance built until we could take no more students. For several years we baptized around 30 inmates annually. The fields were truly white for harvest.

We were told never to ask or discuss the inmates' crimes, so we usually didn't know. It was only after he was sentenced to 54 years for double homicide that we knew what our very best student and brother in Christ, Kenny, had done. Kenny didn't have to be asked to "go." Today he is responsible for leading men to Christ in prison because some of us finally responded, "Here I am, send me ... to jail."

~ Conrad Slate

Conrad Slate enlisted in the Army Reserve while in college and later transferred to the Air National Guard. He went to Officer Training School and completed 31 years of service retiring as a colonel. He served a variety of positions starting as a Military Policeman. He served in the Security Police, in Public Affairs, in NBC warfare training, and a variety of staff positions, retiring as Deputy Chief of Staff for Support Services. He is a member of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, TN where he is active in jail ministry.

HERE AM I ... SEND ME TO BE AN ELDER

On day one of my entrance into the United States Air Force, I knew I wanted someday to become a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO). Prior to the start of my Air Force career, I was mentored by two family members with stories from their own military experiences, especially since they had reached that milestone. I knew they were in a position to assist and help others which I have come to understand is a very important personal trait of mine. Knowing that an NCO position is not about being "in charge" or being "the boss" but more about providing care and concern of others, attributed to a successful 21 years of service in our military. Later I would come to realize that foundation assisted me greatly serving two separate congregations as an elder in the Lord's church.

I realized successful leaders understand they are not "the boss" of those they lead. Rather, they are responsible for those they lead (1 Peter 5:2-4). **"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."** Young men in the Lord's church today should aspire to the same level. From day one, they should see their Christian journey as not one to achieve a position of being in charge but see themselves as being able to help others achieve an eternal home in heaven.

Men must meet specific qualifications to serve in the role of an elder as we read in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Those who meet these qualifications outlined in God's word must FIRST aspire to the office of a bishop, (1 Tim 3:1), **"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work."** Taking that responsibility is no small task. Once God appoints a man to an eldership position, that man will ALWAYS bear the responsibility of the souls placed in his charge. One day he will stand before the Lord answering to the decisions he made while serving as an elder. Understanding that first principle allows men

to understand this is no small undertaking. While not all men will meet these qualifications and sit in an eldership position, all should strive to be a mentor to the young men that are added to the body. By using their experiences they can help others on their own Christian path.

The role of the eldership is no position of glory and prestige but should always be seen as the servitude role it really is. It is one of constant vigilance, seeking out how the devil seeks to devour the congregation. Acts 20:28-29 reminds these men, **"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock."**

Serving the Lord's church as an elder is the greatest honor this side of heaven but also bears the greatest weight and responsibility. Each man who accepts that responsibility must understand the importance of standing in that role but also know the rewards of serving others cannot be matched.

~ Larry Bates



Larry Bates retired from the US Air Force after 21 years, serving in both the Gulf War and Kosovo. He worked as a munitions systems specialist and computer network superintendent. Currently, he works as the Director of Computer Operations and as an adjunct professor at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville where he resides with his wife of 37 years, Glenda. They have two children and three grandchildren. Larry has served as an elder at the Willow Avenue Church of Christ in Cookeville, TN and at the Lenoir City Church of Christ in Lenoir City, TN. Larry and Glenda are currently members of the Karns church of Christ in Knoxville.

RETURN TO SENDER



In 1962, two years after his honorable discharge from the United States Army, veteran and popular singer Elvis Presley recorded one of his many hit songs entitled "Return to Sender." The narrative behind the song is about a man who sent a letter to a woman he loved. The woman did not love the man in return, and never opened or read it upon receipt. Instead, she mailed the letter back to the man simply stamped "Return to Sender." Yet, the song's relationship of the man, woman, and letter in it bare odd resemblance to God, Israel, and Isaiah in the bible.

For instance, (1) the heavenly God is revealed as a faithful and loving husband to earthly Israel, (2) the earthly Israel (the United Kingdom of Israel) is revealed as an unfaithful and unloving split-personality type of a wife (the divided northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah) to God, and (3) the prophet Isaiah is revealed as a messenger using prophetic words and

writing from God to Israel to reason with her to quit her sinning (Isaiah 1:18-20; 50:1-3).

Therein, when God stopped tolerating His split-personality wife's repetitive sinful antics, He decided to divorce her. The divorce began with the northern kingdom of Israel being led into Assyrian captivity and ended with the southern kingdom of Judah being led into Babylonian captivity. Still, in the process of divorcing her, God wanted His soon-to-be ex-wife to repent of her sins and prepare for the better times that lay ahead for her and the rest of humanity with the coming of Christ. But He needed someone to take this message to His people.

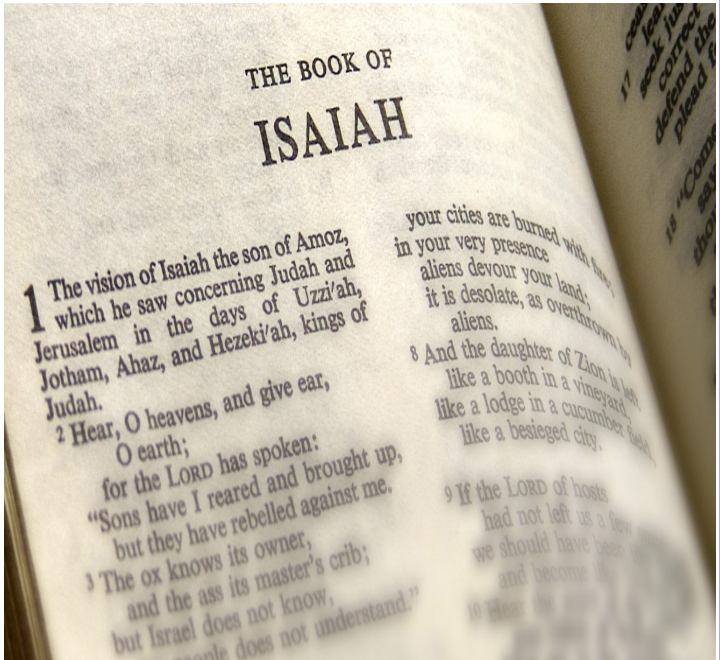
So, the Lord came to Isaiah in a vision, forgave him of his iniquity and sins purifying him to preach truth, and said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Like a faithful soldier in God's army holding the figurative rank of prophet, Isaiah volunteered saying, "**Here am I. Send me!**" (Isaiah 6:1-8). After finishing his mission, Isaiah was killed by his countrymen because of their unbelief (Acts 7:52; Hebrews 11:32-38).

Just like today's faithful Christian soldiers, his soul returned home to be with the Lord eternally, symbolically post-marked "Return to Sender."

~ Tom Wright

Tom Wright served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War Era. Following his military discharge, Tom graduated college and worked in Design Engineering for over two decades. In his middle forties, he left secular work and entered fulltime ministry. He holds degrees of Bachelor of Theology, Master of Biblical Studies, and Doctor of Ministry. Tom has spent about the past twenty-five years serving God as an evangelist, preacher, and teacher. He and his wife Carla live in the Colorado Springs area and worship with the Calhan church of Christ.

*Therefore the Lord said:
"Inasmuch as these people draw
near with their mouths And
honor Me with their lips, But
have removed their hearts far
from Me, And their fear
toward Me is taught by the
commandment of men,
Isaiah 29:13*



COUNSELOR'S CORNER

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8)

What a bold utterance. Most versions of the Bible I looked at, has an exclamation mark after either "Here I am" or "Send me." I guess if I was a Hebrew scholar, I could look at this verse and get more of a sense of the grammar here, but you get the picture. Isaiah was ready to go.

But wait. Just up in verse 5, he's saying **"Woe is me!"** (another exclamation mark). Isaiah seems to be riding a rollercoaster of emotion here. One minute, he's in great affliction and then next, boldly saying "Send me!" What is going on?

I think the next few things he utters is very revealing. **"I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"** (yet another exclamation mark).

When we think of something unclean in the Old Testament, we often equate it with something sinful. But not necessarily. For example, giving birth, having a skin disease, or burying a dead relative all rendered a person "unclean." No sin there. However, Isaiah states **"I am a man of unclean lips."** There was something about himself, held up to having seen the "King, the Lord of hosts" that made him cry out.

Ever felt unworthy? Ever compared yourself to someone else and came up short or just didn't feel like you had what it took to make it (whatever "it" was)? Let's give Isaiah a break on this one -- it was the Lord he saw—who wouldn't have had that reaction or at least should have. But for the rest of us having that kind of moment, what are we comparing or what kind of standard are we using that is leading us to think "I don't have what it takes?"

To be sure, we should always be humble and acutely aware that God has given us life and breath, and that all blessings both spiritual and material have come from Him. But that is really the key to our self-worth because it's really not *self-worth* but **Christ-worth**. The psychological concept of self-worth is our own attempt to build ourselves up on what will not last. All that we are now and can be is rooted in Him.

We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19); Genesis 1:26-27 says we are made in His image, the very image of God; Psalm 139:13-16 says we are fearfully

and wonderfully made, and all the days of our lives were written in God's book before we were ever born; Ephesians 1:4 says God chose His children before the foundations of the earth were ever formed, and in Ephesians 1:13-14 we're told we are God's own possession, chosen for the praise of His glory.

But notice the wording in each of the above phrases: **"are made," "are fearfully and wonderfully made," "were written," "God chose His children," "we are God's own possession,"** and **"we have an inheritance."** These phrases all have one thing in common: they are things done to us or for us by God. These are not things we have done for ourselves, nor have we earned or deserved them. We are, in fact, merely the recipients of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, our worth is not really "self" at all; rather, it is worth given to us by God through His Son.

What a great worth we are -- He paid a debt He did not owe; I owed a debt I could not pay; I needed someone to wash my sins away. And, now I sing a brand-new song, Amazing Grace (all day long), Christ Jesus paid the debt that I can never pay.¹ THAT is Christ-worth; own it and make it yours.

~ Darren Crowden

¹ He Paid a Debt; American Folk Hymn, Copyright 1993 by Howard Publishing Company, Inc.

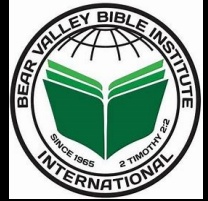


Darren Crowden retired from the U.S Air Force as a Chief Master Sergeant and works for the Defense Logistics Agency at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. He has a Masters Degree in Mental Health Counseling with specialization in Sexual Addictions from Amridge University, and uses his education and vast experience to minister within, and outside, the church. Darren has previously served as an elder of the Lord's church in Pennsylvania for many years. He and his wife, Jennifer, are members of the Chase Park Church of Christ in Huntsville, Alabama.

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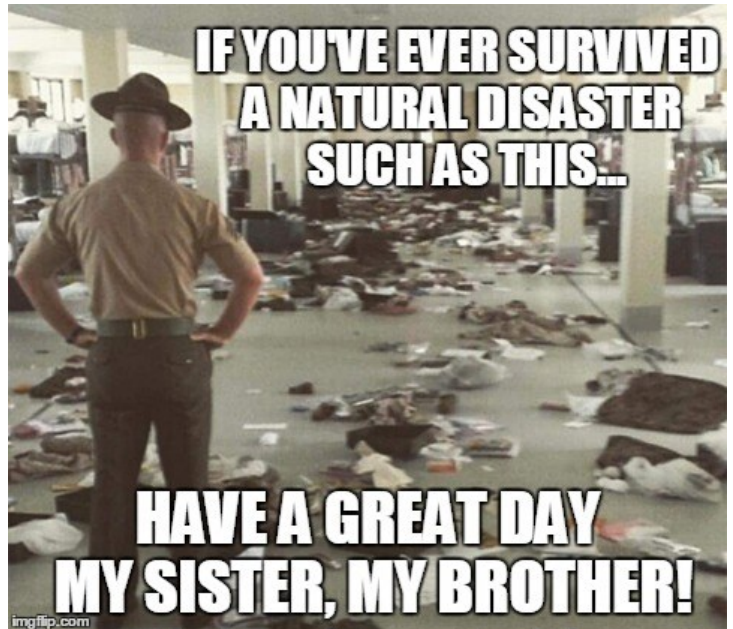
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**GOD'S
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STRONG!**

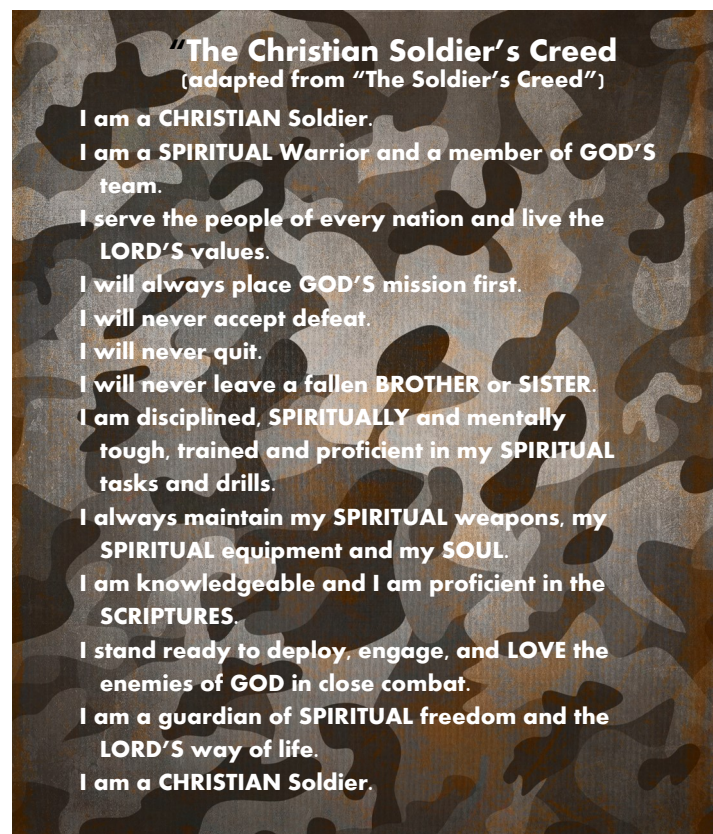
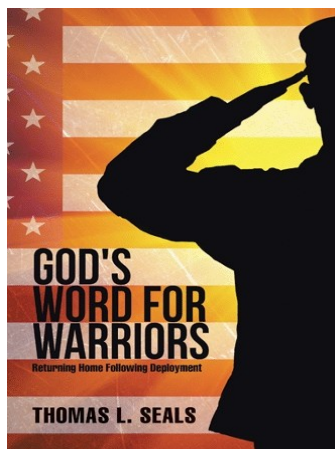


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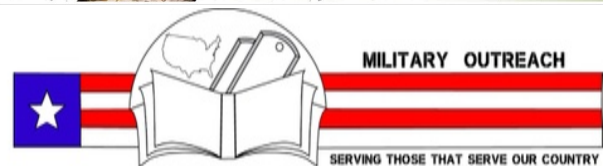
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"The Christian Soldier's Creed" (adapted from "The Soldier's Creed")

I am a **CHRISTIAN** Soldier.
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I serve the people of every nation and live the **LORD'S** values.
I will always place **GOD'S** mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen **BROTHER** or **SISTER**.
I am disciplined, **SPIRITUALLY** and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my **SPIRITUAL** tasks and drills.
I always maintain my **SPIRITUAL** weapons, my **SPIRITUAL** equipment and my **SOUL**.
I am knowledgeable and I am proficient in the **SCRIPTURES**.
I stand ready to deploy, engage, and **LOVE** the enemies of **GOD** in close combat.
I am a guardian of **SPIRITUAL** freedom and the **LORD'S** way of life.
I am a **CHRISTIAN** Soldier.



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GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN FOR YOU

HEAR the word of God: Romans 10:9-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Revelation 2:7; 22:18-19

BELIEVE in Jesus as Savior of world: John 3:16; 14:6; 14:23

REPENT of your sins: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; Revelation 2:5, 16, 21,22; 3:3, 19

CONFESS Jesus before others: Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:8-11

BE IMMERSED into Christ for forgiveness of your sins: Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47; 22:16; Romans 6:3-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22

CONTINUE to live faithful to God until you die or Christ comes again: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 2:10

Call to Duty, a publication of
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Karns Church of Christ
6612 Beaver Ridge Rd.

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(BASE 2 BASE, HEART 2 HEART)

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