LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SEEKING TO GLORIFY GOD:

AN ARMED FORCES MEMBER’S HANDBOOK FOR DISCIPLESHIP

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By

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ABSTRACT

SEEKING TO GLORIFY GOD: AN ARMED FORCES MEMBER’S HANDBOOK FOR DISCIPLESHIP

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The purpose of this thesis is to equip military Christians in glorifying God through obedience to the Great Commission. Jesus’ command to make disciples applies universally to all Christians, yet those in the armed forces often retreat or experience little success in discipleship within their native environment where they feel restricted by institutional policy, ungodly leadership, and isolation from the body of Christ. This project proposes a practical method of discipleship that seeks to equip Christians in uniform to make passionate followers of Christ who willingly embrace the same mission. The research for this thesis will be primarily conducted by surveying fifty to seventy Navy and Marine Corps service members and veterans discharged within the last twenty-four months. The information gained from this thesis will be used to produce an armed forces member’s discipleship handbook for dissemination at base chapels on military installations across the globe.

Abstract length: 146 words.
DEDICATION

To my best friend and love in this world Beth Ann.

Thank you for never giving up on me.
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INTRODUCTION

Pursuing a childhood dream of becoming a Marine aviator, this author left home four months after high school graduation. Although raised in a godly family, there was no personal relationship with the Lord. The church was necessary only when it met an expressed need as Christians who pursued holiness brought discomfort and a desire to hide the truth about lifestyle choices. Bible discussions were interesting, but there was no persistent desire to grow through personal study. Any endeavor at evangelism was more linked to a prideful attempt in convincing an unbeliever that the Bible was right. Similar to the pattern found in the book of Judges, when times of adversity arose, prayers of the saints were sought, only to willingly disobey God’s Word when the pressure subsided. Sin was followed by guilt, and guilt was dealt with through self-effort to be good and attend church. Eventually succumbing to temptation, behavior would once again become consumed with fulfilling the dictates of the flesh.

Some days afforded a glimpse of the hopelessness in life without Christ, yet the struggle continued because of the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Success was the engine for producing short-term happiness, which consistently yielded the feeling of emptiness in due season, which required bigger and better accomplishments to avoid despair. After nearly ten years since first leaving home, God’s divine work of grace wrought the humility needed to finally comprehend mankind’s total depravity. What had been a familiar message of the gospel suddenly awakened this fallen heart to know that a decision to continue sinning willfully would one day bring about wrath from “the living God”.\(^1\) The amazing contrast between sin and

Christ’s obedient sacrificial love was now in view, and the treasure somehow passed in the preceding twenty-seven years was now worth full surrender to his lordship.

During the following year there was a radical transformation as the author’s entire worldview experienced a paradigm shift. Realizing this world is not the permanent dwelling for those who are in Christ, those things the world offered began to lose their appeal. After finally achieving what had been a lifelong dream to fly the F/A-18 Hornet, the realization came that there was something terribly wrong. During the final two weeks of flight training when refusing to conform to peer pressure, a well-respected superior asked, “How do you plan on surviving in your squadron if you don’t act like they do?” It was easy to foresee the looming clash between an inward desire to glorify God with a culture that sought to exalt self. After much lamenting, the realization came that God did not give this opportunity merely because it had been a lifelong dream. As a close friend explained years later, Christians in these types of situations are either in need of a missionary or are the very missionary God has sent to those in need. Knowing that God raises up ambassadors to proclaim the truth of Christ, there was doubt as to whether success was possible in reaching those who seemingly had little regard for those things the redeemed cherish most.

In faith this writer began the work of the ministry, but quickly he was in many ways ill equipped for the task. There were many occasions that personal actions unnecessarily offended others, and those times where the author was too easily offended. Although properly recognizing the freedom from idolizing the jet pilot lifestyle, there was a lack of compassion and failure to comprehend how vital it was to become all things to all men in order to win some. As all who

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2 This conversation with a senior officer occurred after refusing to participate in alcohol consumption during a mandatory gathering of all flight students and instructors in Key West, Florida in May of 2006.

3 1 Corinthians 9:19.
willingly step out in service to God experience, there were times of intense spiritual warfare that caused a lack of focus on God’s glory. With the devaluation of a lifelong dream came a decrease in desire to excel further and the constant prayer for God to change the circumstances. This experience brought insight to the greater issue; although God in his absolute sovereignty will accomplish all that He has ordained from the foundations of the earth, this author like so many others who serve in uniform often fall short in both modeling and making obedient disciples consumed with bringing God glory. This project is the culmination of the author’s experience in military discipleship through multiple deployments over nearly twenty years of active duty service alongside every military branch, with time served as both enlisted and officer, and from both a lost and saved perspective.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Great Commission applies universally to all Christians, yet those in military uniform often retreat from Christ’s mandate or experience little success in making disciples in their native environment. Discipleship in the military often breaks down for one of two major reasons, the first of which is that some Christians make little effort in pursuing personal spiritual growth or seeking to grow the body of Christ through evangelism and discipleship. Those who are not motivated to fulfill the Great Commission are either not saved, ignorant of their biblical mandate, or willingly disobedient to the Lord’s command. Some self-professing Christians possess a form of godliness, but lack a saving knowledge of Jesus and are not motivated by love to obey what He commands. Frequently, there is little interest in making disciples because they lack an authentic experience of being a disciple. Others know the Lord but fail to pursue their calling to make disciples because they lack a foundational biblical understanding of what is required of
those who follow Jesus, or have yet to realize the need to do so.⁴ Sadly, there are other believers who do know the Lord, and do understand much of what Scripture says, but simply choose not to respond consistently with obedience.

The second major reason that discipleship suffers in the military is that although some Christians greatly desire to glorify God through obedience to the Great Commission, they are in many ways ill equipped to do so effectively. While they want to see Christ exalted in their environment, they are not prepared to lead spiritually. Lacking adequate training in disciple-making, they suffer many failures simply due to inexperience, lack of knowledge, and isolation from the body of Christ. Because chapels often seem cold and foreign, they become disconnected from other Christians at times where edification is needed most.

Despite this author’s many shortcomings, God worked in tremendous ways during military deployments by providing opportunities to comfort suicidal service members, counsel those suffering from failing marriages, conduct outreach ministry in foreign lands, and even lead some lost souls to the Lord. However, time brought about the realization that more must be done to prepare the next generation of lay military Christians. Through both ministry success and setbacks a deep-seated passion was birthed to better equip others so that they might experience greater success in making disciples who worship Jesus. The purpose of this project is to make a biblical case for every Christian to glorify God through obedience to the Great Commission, and provide a practical model of discipleship for those Christians God has called to serve their nation in the armed forces.

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Statement of Limitations

The primary thrust of spiritual leadership in military ministry is both promulgated and facilitated by those who serve as military chaplains. However, this project does not seek to offer in-depth research and recommendations on how to improve discipleship practices within the chaplain corps. Because the majority of service members serve in the four years following high school or college, it is likely that most who serve as lay Christians will not have had any tangible opportunity for extended ministry training. The primary focus of this thesis is on equipping the lay Christian in fulfilling their mission to make disciples during their service amongst the ranks.

This thesis contains discipleship principles that are applicable to all environments, however, many aspects of the material are designed to deal exclusively with military service and will at times parallel military matters. There will be little distinction made regarding the variety of roles in which Christians can serve in the armed forces, such as differences between active and reserve duty. The case will be made that authentic ministry is heavily relational and inroads should be forged in the time prior to military deployment. However, the focus will be on military Christian’s call to function as a missionary to their unit once they have deployed to foreign seas or lands beyond the physical reach of the local church.

Finally, the scope of this project is not designed to draw theological lines of distinction between various Protestant denominations. A natural consequence of assimilating young men and women from across the nation to serve in the armed force is that ecumenical diversity becomes commonplace. As an ordained minister in the Southern Baptist Convention, this author very much upholds such doctrines as the inerrancy of Scripture, believer’s baptism, the priesthood of every believer, and will operate from that theological base. However, the purpose
of this thesis is to make a common appeal for every believer’s mandate to both become and make disciples of Christ.

**Theoretical Basis for the Project**

The mark of obedience is one of the greatest indicators that the gospel has penetrated a fallen heart, as the redeemed will naturally seek to know and obey God’s will. John MacArthur writes, “Obedience is so foundational that if it is not present in the life of one who claims to be a Christian, that person’s faith ought to be questioned.”

This principle is clearly supported throughout Scripture, and particularly by Jesus himself who said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” Leaving no room for doubt, John reemphasized this truth by revealing that those who say they know Him and “does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The concluding chapter of Matthew’s Gospel records Jesus’ final command to likely more than 500 disciples, which is known as the Great Commission. Jesus’ instructions were clear: all those who seek to follow him must “make disciples” as they “go” throughout the nations in His power, by evangelizing the lost, and both baptizing and teaching the saved. Disciples who seek to glorify God will strive to reproduce themselves by leading those they encounter to Christ and instructing them to know and obey His Word.

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6 John 14:15.

7 1 John 2:4.


God’s plan of salvation includes the active participation of the redeemed left in the world as His “…witnesses…even to the remotest part of the earth.”\(^{10}\) While the work of salvation belongs exclusively with the effectual sovereign call of the Father who draws lost people to Jesus, His people are commanded to, “…Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”\(^{11}\) God has called a small group of men “for the equipping of the saints”, and all saints “for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”\(^{12}\)

Christians who serve in defense of their nation too share in Christ’s universal mandate to make disciples. Although they uniquely possess some of the greatest inherent opportunities that should serve in the furtherance of God’s kingdom, sadly their uniquely inherent challenges often yield diminished results. It is only through a personal saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and the empowerment by the Holy Spirit that any believer can be used in service for God.\(^{13}\) However, spiritual growth occurs in the life of a believer when they are discipled to both know and obey all that Jesus commanded for His church.\(^{14}\)

**Statement of Methodology**

In Paul’s final letter to his son in the faith, he instructed Timothy to entrust the things he had received from him to “…faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”\(^{15}\) This account displays the first four generations of Christian discipleship, and emphasizes that the task of making disciples must continue until Christ returns. Scripture is clear that God uses redeemed

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\(^{10}\) Acts 1:8.  
\(^{11}\) John 6:44, Mark 16:15.  
\(^{12}\) Ephesians 4:11.  
\(^{13}\) John 14:16-17, 26.  
\(^{14}\) Philippians 3:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.  
\(^{15}\) 2 Timothy 2:2.
people in the lives of others to both lead them to Christ and teach them to obey all that He commanded. However, this command is often either ignored or marginalized on military deployments, where military Christians often feel restricted by institutional policy, ungodly leadership, and isolation from the body of Christ. This thesis will make a biblical case for all Christians to grow and help others grow into the likeness of Christ wherever their “going” leads. Secondly, practical help will be provided to both uniformed lay missionaries and those called to support them.

The introduction begins with a biblical case for discipleship and offers an overview of the unique opportunities inherent to Christians in uniform seeking to glorify God by obeying the Great Commission. From this framework the stark contrast between what should be and what typically occurs on military deployments will easily shed light on the gravity of the problem. It would be a mistake to conclude that discipleship does not occur in the military, but equally faulty is the assumption that the majority of Christians are fulfilling the Great Commission as Christ commanded.

Chapter two discusses the primary casual factors that diminish discipleship in the military, such as the unique challenges service members face, the gap in discipleship training in the local church, and trending restrictive government policies. The purpose of this chapter is to compare this author’s experience against research conducted through an anonymous survey of Navy and Marine service members and veterans.

Chapter three is dedicated entirely to providing practical advice for those who serve military Christians in supporting roles. In the way that no warrior would be adequately prepared for combat apart from the training they receive prior to entering the battlefield, the lay military Christian must be properly discipled before leaving on deployment. This chapter seeks to provide
insight and encouragement to churches, chaplains, and loved ones at home that desire to better support uniformed missionaries in their ministry to the military.

Chapter four is designed to equip military missionaries for the work of ministry by first establishing a firm foundation in Scripture. This chapter seeks to convey biblically the military Christian’s call to fulfill the Great Commission, offer specific insight on the field in which they labor, and conclude with an exposition of every disciple-maker’s marching orders found in 2 Timothy 2:1-7.

Chapter five will attempt to transition uniformed missionaries from biblical knowledge to real-life application. Most often there is little lacking in regards to a saved person’s desire to bring God glory, as their passion becomes to obey all that their Lord commands. However, inexperience in disciple-making is often a significant barrier. This chapter will offer practical advice in fulfilling the Great Commission to those called to serve as lay military Christians. Chapter six seeks to encourage the reader by providing a personal account of the military missionary who had the greatest impact on the author providing a perfect illustration of how God is glorified through the obedient service of lay military Christians. This chapter will conclude by synthesizing the practical model of discipleship presented throughout this project and offer a final plea to glorify God through obedience to the Great Commission.

**Definition of Terms**

Commissioned Officer – A member of an armed force or uniformed service who holds a commission extended to them by the pleasure of the President of the United States. A commissioned officers’ primary role is leadership and typically requires a bachelor’s degree.

Enlisted – A member of an armed force or uniformed service with any rank below that of a
commissioned officer. Typically, enlisted service personnel perform jobs specific to a particular occupational specialty in which they were trained and require a high school education.

Fraternization - a social or business relationship between members of different military grades in violation of a custom of the naval service which, in the eyes of one experienced in military leadership, impacts adversely on good order and discipline, or degrades or at least threatens to degrade the character or status of the position that a member holds.

Military Deployment - The movement of armed forces and their logistical support infrastructure around the world to conduct combat or combat supporting operations.

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder may develop after a traumatic or life-threatening event, which produces symptoms ranging in severity to include upsetting memories of the event, jumpiness, or sleeplessness.\(^{16}\)

OCONUS – Outside the Continental United States Squadron – A military unit consisting of various types of aircraft, flight crew, and maintenance personnel tasked with conducting flight operations in either a combat or combat supporting role.

UCMJ – Uniformed Code of Military Justice is a federal law enacted by the United States Congress in 1950 that is the foundation for the United States military justice system.\(^{17}\)

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Review of the Literature

Timothy could not have entrusted to others those truths, “…profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) if they had not first been entrusted to him. In like manner, this author would have nothing of eternal value to share apart from those things that are rightly divided and consistent with the inspired Word of God. The following list of Scriptures and others sources written and based upon the authority of the Word were heavily relied upon throughout this project.

Books

Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World. In an age that presents more distorted versions of the gospel than ever before, the two extremes of cheap grace and works based salvation can leave the sincere truth seeker at a loss. MacArthur’s intention with this book is to warn the modern church of the dangers of pragmatism, much like Charles Spurgeon warned of modernism a century prior. This resource assists in demonstrating the authentic gospel to a diversity of denominational backgrounds typical amongst those who serve in the military, and encourages true followers of Christ to proclaim it with boldness.

Design for Discipleship: Discovering God’s Blueprint for the Christian Life. Pentecost holds to the belief rejected by this author that Christians can be saved apart from being a disciple as he writes, “Not all men who are saved are disciples although all who are disciples are saved.”

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20 Ibid., 10.
However, an experienced seminary professor and Bible teacher, the author seeks to convey that being a disciple of Christ requires both belief and obedience to Christ’s Lordship.  

*Following Christ.*  

This work effectively transcribes deep theological truths into the vernacular of the lay Christian. Narrowing in on the issues most relevant to Christians who work in the secular world, R. C. Sproul challenges his readers through both biblical thought and reasoning to move beyond spiritual infancy.

*Growing in Christ.*  

The author contends that because Christianity is not instinctive to human nature that has suffered from the fall, it must be both taught and pursued through effort. Packer offers in his well-rounded book 64 concise chapters that help both small groups and individual seekers understand the major tenants of the Christian faith. While not an exhaustive look at any topic, this book serves as an excellent beginning for discipleship.

*Growing Toward Spiritual Maturity.*  

This book offers fresh insight for new believers and those who disciple them in how to rely upon the resources available within the body of Chris that were given to facilitate spiritual growth. It emphasizes that maturity will move beyond an inward focus through expressions of discipleship in others. The model proposed in this thesis very closely adheres to that presented here.

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21 Ibíd., 13.  
Hard to Believe: The High Cost and Infinite Value of Following Jesus.\textsuperscript{25} In an era where the diluted gospel has gained unimaginable prominence in evangelicalism, MacArthur's work serves as a timely reminder of the true cost of following Christ. This book helps prepare those who share the Good News of what Scripture actually requires of those who would die to self, by pointing to the perfect display of obedience and love modeled by Jesus.

How to Succeed in the Christian Life.\textsuperscript{26} In this foundational work, Torrey provides a very sound presentation of discipleship in action. From salvation to service, joy to persecution, the author helps believers know more about their position in Christ and subsequent call to live in wholehearted obedience to Him.

Ministry with the Military.\textsuperscript{27} This work was designed to serve as a handbook for chaplains and those churches near military installations that conduct ministry to service members. This resource serves as an excellent companion whereas to this project which seeks to provide a handbook to individual service members.

The Pillars of Christian Character.\textsuperscript{28} This book discusses what the author terms as thirteen fundamental pillars that all Christians must seek to develop as they mature in Christ. Far too often the modern church enables congregants with the ability to display superficial attitudes that lack authentic godly character. It helps to expose readers to much of what the Scripture says

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} R. A. Torrey, \textit{How to Succeed in the Christian Life}, (New York; Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906).
\item \textsuperscript{27} Donald W. Hadley and Gerald T. Richards, \textit{Ministry with the Military: A Guide for Churches and Chaplains}, (Grand Rapids, MI: 1992).
\end{itemize}
about the necessity of spiritual maturity, and offers practical insight on how they can participate in their sanctification through obedience.

*Politics according to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture.*\(^{29}\) One of the greatest struggles for those who seek to make disciples while wearing the military uniform is determining where perceived institutional policy might hinder their efforts, and properly assessing the legitimacy of such boundaries. While some limitations would be considered founded, others are unfounded and should be prayerfully examined for their origin and necessity. Grudem offers great help to those who serve in government positions in reconciling their higher calling to glorify God against hindrances they encounter on the job.

*Spiritual Growth in Grace.*\(^{30}\) It is staggering to contemplate the disparity between the amount of people who claim the title Christian compared to those who actually demonstrate the consistent fruit of spiritual growth. Pink argues here that true growth must be based solely upon a true knowledge of the Word of God, apart from which will only result in error and faulty religion. The author examines many attributes of spiritual maturity, such as its root, necessity, stages, decline, and evidences. This book helps readers to know that all Christians must grow.

*Success and the Christian: The Cost and Criteria of Spiritual Maturity.*\(^{31}\) Among the chief concerns throughout the author’s ministry was that the modern church was growing increasingly


aligned with the world. This book encompasses a collection of Tozer’s sermons preached at Southside Alliance Church in Chicago, that emphasizes the utter importance of exalting God above all else. He teaches that true growth will occur when the flesh is mortified and a retreat toward simplicity is pursued over the lusts of the world.

Webpages

http://aclj.org/. The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) and its globally affiliated organizations are committed to ensuring the ongoing viability of freedom and liberty in the United States and around the world. By focusing on U.S. constitutional law, European Union law and human rights law, the ACLJ and its affiliated organizations are dedicated to the concept that freedom and liberty are universal, God-given and inalienable rights that must be protected.

http://www.ocfusa.org/. Officer Christian Fellowship (OCF) is a national organization who seeks to help Christians in the military grow together in their relationship with God and others, and to unite them in biblical fellowship and outreach, equipping and encouraging them to minister effectively in the military society.

Scripture

This thesis relies most heavily upon Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 known as the Great Commission. His directions are clear in that all Christians must go, baptize and teach those who desire to follow him. In connection with Matthew’s account, Acts 1:8 will demonstrate that modern day Christians continue in the power of the Holy Spirit as they carry on the first century church’s mission to share the gospel across the globe.

In Matthew 4:19-20 Jesus instructed a group of career fishermen to, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The text reveals that the disciples immediately abandoned their
nets and followed Jesus. Although Christians in the military are in most instances not called to abandon their profession, this passage helps emphasize each Christian’s highest calling to make disciples.

It is not uncommon to discover some who profess a personal relationship with Christ, but readily admit little has changed from their former life. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” Jesus’ call to discipleship requires the death of self, and a continual commitment to follow him even through suffering.

Although preaching today frequently offers self-help remedies and comforting illustrations, Paul reminded the church in 1 Corinthians 2:2 that he had labored to proclaim Christ alone. Although a revered Jewish leader, he revealed in Philippians 3:7 that, “whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.” These two passages have greatly informed this author’s understanding of authentic Christian ministry and the result it produces in born again believers.

There are many church growth models utilized in the modern era, where some are even designed to make Christian assembly comfortable to the unsaved. Paul’s instruction in Ephesians 4:11-12 guides the conviction in this project that God has gifted few men to equip saints for the work of ministry. Having matured under the truth spoken in love, Ephesians 5:1 reveals that Christians must strive to imitate Christ.

Paul’s second epistle to Timothy provides great help in discipleship to all Christians in every generation. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Timothy is commanded to transplant those things he learned from Paul into the lives of other faithful disciple-makers, which emphasizes the unbroken chain of discipleship that will remain until Christ returns. The modern trend toward political
correctness has impacted military culture significantly, as the Department of Defense is often used to implement policy changes where legislative agendas lag. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveals that every passage of the Bible is God breathed and possesses those things needed for equipping God’s people for good works. For this reason Paul instructed his son in the faith in 2 Timothy 4:2 to, “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” Paul continued his instruction in 2 Timothy 4:5 by encouraging Timothy to suffer hardship as he shared the hope of the gospel with unbelievers. These passages will emphasize in this project the importance of all Christians to share the truth in love, which alone offers hope to those blinded by Satan.

God’s design for every born again Christian is to grow within the fellowship of other believers. Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” This passage reveals that God intends for all Christians to assemble together for the edification of one another.

Spiritual maturity is absolutely vital for those who desire to fulfill God’s purpose in their life. 1 Peter 1:14–15 says, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.” In Romans 12:1 Paul taught that true worship occurs when a believer presents their body “a living and holy sacrifice”. These passages reveal that God desires for his people to pursue holiness in their life, which means that previous patterns of sin must be abandoned.
CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM WITH DISOBEYING ORDERS

The urgency in which military orders are followed and the consequences for disobeying an order increase as the rank of the issuing authority increases. Shortly before the Ascension, Jesus said to the disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” As the highest possible authority giving the final instructions to those whom He had labored to disciple during His earthly ministry, Jesus’ command to “make disciples” should produce the greatest level of devotion from every Christian. The church has no shortage of resources written exclusively on the subject of the Great Commission, including the category of works that this project falls within. However, little has been written with the narrow perspective of how it applies specifically to the context of the lay military Christian. Before discussing the problem of failed discipleship in this setting, a biblical case must first be made for the command’s universal application in the life of every believer.

A Biblical Case for Discipleship

A person who freely receives God’s merciful gift of salvation when they confess “Jesus as Lord” after having believed in their “heart that God raised Him from the dead” are saved from the wrath of God that was until that moment apportioned for them. More than spectators in God’s redemptive plan, Paul writes that the redeemed “are His workmanship, created in Christ

1Romans 10:9.
Having been bought from the slave block with the highest possible price, Christians are throughout Scripture commanded to glorify God through worshipful obedience.

Extending beyond an initial decision when hearing the gospel, disciples of Christ are called to deny the dictates of the person who until that moment had been most important, themselves. Contrary to much modern thought in Christendom, being a disciple of Jesus demands daily self-denial and obedience to His will, even during times of great suffering. Because believers are no longer slaves to sin, Paul instructed the Corinthians to, “present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.” As slaves to Christ, disciples must hate all earthly relationship in comparison to their King. Those who have found this great treasure will trade everything they own to obtain it, as they grow to consider everything they have ever known as rubbish in comparison to gaining Him. As a result, they should pursue a deeper knowledge of Christ with great effort, repent when error is exposed, and move with urgency to obey all that He commands.

The pinnacle of Christian work on the earth emerges from the command to make disciples while sojourning through a world of enslaved men and women currently blinded by the god of this age. The Great Commission as contained in Matthew 28:18-20 has been attributed to the “why” Christians are left on the earth after their salvation. Addressing this passage John MacArthur writes:

If a Christian understands all the rest of the gospel of Matthew but fails to understand this closing passage, he has missed the point of the entire book. This

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3 Ephesians 2:10.
4 Romans 12:1.
6 Romans 6:19.
8 Matthew 13:44; Philippians 3:8.
passage is the climax and major focal point not only of this gospel but of the entire New Testament. It is not an exaggeration to say that, in its broadest sense, it is the focal point of all Scripture, Old Testament as well as New. This central message of Scripture pertains to the central mission of the people of God, a mission that, tragically, many Christians do not understand or are unwilling to fulfill.9

The word commission rings particularly loud in the ears of a military service member, because it carries specific connotations and privileges in the military rank structure. Every young enlisted member aspires to one day join the ranks of non-commissioned officer, where they will be delegated higher levels of authority and responsibility. However, it is the commissioned officer that carries the greatest relevance, as they are delegated a higher level of authority to issue lawful orders directly from the President of the United States. For the military Christian it should be easy to accept why Matthew 28:18-20 receives the prominent title of The Great Commission, because each disciple of Christ receives their orders directly from the highest possible authority.

Jesus begins his commission with the reality that He possesses all authority, both in heaven and on the earth. Orders given by Him are not negotiable, retractable, or subservient. Rather, they are absolute, immutable, and superseding in every possible aspect. With the weight of the commissioner’s binding command, believers are afforded His presence as He has promised to always be with them. This assurance was would have reminded the disciples of Jesus’ promise of rest when weary for those who are eternally yoked with their master who is both gentle and humble in heart.10

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9MacArthur, Matthew. 330.
10 Matthew 11:29-30.
In the Great Commission, the only imperative command is to “make disciples,” which seeks “the reproduction in others of what Jesus has produced in us.”\textsuperscript{11} It also contains three participles that reveal how disciple-making must be accomplished, the first of which is “go”. Hagnar concludes that since the main verb “make disciples” has the object “all the nations,” it must be assumed Christians are to go into all the world.\textsuperscript{12} As Thompson explains, many fall short by assuming they should wait until unbelievers come to hear.\textsuperscript{13} Secondly, in their going disciples are to share the gospel of Christ through evangelism that will culminate with baptism as the first act of obedience from a truly regenerated person. Finally, although many often cease their disciple-making after a person professes Christ, true discipleship requires that new believers must be taught to know and obey all that Jesus has commanded.

Discipleship conducted the way first modeled by Jesus and taught throughout the New Testament does not produce benchwarmers or spectators. Steven Collins writes, “Disciple making strategy has a front door and a back door. One enters as an infant believer and emerges as an empowered worker. In many ways, discipling is much like military book camp. Recruits enter as soft civilians and come out as toughened soldiers, ready for combat.”\textsuperscript{14} True discipleship produces obedient disciple-making disciples who will in due season produce other obedient disciple-making disciples. Paul instructed Timothy to “Suffer hardship with me, as a good


\textsuperscript{13} Thompson, Oscar W., Concentric Circles of Concern, Seven Stages for Making Disciples, rev. and exp. by Claude V. King. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 190.

soldier of Christ Jesus” as he went about imparting all that he had learned from Paul to “faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

**Unique Opportunities for Military Missionaries**

While every believer is empowered to be a witness in their going, one would do well to take inventory of the unique opportunities imparted to them for the proclamation of the Good News. Jesus taught, “…From everyone who has been given much, much will be required…” Sadly, like the wicked servant who hides their talent in the ground too many believers never fully utilize their giftedness in the work of the ministry.

Studies show that less than 23% of Christians will embrace Christ after age 21, and 64% of all Christians are saved before the age of 18. While these statistics also demonstrate that only approximately 13% embrace Christ between the ages of 18-21, as much as 40% of conversions from this group are attributed to either relational evangelism or a significant life event. Given the massive amount of time military Christians will spend in close proximity to their fellow service members, and the persistent stress produced in their challenging environment, military deployments typically yield plenty of opportunity for both. During World War II a common phrase often heard from allied troops was, “there are no atheists in foxholes.”

It is not uncommon for the foxhole missionary to hold a captive audience for hours or even days

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15 2 Timothy 2:2-3.
18 Ibid.
during times of great need in person’s life who is actively seeking to make sense of a fallen world.

Another key opportunity is found in the fact that unlike most missionaries who must work months or even years before they depart for the mission field to raise monetary support, military personnel on most occasions are not wanting of basic physical needs. Although they rarely receive luxury accommodations, items such as pay, lodging, and food rank among the lowest of concerns for the uniformed missionary as these things are readily provided by their service branch while serving both at home and abroad. Finally, other strengths typically found among this demographic are excellent health, intellect, and youthful energy. While not all deployed Christians will be the beneficiary of these unique opportunities on their deployment, most will find this list typical. In chapter two an analysis will be provided of the unique challenges these men and women of the faith must endure while deployed, however, the next sections will reveal that their greatest enemy to overcome is the flesh.

**Battlefield Analysis**

When one contemplates the implications of the Great Commission, and envisions the New Testament church concerned about the Father’s business, they see people of God in motion, however, the opposite tends to occur on military deployments. Before a case is presented here, it must first be restated that God has and will continue to use men and women in the military to accomplish tremendous things for His glory. In even the most dire of circumstances, any observer who will certainly be biased toward their subjective perspective must resist the temptation to adopt what many have termed the “Elijah Complex”.\(^{20}\) Elijah was reproved by God

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who reminded him 7,000 had not bowed or kissed Baal after the prophet murmured that he alone remained faithful to God.\textsuperscript{21} With this reality in view, it is this author’s humble conviction that discipleship routinely suffers in military circles.

In the introduction it was revealed that through nearly twenty years of active duty service, this author has consistently observed less than optimal results in discipleship. This reality was most apparent on a personal level, and particularly prior to conversion where there was no desire to obey God’s Word as an act of worship. Once saved, there was a longing to bring God glory in fulfilling the Great Commission but on most occasions ineffectiveness in disciple-making. In 2009, an assignment as a flight instructor yielded an opportunity to decompress from a relentless deployment schedule and pursue ministry training. This season provided time to complete a seminary degree, teach in the local church, participate in a prison ministry, and fulfill a great passion of discipling the next generation of fighter pilots. These three years proved vital in equipping for the work of ministry that occurred during a follow-on tour aboard a naval ship carrying approximately 2,500 service members. Once deployed there was opportunity to teach multiple times each week, preach often during chapel services, and conduct an extensive amount of one-on-one discipleship. This vantage point granted the author a unique ability to better assess why discipleship suffers amongst the ranks.

Low Priority on Spiritual Growth

John wrote his first epistle to an audience of believers that were at three different levels of spiritual maturity, which he addressed as children, young men, and fathers.\textsuperscript{22} God intends all Christians to undergo a continual process of transformation into the image of Christ called

\textsuperscript{21} 1 Kings 19:18.
\textsuperscript{22} 1 John 2:12-14.
sanctification, where they grow from spiritual infants into mature saints. Only the born again believer by the Spirit who is connected intimately to Jesus is capable of true spiritual growth through an ever-increasing knowledge of God’s Word. Scripture illuminated by the Holy Spirit will provide the nourishment needed for spiritual growth, which is why Peter exhorts his readers, “like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

Some in the church at Corinth erred in assigning their allegiance to the one who had discipled them, but Paul made it clear that while men are called to sow and water the Word into a believer’s life, it is God alone that causes growth. However, along with pursuing knowledge of the Word, true growth occurs as a Christian moves beyond hearing to doing what Christ has commanded through acts of obedience. Grudem explains that man is called to cooperate with God in sanctification by both passively depending upon God’s work, and actively striving to obey what He commands. He writes:

> We are not saying that we have equal roles in sanctification or that we both work in the same way, but simply that we cooperate with God in ways that are appropriate to our status as God’s creatures. And the fact that Scripture emphasizes the role that we play in sanctification (with all the moral commands of the New Testament), makes it appropriate to teach that God calls us to cooperate with him in this activity.

As with many doctrines in Scripture, it can be rather difficult for some Christians to reconcile what they perceive as an apparent paradox between God and man’s role in sanctification. This is likely best illuminated in Paul’s letter to the Philippians when he writes,

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23 1 Peter 2:2.
25 James 1:22.
“…work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and work for His good pleasure.”27 In this passage the apostle reveals that God works in a believer, while at the same time expects them to strive with reverential obedience. Newton explains that a Christian must surrender as much of themselves to Christ as they have come to understand at that their current level of spiritual maturity.28

Tragically, some Christians fail to move beyond spiritual infancy or experience long seasons of stagnation by neglecting their part in sanctification. MacArthur contends that one may even regress spiritually, only to one day have to regain spiritual ground previously held.29 Although true conversion should produce a hunger to grow deeper in one’s relationship with their redeemer, the potential of spiritual apathy is always a near and present danger. The Hebrew writer rebuked his readers because of their dullness in hearing the Word, and their inability to endure solid food although they themselves ought to have been teachers.30 The reality is that no Christian is ever exempt from the potential to drift toward apathy and sluggishness, which is why spiritual growth must always be the highest priority for a believer.31

The average American service member who courageously joins the modern day all-volunteer armed forces that have been at war for more than a decade are in most accounts extremely driven to succeed at whatever they commit themselves to. They are by nature ambitious, set challenging goals, and often succeed in realizing even their most lofty aspirations. They know how to plan ahead before an upcoming deployment and amazingly work various

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28 Newton, Spiritual Maturity, 17.
30 Hebrews 5:11-12.
logistical feats to bring with them items such as guitars, electronics, and volumes of textbooks so that their progress is not delayed during time spent abroad, however, it is not uncommon to discover that military Christians neglect to include items that might aide in pursuing spiritual growth. While the majority do bring along a Bible, it is also not uncommon to discover that few if any days are spent studying it.

A major reason why Christians fail to grow spiritually is that they simply do not make it a priority in their life. Barna explains that sixty percent of Christians fail to grow spiritually because they never set any goals, standards of measurement, or means of accountability for their spiritual growth. He concludes, “Six out of ten believers have no sense of what they want to achieve or become.” Operational tempo can dictate how much time is spent during a considerable portion of the day, but there are often periods of solitude away from familial relationships and distractions such as media that could be dedicated to God for spiritual growth. Unfortunately, the prevailing trend is that other means of questionable entertainment are allowed or even sought after to monopolize one’s time.

A.W. Tozer explains that like the Hebrews, many Christians are far too content with only a superficial knowledge of elementary truth. In the way that a baby cannot concentrate on deeper levels of conversation, spiritual infants cannot press beyond elementary teaching, which inhibits their ability to grow in Christlikeness. It is easily understood why it is unnatural for an adult who still behaves as an infant due to mental impairment, yet many Christians do not see the spiritual parallel in their own sanctification. While ignorance of spiritual things should be

33 Ibid.,36.
34 Tozer and Snyder, *Success and the Christian*, 3.
accepted and tolerated in a new Christian, apathy toward spiritual growth should be loathed. Arthur Pink exclaims of the danger that exists when slumbering saints become content on, “Trifling away opportunities to glorify their Saviour, instead of redeeming the time: rusting, instead of wearing out in His service.” MacArthur contends that apart from willful disobedience, the most foolish thing a Christian can do is squander the precious time given them by God who commands them to walk in wisdom. The military Christian’s time is wisely spent by establishing spiritual goals prior to deployment and working each day to fulfill their part in accomplishing them.

Failure to Assemble

The Marine Corps’ philosophy is that every Marine should be equipped with the training necessary to operate as a basic rifleman. During introductory infantry training the concept of the assembly area is introduced which is where final preparations are made before stepping into combat, where a Marine can check his fellow warrior’s gear, and in return have his own gear checked. A parallel exists in regards to the church when Christians are commanded, “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” Peter warned the church that they must remain alert because the enemy

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35 Arthur W. Pink, Practical Christianity (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 115.
37 Newton, Spiritual Maturity, 113.
39 Hebrews 10:24-25.
prowled “like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” ⁴⁰ Like a gazelle separated from the herd, Christians become extremely vulnerable to the devil’s schemes when they attempt to live in isolation from the church.

The Holy Spirit baptizes each believer into the body of Christ at the moment of their salvation. ⁴¹ The church at Corinth was fighting over the superiority of the sign gifts, but Paul wrote to them that each believer is imparted with unique manifestations of the Spirit according to His own will. While the Corinthians erred in becoming puffed up, it was made clear that spiritual gifts are not imparted for one’s own ego, but rather the common good of the entire body. ⁴² One of the greatest joys that a believer can experience is using their giftedness to edify a brother or sister as an act of worship to God. One of the greatest comforts during seasons of adversity is the church’s unique ability to hold up a troubled soul as they lovingly share a burden as their own.

Hours before Jesus was taken into captivity He prayed that the disciples, and those who would become disciples by hearing their words, would be one in perfect unity. ⁴³ John would later pen his first epistle proclaiming the eternal life sent by the Father and manifested to the disciples “so that you too may have fellowship with us.” ⁴⁴ Although Scripture reveals God’s will for all Christians to unify as one, it is not uncommon for those in the military to forsake assembling together on deployment. ⁴⁵ While many attend church regularly at home, they allow a variety of reasons to override their obligation to be unified with their brothers and sisters while overseas.

⁴⁰ 1 Peter 5:8.
⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 12:13.
⁴² 1 Corinthians 12:7.
⁴⁴ 1 John 1:3.
⁴⁵ Philippians 2:2.
Admittedly, although claiming to be a Christian, this author assembled with other believers less than twenty-five percent of the time during the first ten years of military service. Despite frequent petitioning during the first deployment after conversion, most Christian coworkers denied requests to attend worship service or participate in Bible study on a consistent basis. This was logically easy to reconcile because the squadron moved geographical locations often, and there were a vast amount of alternative activates such as touring the local area that seemed to keep most from attending. However, the deployment aboard the naval ship brought to light the discouraging reality that many service members who proclaim Christ simply do not choose to assemble with other believers while on the majority of the time.

The military is readily accepted as a cross-section of American society, where according to a Gallup poll conducted in December of 2012, 77% percent self-identify as Christian. On a ship of approximately 2,500, on average less than 100 people or 4% attended at least one of several worship services, or more than 10 Bible studies each week. It was easy to comprehend low attendance while at home where there are numerous competing factors, or when deployed to a foreign land that offered frequent travel opportunities, however, on the ship there were very few alternatives. One could assume that a card tournament, karaoke, or movie night would pull most from attending a religious gathering, however, it also become routine for professing Christians to forgo assembling with other believers when there were no other alternatives, even when attending would have yielded them time away from their duties.

There was a growing trend for some to observe recorded services from their home church over the Internet. A common complaint was that the chapel service was too different from what

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they were accustomed too; however, the reality is that they were not benefiting from the encouragement and accountability each Christian needs. Although they were not yet apostates, Spence explains that those who habitually refused to assemble in the Hebrew church were in danger of apostasy. Applicable to any Christian, he writes, “He who neglects the Christian assemblies is likely to ere long to forsake the Christian Church and renounce the Christian faith…”

In the modern age many who proclaim Christ have adopted a consumerism mentality where they exalt their comfort and preferences over obeying what Scripture commands regarding fellowship with the body of Christ. In a recent sermon MacArthur put his finger precisely on the source of the issue when he said:

I think the contemporary evangelical world has lost this great reality of the life of the church. Part of it, of course, is because evangelicalism today appeals to people on the basis of what they want. And so, they start by seeing Christianity as something that gives me what I want. That doesn’t turn you loose to sacrifice your life for the needs of others. It’s the opposite of that. It’s narcissistic self-indulgence that is presented so very often…The evangelical church has, for decades, been trying to give the culture what it wants, and people want what they want, and they have created a world in which their own wants dominate. What do people want? They want privacy. They want convenience. They want low commitment. They want anonymity. They want unaccountability. And mostly, they want self-promotion and self-actualization.

Often discouraged by this reality, the question of why Christians were refusing to assemble was posed systematically to professing Christians. From the wrong music, the boring speaker, the quirky chaplain, or any myriad of activities that received higher priority, many were content holding little regard for unity with other believers. It appears by all accounts that a generation has arrived that is simply tired of any church activity that does not suit their own

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49 Philippians 2:2.
liking. The result is a lack of maturity to see past one’s own preferences that leaves them isolated from the body of Christ, where they place their own needs above others, and they follow their will above God’s. From experience this author sympathized for every spiritual leader that suffered discouragement. The reality is that most Christians who failed to participate in corporate worship with the body of Christ regressed spiritually while deployed, and rarely sought to glorify God by fulfilling the Great Commission.

Carnal Creep

Shortly after deploying aboard the ship many came to admire a young leader who seemed committed to study the Bible each day with his wife through email correspondence. He offered great support when a Bible study was started with coworkers, but within a few weeks it became increasingly difficult to convince him of the need to remain faithful. After a couple of months it was common to find him in the gym two times per day, but he had completely quit attending any form of Christian fellowship. Having shared Paul’s advice that, “bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things…” it seemed to fall on deaf ears. More effort was made to encourage him further after he revealed that his marriage was suffering, but he still failed to make his spiritual growth or fellowship with other believers a priority. Sadly, in a short while he was reprimanded for sexual misconduct and sent home early with his career and marriage shipwrecked.

This firsthand account helped shed new light on David’s sin with Bathsheba found in 2 Samuel 11. Whether a person lived in the Old Testament era or up until this present day, God’s principles as revealed in Scripture are timeless. Paul instructed the Galatians, “Do not be

[50] 1 Timothy 4:8.
deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."\(^{51}\) Charles Stanley writes, “You reap what you sow, more than you sow, and later than you sow.”\(^{52}\) The problem with sowing bad seed is exasperated when some are deceived into complacency because it takes time for their deeds to materialize. Furthermore, it often leaves one terrorized when they discover more of a harvest than they bargained for.

A natural consequence of only sowing into the things of the flesh is that only deeds of the flesh can be reaped. When disciples do not sow into their own spiritual growth by reading and obeying God’s Word, or fail to assemble with other believers for both encouragement and accountability, they often reap the fruit of carnality. Jesus called all disciples to “…be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” which should produce a tremendous desire to strive for personal holiness.\(^ {53}\) However, many military Christians seem careless in their duty to obey all that Christ commands, which is precisely where carnality begins.\(^ {54}\)

As discussed previously, among the unique opportunities of being a military missionary is that in going about the normal performance of their duties, their feet will often trod on foreign lands that would not have been open to them otherwise. This opportunity can yield a wide open door to share the Good News in Christ-less cultures. Tragically, instead of capitalizing on the open door to glorify God through missions, many choose instead to indulge in every possible enticement of the flesh found in those cultures.

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\(^{51}\) Galatians 6:7.


\(^{53}\) Matthew 5:48.

While it is staggering to consider how a Christian could so easily turn from their command to deny fleshly desires, most often it begins with a temptation to over indulge in alcohol. One of the biggest points of division among military Christians is to what extent believers should partake if at all. Because the military readily endorses alcoholic consumption at command sponsored events, it becomes commonplace even among those who feel that it violates their conscious. It reigns as the focal point that all liberty activity is planned around, and often even those as young as eighteen are allowed to participate while deployed. Although many defend with great passion their liberty to drink as a Christian, they often fail to incorporate such passages that demand a struggling brother be considered, prohibit drunkenness, and forbid one’s participation in drinking parties.\(^55\)

While acknowledging the sincerity of those that contend their conscious is clear, this author is convinced that not every conscious judges objectively with the rule of Scripture. One fellow Christian once insisted that his conscious was clear after consuming more than nine strong alcoholic drinks within the course of few hours, where it is physically impossible to prevent some degree of inebriation. Paul wrote, “all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All Things are lawful, but not all things edify.”\(^56\) While some may contend they have the unabridged liberty to drink, an objective consideration would likely concede that choosing to do so during drinking parties is less than wise.\(^57\) Almost without exception, service members who are punished for misconduct have at some point in the hours preceding the event in question consumed alcohol.

\(^{55}\) Romans 14:21; Galatians 5:21; 1 Peter 4:3.  
\(^{56}\) 1 Corinthians 10:23.  
\(^{57}\) Ephesians 5:15-18.
Those aboard a ship or in a combat zone can often forgo the temptation of alcohol abuse due to its unavailability; however, there is rarely a shortage of sexually explicit media that so easily entangles Christians in a weakened spiritual condition. Many fail to realize that they are committing adultery according to Jesus when they choose to lust over pornographic material.\(^{58}\) While various forms of pornography have existed for centuries, the modern digital age has ushered in its proliferation on an epidemic scale where it now continues to have a devastating impact on all of society.\(^{59}\) Like many who profess Christ across globe, a large percentage of those who serve in the military persistently demonstrate a lack of discernment about what they allow into their soul through the eyes, which Jesus called the lamp of the body.\(^{60}\) It is not surprising to discover that like David, what is viewed in private is typically only the beginning of sinful sexual behavior.

In summary the problem is that those who are called to be light often fail to convince the world by a godly example that Jesus has made any difference in their life. By succumbing to temptations such as drunkenness, sexual immorality, and perverse speech they compromise their witness and diminish the ability to be effective in ministry. Bewildered by guilt, they live a defeated existence, often promising themselves to do better once this season of their life comes to a close when they return home. The reality is those who live habitually unfaithful on deployment will continue to do so until they repent, turn from their sin, and trust in their connection to the Vine to produce the good fruit God has prepared for them.


\(^{60}\) Matthew 6:22.
The Ill-Equipped Missionary

Shortly after beginning ministry aboard the ship, a spirited young man began to attend worship service regularly. While he did express joy on some occasions, often he seemed to be in great despair. The group began to pray for him after the worship service, encouraging him in the passageway when crossing paths, and spending time after the service discipling him. Suddenly his spiritual growth took off exponentially where he shared his testimony during service and began to lead a prayer group and Bible study with his peers every evening. Burdened for the hundreds of young service members he could hear singing during an open mic season that was being conducted just a short distance from the prayer meeting, he began to cry out for God to provide an opportunity to minister to them. To his own amazement that opportunity came much sooner than anticipated as his heart was quickened by the Holy Spirit when passing by the event on the way to his room. He sensed that God was leading him to share the gospel, and after some brief internal wrestling, that’s precisely what he did! When the microphone became open to any taker he briefly introduced himself, and then with increasing boldness began to share the Good News of Christ from his heart. Some wept bitterly as he preached, others scorned him in contempt because their party had been interrupted, but all heard the truth about Jesus because this young disciple chose to glorify God through obedience to the Great Commission.

It is typical to find many Christians who want to serve God in roles where there is a void in spiritual leadership, but lack maturity and experience because they have never themselves been adequately discipled. Most students of church history are surprised to discover that the Englishman Charles Spurgeon who is known as the Prince of Preachers was saved in 1850, at the age of fifteen and would only wait one year until being asked to preach in a small village cottage. Soon after he was called to his first pastorate, and within two years he was asked to serve at New...
Park Street Chapel in Southwark where he gave his first sermon recorded in print at age nineteen. Uniquely gifted, Spurgeon preached each week extemporaneously from just a brief outline, which would be transcribed and read around the globe.”

It is readily acknowledged that Spurgeon was gifted beyond most men, however, some fail to understand the extent in which he was discipled by a godly grandfather and immediate family. The young man above had come from a broken home and drug abuse, but began to flourish with discipleship.

It would be a serious mistake to assume that God does not use poorly discipled new Christians who are hungry to serve. However, they are often not as effective in fulfilling the Great Commission as they could be. In due season they will grow into maturity, but more time spent in preparation before their deployment would have better equipped them for their immediate task. They most often know they could be doing more, but are seemingly stuck with their own internal struggles. They shed many tears for the lost, experience frustration every time God’s name is slandered, and at times cower to their perception of unfounded government policies limiting the sharing of one’s Christian faith. They lack an understanding of the importance of prayer, and because they are anemic in the Word, are easily deceived by the enemy such as the true reason why God allows His children to suffer. Like the man mentioned above, he struggled with condemnation in his own life and needed to know with certainty that by God’s grace he was completely forgiven, and even counted as righteous in God’s eyes because he possessed the righteousness of Christ. 

This project seeks to impart to these young warriors

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62 Romans 3:22.
in the faith God’s message to 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.”

**Diminished Results**

When the Great Commission is being fulfilled lost people become evangelized, baptized, and are taught to know and obey Jesus’ commands; however, throughout this chapter the case has been presented that to a large extent discipleship falls short among military believers on deployment. Many who proclaim to be Christian fail to mature beyond spiritual infancy, while others even show signs of regression during their time away. Some light-heartedly dismiss basic commands in Scripture such as the believer’s obligation to assemble with the body of Christ and treat lightly their call to pursue holiness. Many opportunities to help others grow in Christ are squandered needlessly, and as a natural consequence carnality reigns as a diluted form of Christianity is displayed before unbelieving service members. Because students seldom rise above the level of their spiritual leadership, chances are high that compromising disciples will only produce other disciples who tolerate compromise in their life.

Spiritual apathy is problematic for Christians of all generations because those who become complacent in pursuing holiness will likely become indifferent toward the Great Commission as a whole. On many occasions this author has been astonished by the lack of desire among professing Christians to pray, evangelize, and live as an obedient example so that some of the unbelievers they encountered each day might come to know Christ as Lord. Beyond indifference, some Christians even express distain when they observe any attempt at evangelism because they are convinced that one’s faith should be kept private in the workplace.

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63 Joshua 1:9.

Finally, discipleship does not occur on the level that it should because many who desire to make disciples are ill equipped to do so with great effect. While there are many reasons why military Christians might lack experience in disciple-making, their youth seems to be among the most obvious factors. Some are quick to dismiss the potential young Christians can have in ministry, yet church history has revealed countless examples of young men and women God has used mightily in fulfilling the Great commission. Jesus’ disciples were young unprepared and ignorant bunglers and God used them to forever change the world with the love of Christ.65

CHAPTER TWO

WHY MILITARY DISCIPLESHIP SUFFERS: AND THE SURVEY SAYS…

The case presented thus far has sought to establish that discipleship suffers in the military environment, and specifically while on overseas deployments. This section seeks to examine some of the casual factors impacting this reality with analysis of data gathered through an anonymous survey of seventy-seven active duty and veteran service members from the United States Navy and Marine Corps. The intent of the survey was to identify where deficiencies exist in both biblical knowledge and discipleship experience that inhibit uniformed service members from fulfilling the Great Commission. Of the twenty questions asked, the two listed below were designed to establish the demographics:

![Figure 1. Percentages of Responses Related to Time Since Previous Deployment.](image-url)
The primary method for recruiting participants was by direct contact with past and present co-workers, and others they felt might be interested. Of those surveyed, 93.5% professed to follow Christ, revealing that non-Christians typically declined to participate. Another major factor influencing the results is that nearly one-third of respondents had never deployed overseas. While the survey requested those who fall into this category to answer all questions in the context of their previous year of military service, it is impossible to capture from this group some of the areas of difficulty identified in this project, such as a decline in Christian fellowship once deployed.

**Unique Challenges for Military Missionaries**

In chapter two, some of the unique opportunities available to uniformed missionaries were identified, which helped shed light on that fact that more must be done to prepare these Christians in fulfilling the Great Commission. In an attempt to diagnose the cause of the problem

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1 Figure 2 reveals that a combined total of 93.5% of those surveyed professed to be a Christian.
correctly, it is fitting to begin this section with some of the unique challenges also inherent to military ministry. Among the greatest obstacles is the fact that military service members are forced to constantly move geographic locations, and are normally prohibited from remaining at one duty station for more than three years. Additionally, a service member’s time away from the work environment can always be minimized due to mission necessity. This has many adverse effects, such as making lasting relationships in a local church very challenging that are essential in the discipleship process. The survey revealed that the challenging demand on a service member’s time does not lessen once they are deployed. When asked to identify the greatest obstacle to attending corporate worship or Bible study, operational necessity was the leading cause.¹

![Figure 3. Percentages of Responses Related to Greatest Obstacle to Christian Fellowship.](image)

Figure 3. Percentages of Responses Related to Greatest Obstacle to Christian Fellowship.

¹Figure 3 reflects that operational tempo was the greatest obstacle to attending corporate worship or Bible study. Of the 19 people surveyed that responded “other”, 5 indicated they never deployed, while 4 cited a combination of operational tempo and competing distractions on personal time.
Those who serve in the armed forces must be in prime physical condition because the conditions found in combat can be very physically demanding. For this reason young adults are the primary demographic targeted in recruiting. While many are afforded the opportunity to stay until much older, the maximum age across the service branches for new recruits ranges from 28 years for the Marines and 39 years for the Air Force. As all young people, temptation toward sexual immorality is particularly challenging, and only intensifies when surrounded by those practicing ungodly behavior. In addition, married service members are forced to be away from their spouse several months at a time. Young adults often lack spiritual maturity simply because they have not been Christians for very long, which can make serving as a military missionary who does not compromise a significant challenge. When asked to identify the issues that restrict military Christians from remaining unified in their mission to encourage and help hold their brothers and sisters in Christ accountable, more than 57% believed it was a corporate lack of spiritual maturity or attempting to serve in an ungodly environment.

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Figure 4. Percentages of Responses Related to Greatest Obstacle to Christian Unity.

Along with sexual temptation, being away from home can also produce prolonged times of homesickness and loneliness as Christians feel isolated from both their family and local church. Although they often greatly desire Christian fellowship, they come up empty handed when there is a void in spiritual leadership, or the chaplain they have teaches another gospel. These feelings only intensify when forced to work up to seven days a week around many who reject Christ, or even those who profess Him but remain apathetic in obeying what He commands. Further still, a demanding work schedule can make it difficult to remain consistent in spending personal time with the Lord, resulting in spiritual weakness while surrounded by so many worldly enticements.

A final unique challenge for military ministry that has worsened in recent years is combat fatigue resulting from more than a decade of warfare. As a consequence some service members have been required to deploy as many as seven times into harm’s way, often only being afforded six months or less at home to recuperate before the cycle repeats. Many have been exposed to horrific bouts of live combat that has left them battle scarred, not only with physical wounds, but
also with emotional wounds such as post-traumatic stress. Undoubtedly, there are service members that are uniquely challenged in fulfilling the Great Commission, and countless more of their fellow patriots who struggle to comprehend the love Christ because of this condition. In addition to the unique challenges identified here, the next section will address how military discipleship suffers because most Christian service members are never properly equipped as disciple-makers.

**Sometimes They Don’t Know**

One of the greatest tragedies in the modern age is a gospel presentation that beckons hearers to accept Jesus, but is absent of any call to follow him in unconditional obedience.\(^4\) Montoya believes that preachers motivated by numerical growth have, “resorted to a diluted gospel void of the saving features. They have resorted another gospel and inferior results are evident.”\(^5\) MacArthur is convinced that a vast amount of American churches have abandoned biblical preaching, choosing instead to become market-driven and user-friendly.\(^6\) He quotes one church advertisement that read, “As with all clergymen this pastor’s answer is God, but he slips Him in at the end, and even then doesn’t get heavy. No ranting, no raving. No fire, no brimstone. He doesn’t even use the H-word. Call it Light Gospel. It has the same salvation as the Old Time Religion, but with a third less guilt.”\(^7\)

A natural consequence of preaching not based solely upon the Word of God is entire churches whose congregants suffer from biblical illiteracy. Michael Fabarez contends that God’s

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\(^7\) Ibid., 47.
people are anemic of the Word because preachers have been content to feed them junk food that only seeks to affirm their current behavior.\(^8\) Beyond poor pulpit preaching, churches have failed in equipping the flock for discipleship. Elton Trueblood writes, “Cheap Christianity can usually pull a pretty good attendance on Sunday morning. It is cheap whenever the people think of themselves as spectators at a performance.”\(^9\) By failing to preach the true cost of being a disciple, and teaching disciples to obey all that Jesus commands, churches are filled with an audience who only observes Christianity from afar.

![Figure 5. Percentages of Responses Related to Discipleship Training.](image)

Gary Newton explains that just as Christ nurtured His disciples, it is the church in their role to equip believers that is the essential factor in fulfilling the Great Commission.\(^10\) The majority of those participated in the survey know what the Great Commission means, but they fail to follow through on their part in fulfilling it. Figure 5 reveals that among those surveyed, a


\(^10\) Newton, *Spiritual Maturity*, 32.
combined total of 83% percent did not receive what they considered to be adequate discipleship training from their church prior to deploying. Although 27% of those admitted that they did not attend a local church regularly, more than 56% believed that their church failed to equip them in their task to make disciples. Figure 6 demonstrates a clear indicator of how this impacts discipleship is that 64% of those surveyed have never discipled another Christian while serving in the military, and only 20% have discipled more than 2 Christians.

![Figure 6. Percentages of Responses Related to Number of Christians Discipled.](image)

Often missionaries understand their call months or even years before transitioning to the mission field and dedicate time needed for ministry preparation.\(^1\) However, it is not uncommon to find military Christians who are quickly approaching a deployment who lack any understanding of their call to make disciples.\(^2\) There is a wide gap in local churches that are located near military installations that do not actively seek to equip their military members for missions. Many churches often excel at drawing military Christians, yet rarely become

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\(^2\) Hadley and Richards, *Ministry with the Military*, 121.
intentional in actively preparing them for an upcoming deployment. Because of this fact, churches fail to properly discern one of the major reasons God’s has entrusted these military missionaries to their local body for a short season. There is no expectation that a faithful Bible-believing church will exist where a military member will be deployed, and there is an increasing trend that military chaplains will not preach a saving gospel. With this knowledge, a kingdom minded congregation must move with intensity and diligence to equip their military members for the work of ministry while deployed.

**Sometimes They Don’t Obey**

James exhorted his readers to, “prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”13 While much more must be done within the local church, ultimately each individual believer is responsible for what they do or fail to do with the truth they are given. Three questions asked in the survey were specifically designed to uncover areas where participants might lack a basic biblical understanding of key issues related to discipleship. When asked to explain how people are saved in their own words, the vast majority of responses were consistent to salvation by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. Additionally, the responses to the two questions below indicate that most participants understand God’s will for His children.

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13 James 1:22.
Tragically, there seems to be an increasing trend in the American church toward apathy of the truth, readily apparent when those who profess to know Christ demonstrate little or no priority in their life to obey what He commands. Addressing this issue in a recent sermon David Platt cited that while 80% of Americans self-identify as Christians, less than half assemble with a
local body of believers weekly and believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word.\textsuperscript{14} He adds that a more troubling statistic is that half of all Americans claim to be born again Christians, but live very much like the world and reject fundamental essentials of faith such as the fact that Jesus was without sin.\textsuperscript{15} He concludes, “the one thing that’s abundantly clear from those statistics is that there are a whole lot of people in our country who think that they are Christians, but they are not. There are scores of people—here and around the world who culturally distinguish themselves as Christians and biblically are not followers of Christ.”\textsuperscript{16}

The survey conducted among US Navy and Marine personnel for this project lends great support to Platt’s assertions. The following questions were designed to identify to what degree Christians sought to fulfill the Great Commission and obey the Christian’s obligation to assemble with other believers:

![Figure 9. Percentages of Responses Related to Frequency of Evangelism Encounters.](image)


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Figure 10. Percentages of Responses Related to Frequency of Christian Assembly.

While 65% believe that the Christian’s highest goal is to glorify God, and 64% understand that the Great Commission is every Christian’s mandate given by Christ to make disciples, 23% share the gospel with unbelievers only once a year, while 30% never do. Of those surveyed, nearly half failed to assemble with other believers more than once a month for corporate worship, where 73% neglected to assemble with other believers for small group Bible study even when a group was readily assessable to them. While most would attest that these numbers reveal low attendance, this author’s personal experience reveals that actual corporate worship attendance among deployed Christians is significantly lower.

According to the survey, 53% had no spiritual goals prior to their deployment, yet 62% were to varying degrees satisfied with their spiritual growth, and 82% expressed at least some level of satisfaction with their Christ-like example before others. As previously stated, God has and continues to use military Christians for His glory in tremendous ways, but there is clearly a disparity between knowing God’s will and obeying it when 96% of those surveyed profess to
have known Christ for more than 5 years, but nearly 64% have never made a disciple who worship’s Jesus.

**Shifting Sand**

Given the amount of time one’s adult life is spent in the work place, it is inconceivable to consider that Christians might believe God is indifferent when His children squander that precious time being silent and making no attempt to lead the lost to Christ. On the contrary, the workplace is the mission field for the lay Christian where God has called them to be His witnesses. Christians must care enough about those around them to form relationships, pray for them, model Christlikeness, and even willing to endure suffering at their hand that will often yield the opportunity to give a defense for the hope that is within.¹⁷ God loves the world so much that He sends His ambassadors to share Christ, and Christians must never allow anything to sway them from their devotion and obedience to His will. However, this author’s experience has revealed that military Christians often are uncertain about whether they are allowed to share their faith while in uniform, and many express great concern over their belief that Christian liberty is eroding away.

**Trend Toward Adversity**

One of the most pernicious lies of the enemy that has had a chilling effect on discipleship in the modern age is that Christians must separate their faith from the workplace, particularly when they are in any way connected to the government. Many organizations can be rigid in policy regarding what is permitted and prohibited behavior among their employees, however, the military alone carries the full weight of law as prescribed under the Uniformed Code of Military

¹⁷ 1 Peter 3:15.
Justice (UCMJ). This reality is a primary reason why the evangelical community spoke out with urgency when numerous sources reported in the spring of 2013 that the Pentagon was considering court marshaling military Christians who share their faith. Todd Starnes linked the movement to a private meeting between Mikey Weinstein who serves as President of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation with Pentagon officials held on April 23, 2013. Likening Christian evangelism to spiritual rape, and contending that those who do share their faith to be enemies of the Constitution, Weinstein stated:

U.S. troops who proselytize are guilty of sedition and treason and should be punished – by the hundreds if necessary – to stave off a “tidal wave of fundamentalists”…Someone needs to be punished for this…Until the Air Force or Army or Navy or Marine Corps punishes a member of the military for unconstitutional religious proselytizing and oppression, we will never have the ability to stop this horrible, horrendous, dehumanizing behavior.

Tensions only heightened as a result of initial confirmation by a Pentagon spokesman who stated, “Religious proselytization is not permitted within the Department of Defense… Court-martials and non-judicial punishments are decided on a case-by-case basis.” Public outcry from Christians across the nation exploded, including senior level officers such as Rear Admiral William Lee who pledged at the National Day of Prayer on May 2, 2013 in Washington to never retreat from, “my right under the Constitution to tell a young man that there is hope.”

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20 Ibid.


Those who support military service members’ constitutional right to practice their faith were relieved to learn that the Pentagon quickly released a clarifying statement that read:

The U.S. Department of Defense has never and will never single out a particular religious group for persecution or prosecution…Service members can share their faith (evangelize), but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one’s beliefs (proselytization)…The Department of Defense places a high value on the rights of members of the Military Services to observe the tenets of their respective religions and respects (and supports by its policy) the rights of others to their own religious beliefs, including the right to hold no beliefs. The Department does not endorse any one religion or religious organization, and provides free access of religion for all members of the military services. We work to ensure that all service members are free to exercise their Constitutional right to practice their religion in a manner that is respectful of other individuals’ rights to follow their own belief systems; and in ways that are conducive to good order and discipline; and that do not detract from accomplishing the military mission.  

Because many military Christians struggle to find the proper balance between glorifying God and serving their nation honorably, it is important here to clarify the fact that the First Amendment explicitly extends the absolute right for all American citizens to freely exercise their religious faith, including those in uniform. Wayne House explains that the “absolute separation of church and state” interpretation of the establishment clause in the First Amendment has caused consternation among Christians. In 1984, Supreme Court Justice Rehnquist exposed that the term “wall of separation” was coined by Thomas Jefferson 14 years after the First Amendment was drafted, and was inconsistent with the original framers intent, likely because Jefferson was overseas when the clause was debated. In his dissenting opinion of Wallace vs. Jaffree he wrote, “It is impossible to build sound constitutional doctrine upon a mistaken

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understanding of Constitutional history but unfortunately the establishment clause had been expressly freighted with Jefferson’s misleading metaphor for nearly forty years.”26 Rehnquist was convinced that trending faulty interpretation was void of any sound historical fact and had completely missed the intent of the founding fathers. He concluded:

But the greatest injury of the "wall" notion is its mischievous diversion of judges from the actual intentions of the drafters of the Bill of Rights. The "crucible of litigation," ante, at 2487, is well adapted to adjudicating factual disputes on the basis of testimony presented in court, but no amount of repetition of historical errors in judicial opinions can make the errors true. The "wall of separation between church and State" is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned.27

The survey question below identifies that there is uncertainty about when and to whom one can share their faith, where only 26% expressed complete liberty to evangelize unbelievers. Although 77% believed that they could share their faith with anyone, approximately two thirds expressed concerns about doing so with someone other than a peer. In his doctoral thesis A History and Evaluation of Workplace Ministry in America, David Freeland explains that as long as religious harassment does not occur, Christians have the constitutional right to share their faith through evangelism in their workplace. He concludes that religious harassment, “takes place when a hostile work environment is created by using religion as a basis for giving raises, promotions or hiring.”28


Figure 11. Percentages of Responses Related to Liberty of Military Christians to Evangelize.

The threat of court marshaling Christians who share their faith is just one of countless stories within the previous decade that have left many service members with the feeling that their religious liberty is eroding. In March of 2014, the Family Research Council published *A Clear and Present Danger: The Threat to Religious Liberty in the Military* that provided a summarized timeline of such events dating back to 2004.²⁹ From the banning of Bibles to labeling Christian organizations as hate groups, there has been a consistent move by some organizations who seek to restrict by way of government policy a Christian’s ability to share their faith with others.

The question above sought to identify whether service members feel there is a threat toward religious liberty in the military, and the majority feel that it exists. While 33% were mildly or moderately concerned, a surprising 25% were very concerned that evolving policy would eventually limit their freedom to practice their Christian faith. For a military member striving with all their might to obey orders, merely the perception of restrictions against religious freedom could have a chilling effect on one’s participation in the Great Commission. Uncertainty can make serving as a uniformed Christian a scary and uncertain endeavor because service members are not permitted to protest, speak out, or refuse an order. Personally speaking, it can be heartbreaking to some to consider that although countless many up to the present day have given the ultimate sacrifice, some would seek to deny constitutional freedoms from the very ones who fought to defend them.

**Chaplains: Divided, Distracted, Diluted and Detached**

Some of the greatest allies in the gospel ministry for military missionaries are found in chaplain corps. Some have argued that that military chaplaincy violates the First Amendment’s
non-establishment of religion clause, but courts have determined otherwise. Military deployments are among the chief reasons the federal government has funded the chaplain corps since the Revolutionary War.\textsuperscript{30} Noting that approximately 37% of soldiers are stationed overseas that would ordinarily prevent them from having access to Christian clergy, in 1985, a federal appeals court validated the necessity of chaplains to ensure service members’ free exercise of religion.\textsuperscript{31}

![Bar chart showing the effectiveness of military chaplains in equipping Christians for making disciples.](image)

**Figure 13. Percentages of Responses Related to Effectiveness of Military Chaplains.***

On most occasions Chaplains are attached to deploying units, however, only a minority of military Christians ever partner with them in fulfilling the Great Commission. When asked whether service members believed that military chaplains were effective in equipping Christians in their task to make disciples, less than 16% expressed confidence that they were. While 45% of those surveyed believed that chaplains were less than effective, 29% had never interacted enough


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
with a chaplain to make a determination. There are many contributing factors, however, the fact that not every military chaplain preaches a saving gospel or believes in the inerrancy of the Bible as the inspired Word of God is likely the most significant.

According to naval instruction, “Chaplains are trained and expected to cooperate with other chaplains and RMPs (Religious Military Professionals) within the specialized environment of the military while not compromising the tenets of their own religious traditions.”\textsuperscript{32} Although most chaplains this author has encountered willingly support faith groups other than their own, the potential for a conflict of conscious exists. Recently while deployed aboard a naval ship it was discovered that media designed to persuade Christians to abandon Protestant theology was routinely put on display near the only door of the chapel. There has been a significant push in recent years to allow humanist and atheist military chaplains. The president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers recently said during a briefing on Capitol Hill that, “Humanist chaplains would be expected to have Bibles, to have prayer books, to have the ability to guide others in prayer, according to the beliefs of their tradition.”\textsuperscript{33} Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.”\textsuperscript{34} While “clergy who don’t believe in a god”, or one who believes in a god defined outside of the Bible, could certainly distribute resources to military Christians, they are incapable of equipping the saints for the work of ministry.\textsuperscript{35}


\textsuperscript{34} Luke 11:23.

\textsuperscript{35} Myers, “Humanist Military Chaplains”.

Reassessment Required

The first half of this project sought to reveal that while the Great Commission applies universally to all Christians, those in military uniform often retreat from Christ’s mandate or experience little success in making disciples in their native environment. This chapter was specifically designed to identify key causal factors influencing this reality, such as the failure in the local church to equip the saints, and the unwillingness of Christians to act in obedience to what they know Jesus commands. Other issues discussed that negatively impact discipleship is the growing sentiment that religious freedom is eroding for military Christians, and the conviction that spiritual leadership in the chaplain corps is something less than reliable. While there are many reasons, most of which were not covered here, the sad reality is that tremendous opportunities to make disciples who worship Jesus are often surrendered with minimal resistance.

The reality that more must be done to equip military missionaries in their task to make disciples is without question. While it is a times tempting to despair over perceived failure, Christians must remember that Jesus promised to build His church “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”36 God continues to receive glory through His servants in the military, and this author is exceedingly confident that He is raising a cadre of fierce warriors of the faith with unwavering commitment to proclaiming the message of His Son unto the remotest parts of the earth. In the chapters that follow a strategy will be presented to equip these ambassadors of Christ for their highest calling.

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CHAPTER THREE
PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR SUPPORTING ROLES

In their book *Ministry with the Military*, Donald Hadley and Gerald Richards provide tremendous help to local churches and chaplains who seek to minister to service members. While their work would prove beneficial to any Christian in the military, it is most relevant to vocational ministry leaders. In contrast, this project seeks to equip lay military Christians by way of advice from a brother who has walked in their shoes. However, this chapter is dedicated entirely to those who serve uniformed missionaries in supporting roles, and hopes to offer a fresh look from a service member's perspective.

**The Church: In the Rear with the Gear**

The phrase “in the rear with the gear” was used by infantrymen during the Vietnam conflict to describe their fellow service members who served in supporting roles away from the front lines.\(^1\) While it was meant by most to be derogatory, all would admit that wars simply cannot be fought effectively if training does not first occur in a safe environment, and supplies such as ordinance, rations, and medical equipment are not readily replenished from the rear. While each Christian is called to fight on their own spiritual front lines, the local church should collectively serve as rear support for missionaries sent from among them to carry the gospel to the remotest part of the earth. Luke writes that it was the church in Antioch that first commissioned Barnabas and Saul for missions after having received direction from the Holy Spirit during a season of fasting.\(^2\) Like Antioch, the local church in every generation is

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responsible for doing all that is required to facilitate missions.\textsuperscript{3} Churches cannot have a global impact on unreached people groups without missionaries, and missionaries cannot be effective if they are not equipped and supported by the church.

**Pursue Relationships**

Every active duty member of the armed forces is considered to be on the job and must be ready to work all hours of the day, seven days a week. Typically, they are given free time called liberty during the weekends and federal holidays, and may request personal leave days each year; however, time away from the work environment is always at the pleasure of their leadership. When not deployed they receive vast amounts of training that can require them to travel routinely, and their personal goals and hobbies only further detract from the remaining free time they have available. Service members have many reasons, some of which are unavoidable, that will lure them away from their obligation to assemble with other believers in a local fellowship. This is the greatest reason the church must not only welcome, but lovingly pursue military Christians in their vicinity. A great place to start for ministry leaders is by making follow up contact with military visitors, and recruiting the help of members who might already be connected with them to introduce you. Seeking to know and meet their needs will accomplish much with this demographic.\textsuperscript{4}

It is not uncommon to find military members church swapping when they first arrive to a new area and will in time quit trying if they are unsuccessful in making a positive connection. The most important factor that will bring these young men and women back to a church they have visited is that they must feel loved and wanted. It is discouraging to consider how many

\textsuperscript{3} Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *World Missions*, 70.

\textsuperscript{4} Hadley and Richards, *Ministry with the Military*, 85.
times throughout the country that churches warmly greeted this author with enthusiasm, only to see it deflate once revealing that the assignment to their area was only short-term. It can be very difficult for a congregation to form deep relationships with military Christians, and even labor with them in ministry, and then watch them whisked away with very little notice.\(^5\) Church leaders that desire to make a lasting impact on military Christians must prepare their congregation to work through these difficulties, and move quickly to make connections because their time is short.

Once while attending a church that offered a warm reception by the pastor and most of the congregation, an opportunity was provided to participate in ministry by leading a small group. When the class consisting of mostly military families grew rapidly, it became obvious that other leaders began to struggle with jealousy and resentment. This was made most clear when invited by the pastor to lunch with the church staff where one displeased leader inadvertently voiced his displeasure over the invite too loudly. Without enough experience to understand some of the ways in which the enemy brings division, it is likely the incident would have been offensive enough to leave the church forever. Hadley and Richards confirm that most military families fail to connect with a local church because they were at one time made to feel unwelcome or suffered some other type of bad experience.\(^6\) It would be easy to conclude that one’s church is incapable of encountering these types of situations, but this author is convinced that the enemy will find inroads to disrupt unity wherever possible.

Military people can be perceived as peculiar, especially to a congregation consisting of mostly members native to their surrounding area. This is primarily because they are implanted

\(^5\) Hadley and Richards, *Ministry with the Military*, 121.

\(^6\) Ibid., 91.
from around the country and are simply different, such as someone from California or New York being stationed in Mississippi. The vast majority are naturally ambitious, and it is likely that their military training has had a significant impact by making them action oriented. They are likely to show areas of deep maturity beyond their years, yet show immaturity in unexpected places. Hurried, homesick, and hurting, God’s providence has delivered them to the church for just a short season that must not be squandered.

Ministry to military personnel, and particularly those from the millennial generation, must be authentic and relational. While they desire strong relationships, they often have a keen sense for insincerity, and will quickly withdraw their trust if they detect it. Just as Jesus did all of the heavy lifting with His disciples, you will have to actively pursue these young missionaries that probably do not yet understand the task God has ordained for them to accomplish. One should not be afraid to invite them into their home for dinner, which will pay dividends because they likely feel very alone while away from their own family. Significant effort should be made to understand some of the intricacies of their training, which will help churches equip them in becoming effective disciple-makers in their community. In addition, it will help to better understand how and when new military members are transferred to the area and enable the church to connect with them more quickly.

Put Your Resources Where Your Heart Is

It is not uncommon to find churches that will dedicate much of their resources toward fun events, programs, and building projects, yet unwilling to invest one dime into equipping military missionaries. In fact, it is rare to find churches that rightly prioritize missionary training for all of

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their members who are required to travel in their “going”. The focus too often becomes on ensuring they attend, tithe, and participate with the planned agenda, all the while failing to see God’s purpose for entrusting them to the local body for this season of their life. A church that fails to assign value in this area simply does not understand missions. More than just another visitor, it is probable that military Christians in your congregation have the potential to transport the Word they hear from you around the world. Small churches with limited budgets have a key opportunity to participate in kingdom work globally in one of the most inexpensive ways by equipping these God sent, already paid missionaries.⁸

As all Christians, military believers need to be discipled in the fundamentals of the Christian faith; however, there should be a strong focus on their task to serve as Christian missionaries when they are called away from the fellowship of their local church. While they will grow under the hearing of the preached Word, they will often flourish when given the opportunity to participate in a small group. It is here that time can be dedicated to one-on-one interaction, group discussion, and they can be given opportunity to practice what they learn.⁹ Whichever model a church embraces it should seek to help them understand their part in making disciples, and should be easily repeatable for when they are deployed and begin their own ministry.

Among the greatest resources within the church for equipping military Christians are spiritually mature believers that currently serve or have served in the armed forces. There is no substitute in knowing what service members endure compared to having gone through the experience themselves. It is important to remember that not every veteran who is willing to

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⁹ Ibid., 124.
participate in military discipleship must be the primary leader, but all according to their own gifting have something they should seek to impart to the next generation. Pastors would do well to seek out these seasoned warriors within their flock that can serve as a vital link between uniformed missionaries and the congregation. Other key assets are active duty chaplains that should be heavily relied upon if God leads them to join a local congregation. In conclusion, for uniformed missionaries to be most effective church leadership should rightly prioritize their training before deployment, and help their congregation understand the urgency of effective ministry to the military.

The Church’s Role When They Deploy

A church truly committed to missions will see the value into supporting their missionaries to the military with needed resources. Although the chaplain can provide a minimal amount of material, their budgets are often limited and the supply chain can be quite long. Above monetary support, one of the greatest comforts available to a deploying service member is the knowledge that their church family will hold them up in prayer while away. A church that prays for their deployed missionaries understands they are merely an extension of the local church, and their mission abroad is one in the same with the believers back at home, to bring God glory. It is important to remember that for various reasons such as communication blackouts and privacy issues, deployed missionaries will not be able to communicate many of the details that are occurring. Instead of becoming removed from their ministry, the church must remain all the more diligent to intercede without ceasing.

Along with prayer, the peace of mind and assurance that a service member’s family will be cared for by the body of Christ is the best way a local church can offer support. Being a single caregiver is a challenge for any person, but it becomes particularly difficult for young spouses
enduring a forced separation for the first time. Offering a great glimpse into the hardships that deployment brings on military families, Hadley and Richards write:

In short, deployments place severe and unnatural strains on marriages and family relationships. And we have scarcely mentioned such difficulties as coping with loneliness; making decisions without opportunity to consult one’s partner; enforcing discipline; tutoring and nurturing children; accepting a curtailed social life; resisting temptation; and handling such common concerns as bills, illnesses, unforeseen crises, mechanical break-downs, and a host of daily frustrations.\textsuperscript{10}

Much wisdom should be utilized as ministry leaders prayerfully consider the right people to care for those who remain behind. It is not uncommon for marriages to experience great difficulty during deployments, and problems can climax rapidly when tensions are high and communication becomes difficult. Ideally, spiritually mature couples should work together in overseeing the needs of those at home, as they are likely most equipped with the experience and biblical knowledge needed for timely counsel. The church’s main concern is to help hold military families up in any way tangibly possible until life can once again normalize after the deployment.

The Church’s Role When They Return

Military deployments that potentially place service members into harm’s way can cause trauma-induced stress, often leading to a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The hardship endured during a deployment can result in various forms of abuse, broken homes, and even self-induced injury as a result of severe depression. Many Christians too easily buy into the world’s method of coping with these types of issues, such as an overreliance on psychiatric medication and secular counseling. Kelly O’Meara writes, “That Americans are being diagnosed

\textsuperscript{10} Hadley and Richards, \textit{Ministry to the Military}, 155.
as mentally ill and being prescribed psychotropic drugs at startling, even epidemic rates, is not in question.”¹¹ She contends that limited oversight and corporate greed in the pharmaceutical sector has left the country overmedicated and in a worsened condition. There is growing evidence to support these conclusions in the military community, such as the following report recently published by The Marine Corps Times:

Echoing recent concerns about the effectiveness of military mental health efforts, a new American Legion survey of veterans found that nearly half thought clinical help they received for post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury had little or no effect on their conditions…The Legion’s survey of about 3,100 veterans found only a small fraction of those with brain injuries or PTSD — about 16 percent — saw their medical treatment as being clearly beneficial to their health. Roughly the same amount thought their condition worsened while in treatment. More than one in four veterans surveyed said they felt their treatment produced no tangible effect either way…Veterans also expressed frustration with physicians’ reliance on medication to address their symptoms. More than half of those on prescriptions said they take five or more medications; 30 percent said they use 10 or more.¹²

The truth is that a New Testament church that is committed to the faithful teaching of the sufficiency of Christ in all things is the single greatest help for these wounded warriors.¹³ Sadly, not all pastors and Christian counselors believe that counseling based exclusively from the Bible is sufficient. Recently, an acquaintance revealed that during three months of counseling received from a Christian organization, not a single reference to the Bible, sin, or repentance was made.

There is a real danger in the current age among Christian counselors who fail to give


preeminence to Scripture during sessions, even though their patients selected them for that purpose.\(^{14}\)

Contending that truth can be observed in both God’s Word and God’s works, David Enwistle insists that Christian psychologists must strive to independently discover truth that is equally present in both. He concludes, “When faced with apparent contradictions, we reexamine the psychological and theological evidence, lending greater weight to whichever source provides greater clarity.”\(^{15}\) The underlying assumption is that what is known through modern and historical observation about the discipline of psychology, although skewed by sin, should be given equal weight with Scripture because one’s own hermeneutical interpretation is equally skewed by sin.\(^{16}\)

There is much to gleam from secular findings in the area of psychology, but it is God’s Word alone that is “able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” and lead a person to the true source of healing.\(^{17}\) This is why pastoral counseling from those dedicated to the preeminence of the Scriptures is so vital for the church today. There are certainly times when modern medicine is beneficial in a Christian’s life, but it is Jesus alone that is able to transform a person from within. Only the Bible contains the direction needed to bring lasting change in failing marriages, to comfort those who mourn, and renew a broken spirit.


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 232.

\(^{17}\) Hebrews 4:12.
The Chaplain: Fresh Supplies on the Battlefront

Due to the nature of the military environment, saints from the local church will simply not have the ability to support military missionaries by being physically present. Because of this fact God has provided uniformed missionaries with one of their strongest allies called the chaplain. It would be a misnomer to say that chaplains are always in the rear with the gear because more often you find these warriors in the faith in the most dangerous parts of the battlefield, not under compulsion but love for the men and women under their care.

This section is meant to help these servants of God better understand those called to make disciples from within the foxhole, so that they might gain further insight in equipping them for the work of the ministry.

Nearing the last portion of a deployment, this author experienced a particularly challenging week that brought great discouragement by Friday evening. Although balking at the idea of spending more time with coworkers, there was a clear expectation from leadership for all pilots to make an appearance at the Officer Club where it was customary for the night to end in a drunken stupor. Emotionally drained, an empty room in the back of the club provided the solitude needed to cry out to God over feelings of abandonment while literally halfway around the world from loved ones. After much weeping, self-loathing, and eventually repenting, the realization set in that it was time to return to the crowd before digging a deeper hole with squadron mates.

What happened next is still impossible to fully comprehend. All previous nights in that environment resulted in debauchery and lonely encounters with inebriated coworkers, but on this occasion the two men that joined the table appeared to be quite sober. Apparently they were recently retired military chaplains who were traveling around the world as the Spirit led them.
They listened for hours to lamentations over the pain and discouragement experienced during the preceding months, and very patiently helped to counter every lie of the enemy with truth from God’s Word. On the walk home heartfelt praise erupted over God’s goodness as it became clear that God knew the need and even sent His messengers in advance so that they would arrive at the precise time and place for a divine appointment. Because of their timely investment of truth, this author was able to serve others in a greater way throughout the remainder of the deployment.

As chapter two revealed, there has been an active agenda to saturate the chaplain corps with those who preach a different gospel. Resultantly, Christians in the military who believe in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures do not automatically assume that all chaplains are allies in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. It is increasingly important to these uniformed missionaries to know that their chaplain is committed to rightly dividing the word of truth, both in and out of the pulpit, whether it is in or out of season. Although the blessing of forming close relationships with military chaplains has been limited, most have revealed to this author that they have felt pressured in various ways to compromise in the interest of political correctness. The intensity of the fight on truth has left many faithful chaplains battle wearied, but those who seek to leads God’s people must stand up and be counted for the side of truth.

Beyond a strong pulpit ministry, chaplains must remain focused on equipping the saints for the work of ministry.\textsuperscript{18} It is not uncommon to see a unit’s chaplain tasked with various activities that have little to do with their highest calling. Bruce Crouterfield who served as a Navy Chaplain explains in his doctoral thesis \textit{The Value of the Naval Chaplain in the Fleet Marine Force Environment} some of the expectations of a chaplain per naval instruction. He writes, “They are expected to facilitate the religious requirements of personnel of all faiths,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{18} Ephesians 4:12.}
provide faith-specific ministries, and function as a key advisor to the command.”\textsuperscript{19} He rightly identifies that chaplains must distinguish between “task-driven ministry” and “spirit-led ministry”. Further expounding upon the common traps that cause a chaplain to become overly task-driven, he asserts, “Chaplains can pour all of their energy into their tasks and functions and, yet, know that real ministry isn’t happening because the lives of the people around them are not being touched.”\textsuperscript{20}

Although there are clearly requirements that must be met, many of which carry great significance, the chaplain must keep what is most important as the thrust of their effort. There should be a distinct difference in the mind of the born again Christian chaplain between completing to-do lists from their commander and shepherding the flock of Christ; the first “pays the bills” while the later has true eternal significance.\textsuperscript{21} Military lay missionaries need to be discipled in order to become effective disciple-makers, which means they need time with you to forge a relationship. With so much religious diversity among the chaplain corps and the military as whole, Christians need to be led on how to be unified in areas such as prayer and corporate worship when at all possible, and shown with clarity when to separate from those who teach another gospel.

**Friends and Family: Fire Support**

When the time arrived to leave home for boot camp it felt how this author imagined it would be to attend one’s own funeral. The days leading up to the departure were getting more


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 24.

\textsuperscript{21} Crouterfield, *The Value of the Naval Chaplain*, 27.
difficult for each person of the family, but it seemed manageable until the final few hours. The brokenness observed in each family member would haunt this author nearly every night during recruit training. While it hurt to know that the decision to leave had caused great pain, there was never any doubt of their unconditional love. Like so many nights during childhood, there was great comfort in the knowledge that the entire family was praying each day while away.

Solomon wrote, “The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.” On many occasions well-laid plans were redirected in remarkable ways that in hindsight proved to be for the better. On other occasions desires of the heart did come to fruition, but in time it became easy to see God’s hand from beginning to end. It is vital to understand that if a loved one belongs to the Lord and they have peace about their decision to enter the armed forces, they are likely being called to serve God as a missionary to the military. Because the Lord is rich in mercy and He wills for none to perish, He sends ambassadors into every place His name is not known, and the military is no exception.

A primary reason the United States Marine Corps has been immensely successful in winning the nation’s battles hinges on the combat perfected use of combined arms. Advancing into enemy territory on a single front often thwarts a unit’s momentum, so ground commanders are trained to master the integration of fire support from artillery, air power, and naval gun fire to suppress their enemy. Similarly, those who seek to be effective in spiritual warfare must learn to depend upon prayer support of the saints. Paul beckoned for the church in Colossae to pray “…that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ…” Convinced that prayer must be utilized to see success on the battlefront, Wesley

22 Proverbs 16:9.
23 Ephesians 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:20.
24 Colossians 4:3.
Duewel writes, “The heart of the whole Christian warfare, the strategy for all Christian victory and the battleground for all Christian advance is prayer.”

Regardless of the miles that separate a military missionary from his or her loved ones, prayer is the surest way that God allows them to co-labor in ministry. If they are called to go, then it is imperative that you cover them in prayer. When they are blessed to experience success in the spiritual realm, they are likely to be scorned by those in the world around them, and the conditions on their mission field are only becoming more hostile each day to born again Christians. Where the enemies resistance increases, they will certainly witness God working in exciting ways, which means like Elijah there will be mountain top highs followed by intense lows that must be covered in prayer. If a loved one who serves in the military has not fully surrendered their heart to the Lord, then never give up on praying for them, and specifically that God would send His missionaries to them. Although this author’s family felt at times as though all hope was lost, God was using their prayers to patiently open blinded eyes to the hopelessness of a life apart from Christ.

Along with prayer, timely counsel from those who know one best and are committed to the study of God’s Word is priceless. Attempting to honor God in an atmosphere where sin abounds is wearisome on many levels. While it was always a great day to open a package from home, it is the opportunities to share burdens with one’s spouse over the phone, by letter, or through email that is relished most. They better than any other person know a service members personal strengths and weaknesses, and know when to comfort and when to convey honestly that their perspective is skewed. Ideally a military loved one will be closely connected to a local church in their vicinity that will support them in many ways while deployed; however, their

The church will change over time because they will be forced to move at least every three years. This is why their Christian family and friends on whom they can rely to provide support over an entire career is so vital to their effectiveness in making disciples.
CHAPTER FOUR
A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE UNIFORMED MISSIONARY

Charles Spurgeon believed that in his day far too many Christians had become resolved
to leave the ministry of reconciliation entirely with the man in the pulpit, as the ordinary laymen
was free to concern himself with only those things related to the physical realm. He once
preached:

Do not many Christians fail to see their commission? It has come to be a
dreadfully common belief in the Christian Church that the only man who has a
“call” is the man who devotes all his time to what is called “the ministry”,
whereas all Christian service is ministry, and every Christian has a call to some
kind of ministry or another…So you and I must not act as though we were living
here to make money, or to bring up our families, and make matters comfortable
for ourselves. We are, if we are Christians, sent into the world upon a divine
errand, and oh, for grace to recognize the errand, and to perform it!¹

Although this sermon was first proclaimed more than 140 years ago, little has changed in
the mindset of most Christians. As presented throughout this project, Jesus’ command to make
disciples applies universally to every believer in every generation. This chapter is dedicated
exclusively to the task of helping military Christians understand biblically their call to serve as
ambassadors of Christ while serving in the armed forces.

The Military Missionary’s Call

In Ephesians 4 Paul implores his readers to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with
which you have been called.”² Their unity was paramount to the apostle who reminded them that
in Christ they were one body, with each one being uniquely gifted by the Spirit. Verses 11-16 are

1909), 125.
² Ephesians 4:1.
likely the clearest portrayal of how the church should function as a growing unified body. Jesus
gave to the church “some as apostles, and some as prophets”, which were called for the specific
purpose of laying a foundation through the written Word of God. He also gave some as
“evangelists” who are specially gifted in proclaiming the gospel to those who do not know
Christ. Finally, He gave “some as pastors and teachers” who continue to serve through faithful
teaching by remaining consistent with Scripture “for the equipping of the saints for the work of
service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”

MacArthur explains, “…if you want to build up the body of Christ, then the saints have to do the work of the ministry. And if the saints are
going to do the work of the ministry, they have to be perfected and that's the job of the teaching pastor.”

Most Christians who serve in the military are not called as evangelists or pastor teachers
but all are called for the “work of service”. Moreau, Corwin, and McGee explain that while God
only calls some into full-time vocational ministry, all Christians are called to fulfill the Great
Commission. They write:

Those who have responded to God’s call to salvation have a deeper call given by
God: they are called to discipleship or holiness…have the responsibility to teach
others to obey all that Jesus taught (Matt 28:20. Consequently, a commitment to
follow Christ involves at the heat a commitment to mission. If nothing else, this
means at the very least that Christ’s followers must be contagious agents carrying
the “Jesus Plague”. This call is issued to all Christians. This is not to say that all
Christians are “missionaries” in the narrow sense of the world or engaged in full-
time service for the kingdom per se, but that all are to be involved in the process
of growing to be like Jesus and helping others to do the same.

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3 Ephesians 4:11-16.
5 Moreau, Corwin, McGee, World Missions, 165.
Although not an exhaustive list, Paul instructed the church in Rome to utilize their spiritual gifts for the edification of one another. He wrote, “if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving, or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation, he who gives, with liberality, he who leads, with diligence, he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” As witnesses to the grace of God in their lives, all Christians should use their unique giftedness to build up the body of Christ through the “work of service” which culminates in making disciples who worship Jesus.

When a Christian is placed into a foreign environment they should as a first priority seek out a local body of believers, but most often during military deployments movements happen too frequently or a local established church simply does not exist. They should also seek out military chaplains and support their ministry in any way possible. However, there is not a guarantee that one’s unit will be assigned a chaplain, and there is an increasing trend that those chaplains who are present do not uphold the Word of God as inherent, and do not believe that Jesus is the only means of salvation. Military missionaries must be ready to lead in disciple-making wherever there is a void in spiritual leadership. Manser defines a missionary as “those called and commissioned by God to fulfill specific tasks, especially that of taking the gospel to those who have not heard it. Missionaries may be sent to other towns, cities or nations, or may be called to fulfill their task closer to home.” The missionary serves wherever there is a need for

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6 Romans 12:6-8.
7 Michael R. Mitchell, Leading, Teaching and Making Disciples: World-Class Christian Education in the Church, School, and Home (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2010), 246.
ambassadors for Christ to plead with lost people to be reconciled to God, with their chief aim being to glorify God in building up the body of Christ.\(^9\)

**The Military Missionary’s Field**

Military service while not on a deployment can in many aspects become routine and feel like any other civilian vocation, but it would be a mistake to conclude that it is unimportant to discipleship. The time before leaving overseas is likely where relationships are formed, and where unbelievers will make their first judgment about the authenticity of a Christians’ faith based on their lifestyle. However, in most instances there will be ample opportunity to rely heavily upon the local church or base chapel in making disciples. The need greatly increases for military missionaries when a deployed unit becomes isolated from an established congregation of believers, the work schedule becomes seven days a week, and people begin searching for answers in a world that makes less sense each day. Deployment yields some terrific opportunities for military Christians to fulfill the Great Commission, but sadly it is regularly where discipleship suffers the most.

Once leaving the states and entering your mission field, it is possible that there will be few experienced disciple-makers to rely upon for support in ministry. Of the Christians that accompany you, many will lack spiritual maturity and may struggle to stay committed to discipleship and holiness once they are taken out of their normal support system that encourages them to stay faithful to Christian fellowship. There will be many who profess Christ but seem to be consistently apathetic toward their call to obey Scripture, and consistently exhibit carnal behavior. The work environment can become grueling to a Christian as it seems to be a place

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\(^9\) 2 Corinthians 5:20.
where only sin abounds, and everything within their environment works against their desire to make disciples of Jesus, which is why it is so vital to have a transformed mind that has been molded by the authority of God’s Word.

Reconciling Faith and Force

This project would be lacking if it did not address to a minor extent how military Christians must reconcile their faith with the reality that they might be ordered into combat and responsible for taking another human life. Amazingly, many join the military for reasons such as travel, adventure, and college incentives, having never considered what Scripture teaches on war. Others come to a saving knowledge of Jesus after joining, and must work through whether or not serving in the military violates their conscious. This issue surfaced for this author near the end of flight training after becoming troubled with the expressed desire of other pilots to drop bombs in combat with questionable motives.

James Eckman explains that the three most prominent views on war among Christians throughout history are biblical pacifism, Christian activism, and just war. He explains that biblical pacifists base their views primarily on passages such as Exodus 20:13 that prohibits killing, and Jesus’ teaching such as turn the other cheek toward their enemies.10 Christian activists on the other extreme believe that beginning with the Noahiac covenant in Genesis 9:5-6, and reinforced in Romans 13:1-7, the state is granted the unbridled authority by God to punish evildoers, and war is simply a necessary extension of that power.11 The more balanced view of just war that began with Augustine in the fifth-century contends that because of Adam’s fall, evil

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11 Ibid.
must be met with the sword in certain circumstances. Eckman provides a summary of the most widely accepted criteria Christians use in determining whether a war to include: a just cause, right authority, right intention, proportionate means, last resort, reasonable chance of success, and noncombatant immunity.\textsuperscript{12}

It can be difficult for new Christians to reconcile whether ever taking another life might be justified, however, an objective study of history reveals that evil will prevail in a society during those times that good men do nothing. Robert Morey writes, “The clearest thinkers and the most biblically sound Christians in every age have seen the justice of using force in personal and civil defense. While doing nothing to stop evil has always led to greater evil, the just use of force has allowed free societies to exist and true religion to flourish.”\textsuperscript{13} Francis Schaeffer wrote:

> What should be our own perspective on military preparedness?…From my own study of Scripture I would say that to refuse to do what I can for those who are under the power of oppressors is nothing less than the failure of Christian love….This is why I am not a pacifist. Pacifism in this poor fallen world in which we live—this lost world—means that we desert the people who need our greatest help.\textsuperscript{14}

Morey explains that the sixth commandment is actually a prohibition against murder, which is made most clear in the following chapter that instructed how Israel was to “put to death” murderers.\textsuperscript{15} Paul instructed the Romans in regards to food or celebration of holy days that, “…Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”\textsuperscript{16} In like manner, each Christian must prayerfully consider whether their conscious is free in regards to military service. Through

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{16} Romans 14.
much prayer and study, it is this author’s humble opinion that God does use the power of
governments to restrain evil in this fallen world, and even calls His own people to fill the ranks.

More than bearing the sword, God uses Christians in the military as a godly influence
with their voice. Addressing the issue of Christian involvement in government Grudem asks, “If
Christians are silent about such moral and ethical issues, then where will moral standards come
from?”\textsuperscript{17} Convinced that their perspective was wrong, this author was compelled to patiently
convey to fellow pilots that war must never be fought “with arrogance and bombastic pride;
instead…with tears and with agonizing tension.”\textsuperscript{18} Whether they are at the highest strategic level
as policy makers, or in the foxhole with a fellow private, Christians at all levels of government
are called to use God’s Word to influence those with the power of the sword toward a Christlike
perspective.

Striking the Right Balance

Although the nation has made tremendous progress, sadly Americans today can still
experience inequality in the workplace based on their race, gender, or socio-economic status.
While not perfect, the military excels in that merit is the single greatest consideration in a service
member’s advancement. Resultantly, it is commonplace for Christians to set aside discipleship as
a distant nonessential while they over exalt the mission or their individual success. It can be
difficult to discern where the line exists because military members are trained from the day they
enter service to highly prioritize mission accomplishment. Military missionaries must being with
the conviction that Scripture is their supreme authority, which has commanded them to make
disciples wherever they go. As previously discussed, the Christian’s command to glorify God

\textsuperscript{17} Grudem, \textit{Politics According to the Bible}, 69.
\textsuperscript{18} Eckman, \textit{Biblical Ethics}, 67.
through obedience to the Great Commission is without doubt the higher call. However, in order to be effective in making disciples on the mission field, the uniformed missionary must learn how to excel for the only acceptable reason of seeking God’s glory.

This author has lived on both extremes where excellence was pursued for the wrong reasons, and the choice was made not to excel for the wrong reasons. On both accounts a biblical perspective was needed to guide decisions regarding the pursuit of excellence in the workplace. Jesus commanded, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”, which Paul reinforced that as a Christian remains blameless before a corrupt generation, they will, “appear as lights in the world.”

Clearly the good works in view in these texts are not professional milestones, but the spiritual fruit that flows from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. However, those who strive for excellence in the workplace for God’s glory will choose not to return evil for evil, guard their own tongue from perverse speech, to be example in all their behavior, and as a result will indeed shine like a bright light on a hill.

Peter urged Christians to keep their conscious clear and, “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Christians can fall into the trap of seeking greener grass and fail to understand their duty to excel exactly where God has placed them in order glorify Him in the midst of unbelievers. The apostle Paul was free from any human entity, yet willingly enslaved himself to all men in order

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19 Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15.
20 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; Romans 12:17; Titus 2:6-8.
21 1 Peter 2:12.
to win more to Christ.\textsuperscript{22} On most occasions a Christian must first earn the respect of their peers before they earn the right to be heard, and they must know how much you care before they care how much you know. The uniformed missionary must seek to perform their military duties with excellence so that they might realize more effectiveness in their highest calling to make disciples who worship Jesus.

\textbf{The Military Missionary’s Orders}

Final communication to a loved one will without fail be focused on those things a person deems most important. That is precisely what readers find in Paul’s second epistle to his young son in the faith named Timothy, which was written from a dungeon shortly before the apostle’s death.\textsuperscript{23} There are substantial differences in Paul’s circumstances between his first captivity in Rome when he wrote his first letter, and his final imprisonment. During the first occasion he was under house arrest, surrounded by many of his closest co-laborers in the faith, and had hope of freedom. Now he was kept in close confinement and most of his time was spent in isolation. Paul had already undergone a preliminary hearing (4:16-18), and did not shy away from telling Timothy that he anticipated his own death was imminent (4:6-8). The message is heartfelt, urgent, and without restraint. While contending with heresy was always a necessary part of Paul’s work (2:17-18), the focus here is clearly on Timothy himself. Timothy must receive the baton from Paul and continue on with the task of making disciples among the Gentiles.

The letter is from a seasoned pastor leaving his final parting words to a younger pastor; however, one must not miss the vital importance of this epistle for every disciple of Christ. To

\textsuperscript{22} 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

Paul the consistent proclamation of God’s Word was of the utmost importance and the only thing that will facilitate repentance and reconciliation between lost men and their Creator. Those who serve in the armed forces know the importance of knowing their commander’s intent, and their own responsibility for ensuring orders are carried out to the very best of their ability. This letter is particularly fitting because like Timothy, every disciple has marching orders contained within. Before leading the nation of Israel to take the land promised to them by God, Joshua was commanded, “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Christians have their own God given task to make disciples as they go, where they must teach sound doctrine, endure suffering, strive for disciplined obedience, and endure their race until the end. With that task in view, Paul exhorts Timothy, and ultimately every believer, to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Train the Trainer

In 2 Timothy 2:2 readers can observe the first four generations of discipleship, where the baton was passed from Paul to Timothy, who would then entrust those things he had learned to “faithful men” who in time would “be able to teach others also.” Timothy’s first responsibility as a disciple-maker was that of the teacher. Christians who seek to make disciples should always strive to bless them through reaching physical needs, but the major focus in discipleship is to teach and model God’s Word. Anything short of Timothy’s complete surrender to the authority of Scripture would not suffice, as Paul was convinced that it alone is “…profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate,

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24 Joshua 1:9.
25 2 Timothy 2:1.
equipped for every good work.” Paul warned repeatedly that his disciple must remain narrowly focused on the faithfulness of his message, and constantly strive to avoid error as to avoid becoming ashamed before God.  

It is a natural desire to lighten the load for loved ones, which one might expect to see Paul do for his young son in the faith; however, in 2 Timothy 4:1 Timothy is given the most binding charge possible because Paul knew the gravity of the task he had to complete. He sets the courtroom by which Timothy will be judged, which is in the presence of the living sovereign Father and of the Christ who will without exception judge all mankind for every careless word.  

It is Christ’s “appearing” or second coming that should motivate each disciple to faithful teaching. When the apostle wrote, “I solemnly charge you…by His appearing” it was the highest charge a person could be given, and should result in their utmost devotion and adherence. Paul had Timothy’s full-undivided attention with this statement, as it should every teacher that would follow after him.

Paul believed that man was in need of constant correction due to their sinful nature from the fall, and only the inspired Word of God was adequate for the task. Because God has already spoken in the Bible, the teacher is to work hard to properly and adequately convey that truth to the very best of their ability. The clear emphasis of 2 Timothy 4:2 is to “preach the word”, followed by the aorist imperatives be ready, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Timothy must prepare himself for this task and be ready both “in season and out of season”.

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26 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
27 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:15.
28 Matthew 12:36.
29 2 Timothy 4:2.
When this author contemplated enlisting in the Marines, the decision was sealed after spending a few hours with a sergeant that had served in Marine Special Forces; one who was intimidating to most he encountered. In the months before recruit training the offer was extended to accompany a new recruiter so seek out potential candidates. Although he wore the same uniform and had the same mission, his softer-kinder approach lacked appeal, and he was in a short time reassigned to another duty due to his lack of success. Years later while on a one-month assignment to assist with recruiting, there was another aggressive sergeant that went as far as yelling at a high school gym class during an integrated physical training event. After class the line was quite long to speak to that recruiter.

Some would seek to dilute God’s truth so that it might gain wider acceptance to the world. While success in evangelism is not linked to the speaker’s physical appearance or presentation as it is for military recruiters, the content of a preacher’s message is extremely vital. It is the full truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will use to convict a lost person’s heart. Gospel presentations today often focus narrowly on belief in Jesus, but never call lost people to consider the reality of their own depravity and hopelessness apart from Christ, and the fact that their sin deserves God’s righteous judgment. Sadly, there is a vast amount of people today who call themselves Christian, but were never challenged to count the true cost in following Jesus, and have never denied themselves to follow Him. Just a few verses about the cost of being a disciple of Christ reveals that people must love Christ far above all other human
relationships;\textsuperscript{30} follow Christ even if it means suffering and death;\textsuperscript{31} give everything to Christ;\textsuperscript{32} continue in Christ’s word;\textsuperscript{33} have love for one another;\textsuperscript{34} and bear much fruit.\textsuperscript{35}

After leading a person to Christ that should culminate in baptism as their first act of obedience, they must then be discipled by a teacher to know and obey all that Jesus commands. A point that often gets lost in discipleship is that God intends for all new disciples to in time become disciple-makers. Many become overwhelmed with the idea of teaching another, or having their lives intruded upon by a needy spiritual infant, but in reality the process is much simpler than they fear. John MacArthur writes, “When I disciple someone, there are basically three things I do. First, I teach biblical truth…Second, I apply Scripture to life…Finally, I work with a disciple to solve problems biblically”.\textsuperscript{36} The military missionary should teach the truth of Christ that they know, live that truth as a faithful example in front of other disciples, and allow the Holy Spirit to confirm that truth in a person’s life. God is glorified when the obedient teacher passes the baton to others who in time do the same.

The Suffering Solider

Paul was never bashful about the fact that he often suffered in bringing fourth the Gospel. He endured at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles various physical atrocities that at times even left him near death. In the simplest explanation, Paul suffered because he was founding churches in historically pagan territories, while also facing the same Jewish enemies that plotted the death

\textsuperscript{31} Luke 14:27.
\textsuperscript{32} Luke 14:33.
\textsuperscript{33} John 8:31.
\textsuperscript{34} John 13:35.
\textsuperscript{35} John 15:8.
of Christ. He knew from the time of his conversion that he was called to suffer (Acts 9:16). Paul was certain that days would inevitably come when disciples would endure suffering from those who would no longer tolerate sound doctrine, and would seek out false teachers to soothe their conscious.

Paul commanded, “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.” As a good soldier, Timothy was to endure hardship while faithfully fulfilling his ministry, not permitting himself to owe allegiance to any person or institution above Christ. Timothy would definitely suffer at the hands of those who would reject his message because the truth divides, and those who refuse to walk on the side of the truth are at war with the Living God. As lovers of the truth, Christians are called to suffer while fulfilling the ministry in which God has apportioned to them.

Christians suffer for a variety reasons, the first of which is that suffering is common to all mankind as a result of the fall where Adam’s work became harder, Eve’s childbearing became painful, and death passed to all men. Christians suffer as a consequence of their own sinfulness where, “…He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.” As history reveals, at many points Christians have suffered at the hands of evil men controlled by the enemy, yet are called to “Be faithful until death” However, suffering in a Christian’s life never happens outside of God’s permissible will, and never lacks eternal significance. Christians should not despise the suffering that God permits in their life, but rather “Consider it all joy, my

37 2 Timothy 2:3-4.
38 Hebrews 12:10.
39 Revelation 2:10.
40 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18.
brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”41

An unbiblical view of suffering can cause times of great confusion, fear, and frustration in the life of a Christian. At many points while serving as a new Christian in an F-18 squadron, this author would lament and cry out for God to change difficult circumstances. During one particularly rough season after becoming convinced that it would be impossible to endure further suffering, personal study revealed the prophet Jeremiah’s complaint over the wicked around him who only seemed to prosper. God’s response quickly realigned his soured perspective when He said, “If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses?”42

Christians should prepare to experience various forms of suffering, and increasingly so when they attempt to stand for truth. In fact, when they assess that they are not suffering for Christ one would do well to prayerfully consider to what extent they are fulfilling the Great Commission. Peter wrote, “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”43

Succumbing to the temptation to retreat because of suffering is simply not a viable solution. Even when it seems probable that taking a stand for truth will cause suffering, the Christian’s duty is to simply obey God and leave the consequences to Him. When unbelievers witness unexplainable hope present in a saint that endures suffering for God’s glory, He often opens the

42 Jeremiah 12:5.
43 1 Peter 4:1.
opportunity for them to hear of their only true hope in Christ. Disciples of Jesus must pray that God will use their suffering to display His glory.

The Disciplined Athlete

Paul’s instructions to Timothy also reveals that beyond merely entering the race, it is vitally important how a believer run’s their race of faith. During undergraduate studies this author was blessed with the opportunity to spend time with a volunteer mentor named Staff Sergeant Joe Rodriguez, who was among the first Marines to land during the amphibious assault on Iwo Jima in February of 1945. He told of how difficult it was to wade through the volcanic ash toward their objective while wearing packs weighing nearly one hundred pounds. Sin will without exception weigh a believer down, as trying to run with a guilty conscious is much like trying to fight in volcanic ash while carrying excessive weight.

If a Christian anticipates being successful in running their race with endurance, then they must “lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.” They are called to die daily to the flesh, and as a new creation in Christ, to put the old things away like “anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech.” Encumbrances such as unrepentant sin will always result in spiritual complacency and compromise in a believer’s life. Paul wrote, “in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit…and put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

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44 Hebrews 12:1.
45 Colossians 3:8.
average service member’s birth pushed against righteousness and holiness, and as a result many have become desensitized to sin in an age that calls evil good and good evil.

Christians are commanded to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”, yet many are content remaining in spiritual apathy and disobedience.\(^{47}\) It is shocking to consider how many professing Christians never appear to run to win, although Scripture reveals that it matters how disciples run their race. Paul knew that the Christian’s greatest adversary was the flesh, and reminded Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3 that they must become like disciplined athletes who know they will forfeit the prize if they do not compete according to the rules. In like manner, he told the Corinthians, “I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”\(^{48}\)

There are many situations that military missionaries will face, and on occasion they will find instances that God’s Word neither explicitly permits nor forbids a particular activity. When Scripture has not spoken, a believer should trust the Holy Spirit in guiding their conscious, and when it is addressed in the Bible they should obey without delay. Some attempt to make a compelling argument that to truly reach the lost you have to become one by doing what they do, with the underlying belief that God cannot use what others reject as lame. However, in this author’s experience the vast majority who adopt this philosophy eventually succumb to the temptation to over indulge and are prone to publically compromise their witness. If a Christian is tempted to conform to ungodly behavior to be accepted, because it feels good, or to follow tradition, then they must know that these are not valid reasons according to Scripture which is every Christian’s highest authority.

\(^{47}\) Philippians 2:12.

\(^{48}\) 1 Corinthians 9:27
Paul exhorted his son to run with discipline, knowing that the flesh would rule where a person had not exalted Christ as Lord. To the Roman’s Paul described the struggle that former slaves to sin find themselves in after becoming slaves to righteousness. He exclaimed, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” It is only the blood of Christ that can clean a guilty conscious, which is why the apostle proclaimed boldly that “there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.” Above a desire to glorify God, Christians must take the steps necessary to avoid compromise or apathy toward their own sin. Christian’s live victoriously only to the extent that they preserve an intimate and constant connection to Christ, which is the only way to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”

The Reaping Farmer

Success in evangelism is not measured by the amount of confessions or baptisms a person yields, but whether they present the Gospel with accuracy. Christians should pray that God would use their ministry to bring multitudes to Christ, but God is glorified through them when they obey all that He has commanded. Fruit is the natural consequence of sowing the truth of Christ faithfully in the soil that God provides. Like the farmer who does not expect to yield any produce until the harvest, those who seek to make disciples must remember that they are not in control of spiritual growth. God gave the seed which is the Word of God, called the servant who plants, calls other servants to water, prepares the soil which is a hearer’s heart, and in His own time will give the increase. Where people are called to evangelize through sharing the Good

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49 Romans 7:24.
50 Romans 8:1.
52 Master’s College, Biblical Counseling, 147.
News, the Holy Spirit alone has the ability to confirm the truthfulness of the message in a person’s heart, as the Spirit alone can convict them of sin.

It is very easy for those involved in ministry to become discouraged when they cannot see tangible results at the present time; however, a person’s potential to grow spiritually has absolutely nothing to do with the opinion of a disciple-maker. Newton explains that many times a new believer seems nearly indistinguishable from the lost world, and only time will reveal the true nature of a person’s heart. He writes, “We must never underestimate what God can do in our lives or in the lives of others because He sees tremendous growth potential in every believer who has a heart for Him.”53 Disciple-makers must keep their eyes on Christ as they remain faithful in their ministry and trust that God will bring the increase in His own timing.

Within a few days of checking into a new command this author crossed paths with a lady that demonstrated many signs of spiritual oppression. Through the stories she told, and even the pictures she drew, it became apparent that there were elements of darkness that had been allowed into her life. After becoming burdened for her, prayers were made and solicited from other prayer warriors, and within a few days an opportunity opened up to share the gospel. There was no indication that day she had in anyway received what had been presented, and showed no interest in the months that followed. After a full year the news came that she had been admitted to the psychiatric ward for signs of suicidal behavior. Once showing up to visit her, she expressed great gratitude that someone was there who could share more about the Good News of Jesus. She was transferred out of the command shortly after, but months later called to report that she had put her full trust in Christ and was growing in the knowledge of His Word.

Christians simply cannot measure their success on whether a person responds to Christ in the time they think it should take. One is only successful in ministry to the degree that they obey what God leads them to do. It has taken some missionaries years to see the first convert among indigenous people, and it is not unimaginable to think that a military missionary could be faithful in ministry and not realize a great harvest during their watch. Those who share the gospel with an unbeliever are often only a single link in the chain of saints sent as any extension God’s grace and mercy in a person’s life. While it can at many points feel as though time spent in ministry is energy expended without meaning and suffering without cause, like the patient farmer disciple-makers must stay the course and trust God for the harvest.
CHAPTER FIVE
PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR THE UNIFORMED MISSIONARY

Teaching on the Lord’s Prayer, John Piper writes, “Jesus’ primary concern…is that more and more people, and more and more peoples, come to hallow God’s name. This is the reason the universe exists. Missions exists because this hallowing doesn’t.”¹ Although military Christians are called to glorify God by obeying the Great Commission, this project has sought to expose that fact that discipleship in the military is less than ideal. In chapter three advice was provided to those who serve military missionaries in supporting roles, while chapter four provided a theological foundation for the military missionaries call, field, and orders. The purpose of this final section is to offer practical advice on discipleship for lay military Christians.

The Military Missionary’s Resources

Throughout the New Testament clear instructions are given on how the church should function in fulfilling the Great Commission. Disciple-makers are not made in isolation, rather they are grown under the nurturing guidance of the local church. Christians were never expected to fulfill their mission alone, but are provided much needed encouragement and accountability through spiritual leadership and ministry partners. Through prayer God allows others to actively participate in the work of Christian loved ones deployed to the remotest parts of the earth. This section will give detailed instructions on how to more fully utilize the resources God provides to uniformed missionaries.

Home Base

While some Christians do not attend a church regularly because it feels too foreign, others have concluded that the local church has become irrelevant. It would mistake to conclude this sentiment is a recent phenomenon, as evidence supports that there has been a growing trend within the United States for decades. Barna warned over twenty years ago, “While half of the population strongly believe that the Christian faith remains relevant to the way we live today, only half as many believe that the local Christian church possess such relevance.” As discussed in chapter two, there are many reasons that contribute to this view among believers, however, Scripture reveals that it is quite contrary to Christ’s plan for the church. Paul reminded the Colossians that both his suffering and laboring among the Gentiles was to “…present every man complete in Christ.” Grudem explains that the church’s mission only begins with leading people to Christ through evangelism, and continues with Paul’s same goal of nurturing them into spiritual maturity.

Chuck Swindoll believes that God is involved in “only two worldwide construction projects” that he identifies as evangelism and the church. The primary thrust of the military missionary’s ministry is to make new disciples by evangelizing the lost, but they themselves must first be equipped for the task. The local church is where God intends a believer to plant their life, as they both support and are supported in every possible way. Swindoll explains that

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3 Ibid., 218.
4 Colossians 1:28.
the church alone is able to provide accountability, consistency, unity, and stability in a Christian’s life, and those who believe they can operate in isolation struggle in one or more of these areas in their life.\footnote{Swindoll, Growing Deep in the Christian Life, 361.}

There are many things that must be accomplished when a service member is relocated on military orders, but connecting to a local church should be at the very top of every Christian’s list. There are countless reasons that most would judge as valid for missing church the first week or even weeks, but there is simply not time to delay for military believers who are always on the countdown until their next deployment or move. Across the country there is rarely a shortage of available options, including military chapels. However, there is a decreasing trend of churches that are committed to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. The most important aspect in locating a local fellowship is that it is a church that teaches the Bible faithfully, and attempts to live it out in obedience. Instructing parents about how they should advise their adult children leaving the home, Francis Schaeffer wrote:

Do I say, “You have to find a church that agrees down to every last detail with what I teach”? That’s ridiculous. Nor do I say, “It doesn’t matter where you go.” What I say is, “Find a church which has, and lives, an orthodoxy of doctrine and an orthodoxy of community and go there.” This is not to say that one is going to agree with every detail that is taught, nor that there is no time or place to discuss our Christian distinctives. Within the circle of truth there is that which is more or less pure, according to our own light as we study the Scripture. But if a church is a Bible-believing church, it falls inside the circle and you are not falling off the cliff.\footnote{Francis A. Schaeffer, The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: a Christian Worldview, vol. 4 (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 178.}

When a Christian service member has peace that they are in the church God has placed them, it is vital they remain committed and become a participating member of the ministry within that church. Although it is challenging for some, they must be willing to extend a hand in
fellowship and become determined to overcome apparent differences in personality. The modern pastor is incredibly busy, as they often have many tasks in shepherding the flock, and some even serve as bi-vocational pastors. However, it is important to work through any barriers necessary in getting to know them personally and reassuring them of the desire to be committed to the church. Ideally, church leadership will connect a military Christian with a small group or spiritually mature believer that can disciple them. It is important to make new mentors aware of any upcoming deployments where discipleship will take place and convey the importance of their support in areas such as prayer.

Spiritual Leadership While Deployed

Christians who struggle to find a local church in their community that fits their preferences find that the problem only intensifies when they deploy. In this authors surrounding community there are more than twenty Baptist congregations within a twenty-minute drive. On average the options on deployment will be between a Catholic or Protestant service, where the Protestant chaplain could come from any number of denominational backgrounds. It is not uncommon to discover Christians who refuse to support religious services facilitated by chaplains whose style they judge as too different from their own preferences. When given one of a myriad of excuses after challenging such a mindset, it was helpful to remind a person of the importance in praying and thanking God for sending these servants to what is most often a very challenging environment for ministry.

If God blesses a deployment with a chaplain who is committed to the faithful teaching and preaching of the Word, and equally committed to living as a godly example, then Christians must strive in every way possible to support their ministry. It goes without saying that no chaplain is perfect, just as no believer is perfect, but they are uniquely equipped to provide
needed accountability and spiritual leadership. If blessed with the opportunity to disciple newer Christians, then lay missionaries must work to connect them to the surrounding body of believers. As an essential member of the local body of believers, they are often used in making the chapel feel like a church home for others on deployment. If they neglect to assemble faithfully, others who do not yet feel at home will likely follow their example.

Along with the absence of a chaplain, there are also times when it is necessary to separate in corporate worship from those who do not teach salvation in Christ alone or believe that Bible as God’s revealed Word is inspired and without error. Paul reminded Timothy that, “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.” However, he warned consistently that Christians must turn away from false teachers who preach another gospel. In his closing instructions to the Romans, he commanded, “…keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”

Hendriksen and Kistemaker explain that the church was not to intermingle with these men because of the possibility that some could be led astray by their clever arguments, rather they were to turn away or separate from them.

Discipleship should not stop during those times where a chaplain is unavailable or does not hold to orthodox teaching. Christians in all places are called to make Jesus known to the lost, and to teach the saved to obey all that He has commanded, which is why military missionaries

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9 2 Timothy 2:24-25.
10 Romans 16:17.
must be prepared to lead in discipleship whenever there is a void. The thought of leading spiritually can seem daunting to new Christians, or even mature Christians who simply are not comfortable with being at the forefront, but they should take courage in that a Christian is never alone when they are acting in obedience to God’s will. Recognizing these scenarios, the Department of Defense (DoD) authorizes commanders to designate lay leaders as a temporary accommodation, such as on deployment. Per Naval Instruction, lay leaders must receive training from a military chaplain and are appointed, “on the basis of volunteerism, high moral character, motivation, religious interest, and certification by the appointee’s religious organization.” If you foresee the need to lead corporate worship services while deployed, you should seek an endorsement from your local church, and work with the chaplain assigned to your unit who can provide the necessary training specific to your branch of service.

Fire Support: Prayer

Church history reveals that those who were used most mightily by God were great warriors in prayer, regardless of their theological leanings. Many Christians purpose in their hearts to accomplish great things for God, yet rarely ask for His provision through prayer. E. M. Bounds wrote, “The superficial results of many a ministry, the deadness of others, are to be found in the lack of praying. No ministry can succeed without much praying, and this praying must be fundamental, ever-abiding, ever-increasing.” Many fail to recognize that discipleship is warfare, and find themselves outmatched in every way once they enter the battlefield. John Piper skillfully illustrates the only hope for success when he writes:

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Is the field hospital the main reason for having troops on the field? What’s the main reason sergeants are in the trenches? To settle soldiers’ disputes? Do chaplains come along just to bury the dead? Or is there a war to be won? There is…Christ has his elect from every people, tribe, tongue, and nation (Revelation 5:9). They are held captive by the enemy (2 Timothy 2:26). And so the minefields must be crossed, the barbed wire cut, the snipers evaded, and gospel antidotes for Satan’s mind-altering drugs administered against immense opposition (Luke 21:12–19). So again I ask, How will the church ever come to think this way? How will millions of lukewarm churchgoers be brought to wartime readiness and put on military alert? How can the massive mentality of American prosperity, peace with the world, and family comfort ever be overcome? I believe the answer, beneath and behind the renewed empowering of the Word of God, is a movement of persevering, believing, expectant prayer.14

Any wise commander will take inventory of all available resources prior to entering the warzone in the event they need to use combined arms against the enemy. Likewise, military Christians should make it high priority to seek out other believers that will accompany them on the deployment and covenant together to pray that God would work through their ministry. In addition, it is vital that they build a team of prayer partners that will commit to intercede for you while deployed. It is probable that you will discover many of your Christian friends and family will consider it a great privilege to participate in your ministry through prayer because they understand the eternal implications.15 It is important to communicate with your prayer team what you anticipate the needs are prior to the deployment, such as wisdom in leading a discipleship ministry or witnessing to unbelievers. They should understand the need to continue to pray even when they do not hear from you because of the likelihood that regular communication will not be possible. Even when you can call or write to those back home, many times you will be unable to pass any specific details that would be considered sensitive information.


Finally, a Christian spouse should be one’s primary prayer partner, as they are the single most important human relationship if married. There is no way to avoid the reality that separation and stress from a military deployment will put tremendous strain on a marriage relationship. While this author’s marriage experienced many of the same types of issues during deployments before and after becoming saved, there was a clear distinction in how God used time part to grow closer to Him once becoming believers. As Christians the greatest prayer was that God would supernaturally bring the marriage closer to together even though currently residing on opposite sides of the globe, and that’s exactly what happened! God taught each person how to communicate on a higher level, which greatly matured the relationship, patience, and love for one another. One’s spouse is best equipped to pray for a wearied missionary on the field because they have the experience and discernment to know where their partner is lacking the most at a particular moment. In addition, because they are uniquely connected as one flesh and their mission is one and the same, they have a vested interest in praying that God would be glorified through their mutual ministry.

Tools for the Trade

If committed to glorifying God by fulfilling the Great Commission while on deployment, then uniformed missionaries should plan to bring along the resources needed. Sadly, many young Christians accomplish amazing feats to bring along equipment meant for their entertainment, while bringing very little that aides in their spiritual growth or the discipleship of others. The first priority for any Christian should be a printed copy of the Bible, and even additional copies for others who do not own one. Most military Christians make wise use of modern technology by utilizing digital Bibles on smartphones, tablets or personal computers. However, it is more than
likely that at some point during the deployment they will be unable to recharge batteries or find that an electronic device has experienced a catastrophic failure.

Fortunately, technology has produced some tremendous help for traveling disciple-makers. Where a handful of hardcover books became burdensome to transport on previous deployments, this author was able to bring along thousands of digital Christian resources, worship music videos, and sermons on a recent deployment. If operating on a tight budget a Bible program called *E-Sword* that contains multiple Bible versions and commentaries can be downloaded and installed to a personal computer completely free of charge.\textsuperscript{16} Other paid programs are also available, and in particular *Logos* has proven to be an incredible ministry tool.\textsuperscript{17} If planning on leading a small group, time should be spent organizing a teaching plan and adequately assessing what resource materials are needed. When discipling new Christians it is very helpful to refer them to sermons that are available online. However, it is important to remember internet connectivity while deployed is not a guarantee, and particularly on a personally owned computer. It is wise to download free sermons from websites such as *Grace to You* or *Desiring God*, and bring along writable media resources so that they can be distributed to those in need.\textsuperscript{18}

Finally, if at all possible uniformed missionaries should pursue Christian education from a military friendly institution such as Liberty University when at all possible. As a young corporal the opportunity existed to attend college during off-duty time, however, it created many


scheduling issues that greatly limited progress on the degree. Furthermore, it became an
impossibility once slated for the next deployment. With the advent of online education, pursuing
a degree has become widely accessible to military personnel. Christian education will not only
pay dividends toward one’s growth in the Word, but it will also help to advance their military
career.

**Winning the Lost & Teaching the Saved**

As a flight instructor this author has had the privilege of teaching many young naval
aviators the art of aerial combat maneuvering. Recollection of being a flight student has helped
to relate how foreign the concepts seem to the untrained ear, as there are many complicated
aspects that must be mastered in both the classroom and in the air. During flight training it
helped tremendously when an instructor narrowed down many complexities into two basic
elements: lift vector placement and energy management. By focusing on moving the jet precisely
where needed and ensuring energy was managed and available when needed, it became much
easier to perform in the air. In a similar way, making disciples can be summed up into winning
the lost through evangelism, and teaching the saved through discipleship. Every unbeliever must
begin at the beginning, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The goal of every Christian is to
grow in their knowledge of Jesus and worship Him by obeying what they know He commands.

Although Christians may feel intimidated with their mandate to make disciples, the key is
starting now with what they know through obedience, and trust God for the results. A body of
water such as the Dead Sea that does not contain both an inflow and outflow cannot sustain life
over time. Similarly, Christians must seek to know Jesus more, and constantly strive to give what
they know away to others, or else their spiritual growth will stagnate. Elmer Towns reveals that it
is not as important how a person conducts ministry as long as they remain faithful to the biblical
message. He quotes an unnamed source who said, “Methods are many, principles are few. Methods may change but principles never do.”\textsuperscript{19} In the sections that follow an effort will be made to provide practical help that is in no way meant to be a comprehensive, but rather an example of the methods that have worked in the author’s own ministry.

Evangelism

Those who contend that personal faith should be a private matter have never reconciled Jesus’ command for every Christian’s to fulfill the Great Commission. God has ordained only one way for lost people to be reconciled to Himself, which is a response of faith in the finished work of His Son at the Cross. Hebrews reveals that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen…and without faith it is impossible to please Him…”\textsuperscript{20} Paul instructed the Romans that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”, and that it is not possible for anyone to respond in faith to the Lordship of Christ apart from His messengers proclaiming His message.\textsuperscript{21} For people to be saved they must confess the resurrected Christ as Lord after they have heard the full saving gospel of Christ. MacArthur writes, “Any gospel presentation, to be effective, must clearly and comprehensively present the Person and work of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{22} Jesus is precisely what the Ethiopian eunuch heard when, “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.”\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] Hebrews 11:1, 6.
\item[21] Romans 10:17.
\item[23] Acts 8:35.
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Evangelism is derived from the Greek word *euangelion*, which means to call people to respond to the “good news” or “gospel” of Jesus Christ. God has uniquely gifted some in the body of Christ with the gift of evangelism, as their preaching is often used of God to bring people to repentance and faith in Jesus. Evangelism can feel rather uncomfortable to Christians, but all have the potential to grow in their ability to share Jesus with others by remaining committed to obeying the Great Commission. There are many forms of evangelism, and every Christian’s unique personality and giftedness will play a heavy role in how they approach witnessing to unbelievers. People are most impacted through evangelism when you have taken the time to show them the love of Christ and foster a relationship.

Describing Jesus’ use of “the towel and the basin” to wash His disciples’ feet, David Wheeler contends that, “Next to the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the gospel message, there is nothing more powerful or useful in the call of evangelism…” He explains that Jesus’ model of servant evangelism is simply “love in action” that He desires for all of his servants to follow.

Shortly after arriving in Afghanistan for a military deployment a burden arose over a young man that cleaned the office spaces, where he was paid not much more than was required to feed his family each day. As many of the locals, he was addicted to opium and often seemed trapped beneath the crushing weight of a religious system that left him hopeless in life and fearful of death. Reminded of Wheeler’s teaching on servant evangelism from a recent seminary class, this author determined to serve him each morning by bringing breakfast and praying that God would

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26 Ibid., 140.
be glorified through it. Before leaving the country an opportunity opened to confirm when asked by him that Christ was the true source of the love, joy, and hope he had witnessed.

A very effective technique in evangelism is to begin by simply asking a person to share what they feel it takes to be reconciled to God and live in eternity with Him. Most answers will fall into one of four possible categories: unbelief in God, unbelief in God’s justice, salvation by works, or salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ. There are many programs that are effective in teaching a person to lead an unbeliever through passages regarding salvation. However, all true evangelism must convey to a lost person that they have sinned against the only true God who is perfectly holy and just, and that they are without hope apart from placing their faith in His loving gift of salvation through the finished work of Jesus. While sharing the gospel from the Scriptures is critical, God also uses a Christian’s personal testimony as a powerful witness toward His unique ability to transform fallen lives. Success in evangelism is based upon a believer’s obedience to share what they know of Jesus to the lost world around them, as the results belong only to the One who is able to draw a wayward heart.

Discipleship

George Barna suggests that discipleship, “is about being and reproducing spiritually mature zealots for Christ.”27 Sadly, churches are filled with spiritually immature Christians because many have failed to follow through in teaching new believers to obey what Jesus commands after leading them to Christ through evangelism. Confessing Christ as Lord is only their new birth, and they must be nurtured to grow spiritually through discipleship. Further expounding upon this process, Barna writes:

We might define discipleship as becoming a complete and competent follower of Jesus Christ. It is about the intentional training of people who voluntarily submit to the lordship of Christ and who want to become imitators of Him in every thought, word and deed. On the basis of teaching, training, experiences, relationships, and accountability, a disciple becomes transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.28

Jesus’ command was clear that new believers must be taught to obey all that He commands, and every Christian should be involved with this task on a regular basis. McManis contends that every disciple should be able to answer specifically who he or she is discipling at the moment. He writes, “Some Christians will use the excuse that they don’t know enough to disciple anyone. Baloney! Find someone who knows less than you and them him something.”29 Discipleship is about using the time and resources God has given you at the present time and leading a disciple into a deeper knowledge of Christ. It is important to remember that disseminating information that is not understood by a hearer accomplishes very little. In discipleship the task is to break the text down as far as necessary for learners to gleam truth that enables their spiritual growth. It is the Christian parent’s primary role to disciple their children, mature sisters in Christ should disciple younger women, and military Christians should disciple less mature Christians while deployed.30

One of the most discouraging aspects of disciple-making is when those who profess Christ will not stay committed to discipleship. Paul’s custom when arriving in a new location was to preach first in the synagogues because of his burden for the Jews that were his brothers in the flesh. However, after they refused to listen he would commit his time and energy to reaching

28 Ibid., 18.
30 Ibid., 100–101.
the Gentiles. On many occasions this author has expended great effort attempting to disciple those who demonstrated little interest in growing spiritually, only to find that others were being neglected that God had sent who were hungry to grow. Newton reminds his readers that because people are prone to look at outward signs while God is concerned with a person’s heart, the potential for spiritual growth may at times be hard to identify. For this reason one should never abandon someone as a lost cause, but is also important for one to prayerfully consider with whom the Lord desires to invest their time.

Disciple-makers must strive to live as a faithful example, repent when veering off track, and be quick to reconcile with those they may have offended. Like young children, more is caught than taught when discipling a new believer, which means they will in many ways adapt to what you do more than what you say, at least initially. Discipleship must be relational which means disciple-makers must ensure they are available. Collins suggests spending enough time with disciples to allow for both teaching and observation of your actions and reactions in the real world. Many new disciple-makers resist this element because they fear an invasion of their privacy, or that people will come too dependent. However, God will not allow those that belong to Him to become dependent on any person long-term and only uses his servants to teach a new believer how to hear His voice through the Word.

**Leading Small Groups**

Most military disciple-makers are not called as pastor-teachers, but all must teach on some level during the discipleship process. Earlier in this chapter the case was made for

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31 Acts 17:2
supporting the ministry of the chaplain forward deployed with a military unit when at all possible. However, there are times when it may be necessary for a lay Christian to lead a small group, such as when the chaplain is temporarily unavailable for mission necessity, or when an additional Bible study is needed for those who work during the primary one. This section is meant to provide guidance for beginners in leading a small group, and will offer practical advice for conducting Bible study, prayer, and corporate worship.

Pursue Christ

Many Christians set sail in ministry with the highest hopes for discovering new lands and preaching the gospel wherever their feet trod, only to experience shipwreck more quickly than they could have ever imagined. Some believe that ministry effectiveness is most influenced by a person’s talents, but it is only their connection to Christ that God blesses. Cordeiro explains that the enemy is most effective in thwarting ministry when he successfully pulls a Christian away from their commitment to spend time with Jesus each day in His Word.\(^{34}\) While one will certainly grow in their knowledge of the Bible during preparation to teach, it is time dedicated to personal reflection that will best allow “God to deepen, enhance, stretch, and shape” a teacher’s heart.\(^{35}\) True intimacy with God occurs when a believer opens their heart before Him through repentance, allowing Him to speak to them through His Word, and results in worship as they move without delay to obey what God has revealed.

Spurgeon wrote, “whatever call a man may pretend to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry.”\(^{36}\) Disciple-makers are called to grow

\(^{34}\) Wayne Cordeiro, *The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2007), 57.

\(^{35}\) Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 33.

\(^{36}\) C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: a Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the*
in their personal holiness, which is most conducive during times of personal Bible study and prayer.\textsuperscript{37} If one sincerely desires to see God glorified through their ministry, then they must know that change has to first occur and must continue to occur in their own heart. Religious work produced through self-effort is to no avail, but service that flows from of a continual intimate relationship with Christ cannot fail.

Proclamation

Although much younger than many he was charged to oversee, Paul was insistent that Timothy must not allow his own youthfulness to become a reason for older men to scorn the messenger or reject the message. However, respect would not be acknowledged by his position, rather his consistent example in godly “…speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity…”\textsuperscript{38} Timothy’s first task in shepherding the flock was to practice what he preached, and his second was to preach the Word that alone provides the nourishment needed for spiritual growth.

Of all the tasks that spiritual leaders must do, preaching and teaching God’s Word is paramount. John Stott writes, “acceptable worship is impossible without preaching”, yet it is not uncommon today to find church services lasting hours that center around singing or fellowship while allotting little time for the proclamation of the Word.\textsuperscript{39} Paul commanded, “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”\textsuperscript{40} Timothy’s task was to continually read aloud God’s written instructions, teach the people clearly what it means,

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\textsuperscript{37} Newton, \textit{Spiritual Maturity}, 110.

\textsuperscript{38} 1 Timothy 4:12.


\textsuperscript{40} 1 Timothy 4:13.
and exhort them to obey all that they had learned. Your task is the same if God opens a door for you to lead other Christians in discipleship.

The Christian teacher’s primary responsibility is to rightly divide the word of truth to the very best of their ability, so that it can be conveyed to listeners with accuracy. They must begin with an unwavering commitment to uphold the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Hendricks explains that God’s special revelation in the Bible “is truth that is entirely consistent – never controverted, compromised, or contradicted by other parts of the revelation.”

Paul told Timothy that it was the Word alone that gives wisdom leading to salvation, as “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

Frederick Grant contends that as all New Testament writers assumed the infallibility and inerrancy of the Old Testament, and teachers must remained anchored to 2 Timothy 3:16 which is “the most explicit statement of the doctrine of biblical inspiration.”

If committed to teaching with integrity, then one must strive to unveil what the author intended to say to his original audience, discern the theological principle, and seek to apply it to their modern audience. Students of the Bible commonly refer to this process of interpretation as hermeneutics, which means, “that science which delineates principles or methods for interpreting an individual author’s meaning.”

One the greatest reasons that teachers fail to teach with accuracy is that they attempt to shortcut the study process. If a believer senses the call to proclaim God’s Word to others, then they must be determined study with diligence.

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42 2 Timothy 3:16.
45 David C. Deuel, “Expository Preaching from Old Testament Narrative,” in Rediscovering Expository
become particularly challenging to military missionaries on deployment when they lack the time desired for preparation. God knows each situation best, and more importantly, He knows what tomorrow holds. It is imperative to pray that God will provide the time needed, and help to remain faithful in utilizing the time He gives as a good steward.

Teachers can also make unimaginable mistakes in interpretation by attempting to impose their own biases on a text. Bryan Chapell warns, “If anything in Scripture can mean whatever our imaginations suggest rather than what Scripture determines, then our opinions become as authoritative as the statements of God and we can make the Bible say anything we want.” Teachers must remember that a text can never mean more today than it meant to the original audience. Getting to a correct interpretation is best accomplished by using grammar and history, or what is popularly known as the grammatical-historical method.

Another helpful process for Bible students is inductive Bible study, which means to move from the particulars to the general meaning of a passage. Deductive study occurs when a reader begins with their own ideas and seek to find biblical support, whereas inductive study beings with the careful observation of the text and moves outward to discover the writer’s intended meaning. MacArthur explains that inductive Bible study can be accomplished in four steps, beginning with observation. Interpreters should begin with attempting to answer basic journalistic questions such as who was the writer and audience, what was the occasion, and what historical or cultural factors were significant? Second, attempt to interpret the passage by

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47 Chapell, Christ-Centered Preaching, 77.


identifying key or recurring words and phrases, look for commands, and attempt to cross reference the text with other passages using a concordance or resources such as *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. The third step is evaluation where a teacher consults what others have discovered through the use of commentaries or study Bibles, as all teachers should be leery when their interpretation differs significantly from faithful scholars. Finally, one should prayerfully consider what application the passage has for them and their audience, as information without application is futile.

Another major issue that most new teachers fear, and every new teacher will have to overcome, is how to convey what they have learned to their audience. Roberta Hestenes explains her simple model of “Know, Feel, Do”. She begins with explaining the text clearly, moves on to helping her audience relate with the message on a heart level, and concludes with exhorting them to obey what the passage teaches. Richards and Bredfeldt dedicated an entire volume on their “Hook, Book, Look, Took” (HBLT) method, that begins with an effective attention getter, teaches the meaning of the passage, relates the theological truth to listener’s life, and concludes with calling them to a specific action or life change. If unsure about where to begin, a teacher can never go wrong with tracking through an entire book of the Bible verse-by-verse, such as the Gospel of John or Paul’s letter to the Romans. This approach will help the group better understand the greater context of a particular book, and will aide the teacher in systematically teaching the whole counsel of Scripture.

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The goal in Christian education is changed lives for God’s glory, and you must work to remove all other improper motivations. Hestenes writes, “My goal isn’t to display my learning, to teach creatively, to convey information, or a host of other things. Instead, I want most of all to see changed lives—obedient Christian disciples in the world.”\textsuperscript{54} As pointed out earlier in this chapter, methods will vary because of the unique attributes of each individual, but they are only effective to the extent that biblical principles are intact. If one remains committed to teaching with integrity, puts the time required each week in study, and seeks to apply lessons learned from a teachable spirit, God will use them tremendously with their own unique style.

Unfortunately, there is not enough time given the scope of this project to provide an extensive discussion on the subject of biblical teaching. If ever feeling overwhelmed with the prospect of leading others, never forget that a believer cannot fail if they are seeking to obey God with a humble heart. The Holy Spirit is their strongest ally and the driving factor causing spiritual growth in all Christians. In addition, God has promised to generously give wisdom to humble truths seekers who ask in faith.\textsuperscript{55}

Prayer

Much has been presented throughout this project on the subject of prayer, and this final section will seek to offer practical advice for its place in your ministry. While proclamation is the primary thrust of meetings, it should never be attempted apart from prayer. E.M. Bounds writes, “The life, power and glory of the Church is prayer. The life of its members is dependent on prayer and the presence of God is secured and retained by prayer…Without it, the Church is

\textsuperscript{54} Hestenes, \textit{Knowing What to Teach}, 29.

\textsuperscript{55} James 1:5.
lifeless and powerless.”

Dave Earley is unapologetically convinced of the necessity of prayer, which he sees as powerful, time saving, and the essential key aspect of high impact spiritual leadership. In the summer of 2011, this author was blessed with the opportunity to attend a week long intensive taught by Earley at Liberty University, where the class prayed various times each day throughout the week. To everyone’s amazement, he dedicated the entirety of Wednesday to prayer, which expanded each individual’s prayer life exponentially. More than thirty percent of that week was spent praying, and it was this class that had the greatest lasting impact on this student’s life and ministry.

Leaders should both open and close each meeting with prayer, with emphasis on repentance of sin and thanksgiving for God’s presence. One of the greatest helps to the group is time dedicated to praying for one another on a consistent basis each week. It is helpful to solicit prayer requests and ask for someone willing to bring it before the Lord in that moment. After all prayer requests have been given, time should be allotted for each person willing to pray in turn until all requests have been prayed for, and close with asking the Lord to bless the time in the Word. While many will feel somewhat uncomfortable with praying out loud in front of others, most adapt quickly, and it is very helpful in getting each member in the habit of prayer. It is vitally important that prayer is not reserved only for group meetings, but is practiced by each individual throughout the week. It is highly effective to recruit members of the group to pray for the leader, such as their study time in preparing for lessons. More importantly, the leader must pray for those whom God has placed under their care. Charles Spurgeon wrote:

My brethren, let me beseech you to be men of prayer. Great talents you may never have, but you will do well enough without them if you abound in intercession. If you do not pray over what you have sown, God’s sovereignty may possibly determine to give a blessing, but you have no right to expect it, and if it comes it will bring no comfort to your own heart.  

A commitment to prayer for one another will help build the group up in love as each member labors to bear the burdens of others. By remaining committed to prayer, in time the group will be built up in faith as they witness firsthand God moving through answers to their prayers. On many occasions burdens for others are not intended for one to act, but to pray. Oswald Sanders said, “Prayer influences men by influencing God to influence them.” Along with a prayer time at home, the faithful prayers of the group on deployment are essential to seeing God glorified where they serve.

Praise

Heartfelt worship is the natural consequence of praying saints living under the authority of God’s Word. John Stott, “All worship is an intelligent and loving response to the revelation of God, because it is the adoration of his Name.” Like the church in Ephesus addressed in Revelation 2:1-7 that had lost their first love, proclamation and prayer that doesn’t result in an overflow of loving praise is broken. Paul had instructed the church years earlier that an authentic filling of the Spirit should cause believers to speak, “to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”

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59 Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, 45.
61 Stott, Between Two Worlds, 82.
62 Ephesians 5:19-20.
If a group contains an individual gifted in either singing or playing a musical instrument, then they should employ them with the task of leading the group in worship. In times past small groups lacking this talent were forced to forgo corporate worship through song. However, with modern worship videos such as *iWorship*, every small group can enjoy time dedicated to praising God in corporate singing. If possible the group should seek to incorporate time for praise, as it is effective in unifying Christians as one body, and opening up hearts for the reception of the Word. Above singing, those in love with Christ and in awe of all that He has done, will willingly give all of themselves as “a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Worship to God is the surest indicator that the Holy Spirit has transformed a person, and the goal of all disciple-makers is to make disciples who worship Jesus in spirit and in truth.

**Partnership**

Scripture teaches that there are many reasons why God’s people should work in partnership while fulfilling their mission. Moses taught the necessity of having two witnesses when bringing a charge against an evildoer, as did Jesus and Paul in the New Testament. Solomon revealed the wisdom and practicality that partnership yields, such as the synergistic return on labor, encouragement, meeting physical needs, and protection against enemies. Jesus sent his disciples two-by-two, which was the pattern also followed throughout the book of

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64 Romans 12:1.

65 Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:9.

66 Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.
Acts.\textsuperscript{67} It is vitally important to pray that God will send a ministry partner that is equally hungry for His glory. No one is beyond the ability to fall, and no one is a special agent that God intends to operate outside the fellowship of other believers. Ministry partnership will offer needed accountability, encouragement, prayer support, and consistency to one’s ministry during those times the military mission will prevent a leader from assembling with other believers. It should be noted that many Christians have fallen by allowing close partnerships with someone from the opposite sex other than their spouse, which is almost always a recipe for disaster.

Unfortunately, a person’s drive to compete does not necessarily stop when they become a believer and commit to the work of ministry. In fact, Christians are in many ways more vulnerable to jealously and covetousness toward another’s ministry they feel is more effective. Hadley and Richards warn that rivalry among Christians has it origin in a sin nature, is deplored in Scripture, and grieves the Lord.\textsuperscript{68} Thompson reminds readers that those who allow jealously to persist in these situations may in the end miss what God has planned to do through them.”\textsuperscript{69} Acts 4 introduces a disciple whom the apostles named Barnabas, which means “Son of Encouragement”, who was later used tremendously by God in ministry to encourage the apostle Paul. When one is not the leader because they lack experience or God has blessed the deployment with someone more equipped, they should pray that God would help them serve others as an encourager like Barnabas.

A final consideration in regards to ministry partnerships is whether or not to co-labor with those from other faith groups. As already presented in this chapter, a Christian should only support those in ministry who uphold the essentials of the Christian faith. Many times younger

\textsuperscript{68} Hadley and Richards, \textit{Ministry to the Military}, 52.  
\textsuperscript{69} Thompson, \textit{Concentric Circles}, 189.\end{flushright}
believers or those not yet mature in the Word remain in the denomination of their youth, yet lack a fundamental understanding of what that particular institution teaches. One of this author’s closest allies in ministry on the ship was a brother from another denomination. Although both lovingly challenged one another’s views with the rule of Scripture, there was a mutual passion to see lost people receive God’s free gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

A fitting close to this project is to tell the story of the military missionary who had the greatest impact on the author’s life, despite never being afforded the opportunity to meet him in person. Andy spent time growing up on the mission field in both Costa Rica and Guatemala as the child of Christian missionaries, and later served with his wife doing missions in the Dominican Republic. After returning home due to a health issue within the family, Andy accepted a commission in the Marine Corps and was later selected to undergo flight training. Although serving in Mississippi at the same time, he was assigned to different squadron and a personal encounter never occurred.

One Saturday evening while returning home from a day trip, the news came from a close friend that Andy had been killed just hours before in an airplane crash. While the loss of a fellow service member is always heartbreaking, the accidental death of other peers had already revealed how truly dangerous and painful aviation can be. However, in the days that followed the author’s heart became increasingly broken over the loss of this young man’s life as it was amazingly clear that he had been used by God to touch so many others. Through personal accounts it was revealed that that he had modeled how to be a good husband and father, how to show the love of Christ unconditionally in the workplace, and how to pursue lasting joy through a relationship with Christ vice fleeting happiness in the temporal world. Parallels began to emerge in that Andy was also slightly older than other flight students, had small children, and was raised by godly parents. Still, there was more at play as Andy’s accident and life forced the author to consider his own story. Just two years prior while at the apex of rebellion against God, the author’s entire family was nearly killed in a forced landing of an airplane while serving as the pilot in command.
In the days following Andy’s death unanswerable questions persisted, such as why the author was spared although in his own estimation less worthy? Andy was called into the Marines as a missionary to glorify God, while the author was chasing a dream in an attempt to exalt self. Why was more time given when nothing about the life lived thus far sought to bring God glory? Although never meeting Andy in person, the ripples left by his love and devotion to Christ forever impacted so many others. His example demonstrated that God intends so much more than for people to live their life, which is but a vapor only for themselves.\(^1\) In time it became clear that mercy was extended merely as an act of God’s grace, and this author became resolved to live out the rest of his time on the earth for God’s glory.

**A Final Plea**

There is no greater pursuit in this life than to live for God’s glory. If a person desires to live a life that counts by doing those things possessing eternal significance, then they must commit themselves to pursue God’s glory and not their own. This project has sought to demonstrate that while God will accomplish all that He wills, Christians in the military often miss great opportunities to glorify Him through obedience to the Great Commission. If this project accomplishes anything in the lives of military Christians, the author’s prayer is that it helps reveal that God has saved each believer for a purpose and wills for them to do the work He has preordained from the foundations of the earth for His glory.\(^2\) This author has heard firsthand on many occasions Andy’s story in unexpected places within the military community in the decade since the accident, because his love and devotion to Christ are forever etched into the

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\(^1\) James 4:14.

\(^2\) Ephesians 2:8-10.
hearts of those he encountered. As demonstrated in Andy’s life, God receives great glory and works tremendously through those He calls to serve as a uniformed missionary.

If one has been called to serve in the military then it is important to know that there is much work to be done. One mistake would be to think that God is not using a Christian already because they fall short of perfection. There is no illusion that Andy was perfect, as there are no perfect people, rather perfectly redeemed people. In the author’s own estimation failure occurred as a military missionary much more than success, and succumbing to the temptation to abandon ministry would have occurred long ago but for God’s grace. God meets each of His children just where they are and uses their frailty for His glory, because it is only when one is weak that they are truly strong by the grace of God. Paul wrote, “Therefore I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Wherever a believer is in their walk with the Lord, it is important to take the truth they have been given and start now in service to Him. It is easy to retreat from one’s labor in the Great Commission when they feel ill equipped for the task. However, success in ministry is not measured by human means, but rather one’s level of obedience to what God has told them to do. It can also be tempting to abandon ministry when there seems to be no tangible fruit, but the fact is that often in ministry within a military setting a Christian is only a link in the chain of someone’s life. Another prayer is that military missionaries would not grow weary in their service for the Lord as they remember that “…in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

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3 2 Corinthians 12:10.
Military Christians must know that they are called for a time such as this. If God has led a believer to serve their nation at this time, it is important to know that the landscape is in many ways changing and things once taken for granted should no longer be assumed. It is increasingly becoming problematic for Christian leaders to express their faith in the work environment, where the Bible alone is often attacked and Jesus alone is scorned. For these reasons military missionaries must pray for both wisdom and courage. Wisdom is required because not all hills are worthy to die on, and courage is needed because some are. If one is being called to take a stand for truth, then they must never forget that the same God is with them who commanded Joshua to, “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”\(^5\)

\(^5\) Joshua 1:9.
APPENDIX A

MILITARY DISCIPLESHIP RESEARCH SURVEY

For the purposes of this survey, a deployment is defined as a period of time greater than one month where you served in a military unit at sea or on land outside the continental United States (OCONUS). If you have never deployed, please answer all questions in the context of your previous year of military service, or the last year of your military service if you are no longer in the military.

1. How long ago did you deploy?
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1-2 years
   c. 3-4 years
   d. 5 + years
   e. I have never deployed
2. How long have you been a Christian?
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1-2 years
   c. 3-4 years
   d. 5 + years
   e. I am not a Christian
3. What is the highest goal of Christians after they are saved?
   a. Join and remain faithful to a local church
   b. Give generously to the church or poor
   c. Glorify God
   d. Follow the Ten Commandments
   e. Other (please explain)
4. Did you have any spiritual goals before deployment?
   a. No
   b. Yes (please explain)
5. How satisfied were you with your spiritual growth during the deployment?
   a. Dissatisfied
   b. Somewhat satisfied
   c. Satisfied
   d. Very satisfied
   e. Other (please explain)
6. How satisfied were you with your Christ-like example before others?
   a. Dissatisfied
   b. Somewhat satisfied
   c. Satisfied
   d. Very satisfied
   e. Other (please explain)
7. To what extent did you feel pressure from either leaders, peers, or subordinates to conform or participate with ungodly behavior, including command sponsored events?
   a. Very pressured
   b. Routinely pressured
   c. Rarely pressured
   d. Never pressured
   e. Other (please explain)

8. What is the Great Commission?
   a. Grants military officers the authority to issue lawful orders
   b. Every Christians’ mandate to make disciples
   c. The ordination of clergy or military chaplains
   d. I do not know
   e. Other (please explain)

9. In your own words, how do people become saved?
   a. Please explain

10. On average, how often do you share your faith through evangelism with unbelievers?
    a. Never
    b. Once a year
    c. Once a month
    d. Once a week
    e. One a day

11. How many new Christians have you intentionally discipled while serving in the military (i.e. taught them to know and obey Jesus’ commands)?
    a. I have never discipled a new Christian
    b. 1-2
    c. 3-4
    d. 5-10
    e. 10+

12. Did your church provide for you any amount of missionary or discipleship training prior to your deployment?
    a. I do not belong to a local church
    b. No, my church offered no form of training prior to my deployment
    c. My church offered some limited training, but not enough
    d. Yes, my church offered training prior to my deployment
    e. Other (please explain)

13. How effective were military chaplains at equipping Christians for making disciples?
    a. Ineffective
    b. Somewhat effective
    c. Effective
    d. I have little to no experience with military chaplains
    e. Other (please explain)
14. How often did you assemble with other believers for fellowship and corporate worship (i.e. military chapel or local church service)?
   a. Never
   b. Once a month
   c. Once a week
   d. More than once a week
   e. There were no services available on my deployment

15. How often did you participate or lead a Bible or small group study?
   a. Never
   b. Once a month
   c. Once a week
   d. More than once a week
   e. There were no Bible studies and I did not feel equipped to lead

16. What was the greatest obstacle you experienced to attending regular worship or Bible study on deployment?
   a. Operational tempo
   b. It was discouraged by my leadership
   c. It was too different from my church at home
   d. Too many competing distractions for my personal time
   e. Other (please explain)

17. What is the greatest obstacle to unity among Christians who serve in the military?
   a. Rank structure
   b. Denominationalism
   c. Ungodly atmosphere
   d. Spiritual immaturity
   e. Other (please explain)

18. How concerned are you that changing military regulations do or will infringe upon your right to practice your Christian faith?
   a. Not concerned
   b. Mildly concerned
   c. Moderately concerned
   d. Very Concerned
   e. Other (please explain)

19. To what extent are Christians who serve in the military allowed to share their faith through evangelism with other service members, DoD civilians, or foreign nationals?
   a. Never, its forbidden
   b. Only in an off-duty status
   c. Only when solicited to do so
   d. Any time or place
   e. Other (please explain)

20. To whom can military Christians share their faith with?
   a. Peers
   b. Subordinates
   c. Leadership
   d. Anyone
   e. Other (please explain)
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July 7, 2014

Charles B. Blankenship  
IRB Exemption 1917.070714: Military Discipleship Research Survey

Dear Charles,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.  
Professor, IRB Chair  
Counseling

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