



OF BRO

PEERS

Copyright © 2015 by Band of Brothers Men's Ministry, Inc.

All rights reserved. Feel free to make copies of this study to give to others, but please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission.

For more information about our ministry, please visit us at www.bobmensministry.org

ISBN 978-0-9961571-0-0

Inspired by the HBO miniseries, *'Band of Brothers,'* and the stories of the real-life heroes of Easy Company during World War II.

May the Lord give us the strength and courage to jump into the fight as these men did so many years ago...

SO

OTHERS

MAY

LIVE!!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
Core Values	5
Memory Verses	9
1 The Disciplined Soldier	11
2 Spiritual Warfare	21
3 Fear	32
4 Brotherhood	42
5 Servant Leadership	54
6 A Strong Defense	65
7 Wounded Warriors	77
8 Rest	89
9 Hands and Feet	101
10 Finish Strong	113
Appendix A – Leader’s Guide	123

CORE VALUES

From the very beginning of the Band of Brothers Men's Ministry, our number one priority has been to get the men of the Church plugged into a strong brotherhood. One where they would not just show up every other week, read a few verses from the Bible, answer a couple of soft-ball questions, and then shoot the breeze about their golf game or their latest investment for the next half hour.

Our goal was that they would find the heart of God for their lives as they began to learn what it meant to lay everything down, so that others might find TRUE life in Jesus Christ through their sacrifice.

Our core values are simple:

BROTHERHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY DISCIPLESHIP

- **BROTHERHOOD**

Deep down, each of us have a desire to belong to something, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. Often in today's culture that plays out at the gym, or the bar, or in some sports venue. It feels good to be a part of a team. To have a bunch of guys you can hang out with and just let loose.

But let's be honest. Those things eventually fail us, don't they? We get bored of workout routines or we get injured trying to lift "like we used to." Our buddies at the bar say they've got our back, but most of that talk is gone when the liquor wears off, isn't it? And, yeah, rallying around a sports team is great and a lot of fun, but there's never going to be any real depth there, right?

We know these things, yet we keep on running to them to try to meet that longing for brotherhood.

What if there was something better?

What if there was a place you could pour out your heart – all your fears, your struggles, stuff you've kept hidden all your life – and instead of hearing crickets or condemnation or dumb, self-serving advice, you are embraced by men that understand. Men that have walked the same road and have found victory. Men that will not only pray for you and encourage you, but who will actually walk alongside of you through all the valleys and mountaintops. Men who will surround you and accept you and challenge you, no matter how many times you fall.

THAT IS BROTHERHOOD!

And yes, it does exist!!

Our Platoons (small groups) are made up of men just like you. Guys that don't have it all together. Guys that don't have it all figured out. But they are men

that are willing to walk it out with you. Men that are committed to doing whatever it takes to help each other grow closer to Jesus.

- **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Again, let's be honest with each other. Left to ourselves, most of us pretty much stink when it comes to "sticking things out", right? We'll resolve to eat better, work out more, drink less, make right choices. But unless we have someone pushing us to stay with it, we almost always fall back to what we're comfortable with.

The "Christian Walk" is no different. We are, by nature, selfish. Jesus calls us to be selfless. You can fight it out for a little while in your own strength, and you can fake it for a little longer, but by yourself you'll eventually return to your old ways. Tough truth, but truth nonetheless.

That is why you have to have accountability.

You've got to have brothers that will climb in the foxhole with you. Men that are willing to get dirty. Men that are in it for the long haul. Brothers that will get in your face when you screw up, but will lovingly lift you up to help get you back on the right path.

You will find that kind of accountability in your Platoon.

As you make the choice to open up and ask for help, you will find a group of brothers that are ready and waiting to get into the battle with you.

"Where we go one, we go all." (*from the movie, White Squall*)

- **DISCIPLESHIP**

Brotherhood and accountability mean nothing if they are not accompanied by discipleship. Again, you can find both of those things to some degree at the bar downtown.

What will set us apart is discipleship.

Everything that we do at Band of Brothers is designed for one purpose: to draw you closer to Jesus Christ. To become a "disciple" that follows after Him. Without Him at the center of your life, nothing else matters.

All your accomplishments will fade.

You will have no real passion or purpose that lasts.

Your legacy will consist of toys and trophies that will be the things of garage sales and landfills once you're gone.

Jesus changes all of that.

His offer is eternity in heaven with Him. Your salvation is a free gift that is possible only by the sacrifice He paid on the cross.

But His call to His followers is one of great cost to us: to lay down our life for His name's sake.

The road of a disciple is not easy. It's not glamorous. But it is WORTH IT!

At Band of Brothers, you will learn what it looks like to live as a Disciple of Jesus. Not in theories or in good intentions, but in real-life, practical, everyday applications. You'll be challenged in your Platoons each week to "kill off" more of yourself so that Jesus will become greater in your life. The reason for the skull in our logo is a constant reminder that we called to die to our "self" every day.

So there you go. Brotherhood. Accountability. Discipleship. These core values will be at the center of everything you do in your Platoon over the next few months. Simple and straight forward – yet LIFE-TRANSFORMING if you let Jesus use them to bring you closer to Him!

.

So what will Band of Brothers look like for you? First of all, if you just stumbled upon this book online or in a book store, we ask that you would prayerfully consider finding a group of other men to go through this together. One of the biggest hurdles for guys is opening up to other men, and leaning on them for strength and prayer and accountability. Yes, you could just go through this study all on your own, but we promise you – the results will be so much greater if you surround yourself with a group of guys, your "Platoon" for the next ten weeks.

If you got this book through an already established Band of Brothers regiment, and you are getting ready to go through an official 10-week Wave – well, prepare to get uncomfortable! If, at the end of this 10 weeks, you have not felt challenged or stretched or had someone get in your face – you either faked your way through the whole study, or your Platoon Leader failed to do his job.

We have spent far too many years on the sidelines of the true "Christian" walk. The men of the Church have grown apathetic and lazy, and have given over much of the leadership to the women. We have denied the responsibilities we have been entrusted with, in exchange for Sunday afternoon football and frisbee golf.

IT STOPS NOW.

Make the decision, in your heart, right now, that you will give 110% for the next ten weeks.

Commit to being “all-in” for the men in your Platoon, *EVERY WEEK*, whether you know any of them or not. That means you show up, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally, *EVERY WEEK*.

Commit to being brutally honest and transparent about where you are in life right now, regardless of how foolish you might think you look.

Commit to “hiding God’s Word in your heart” by memorizing the memory verse each week, and allowing it to transform the way you think and react to all of life’s circumstances.

Commit to chase after God with your life – not just on Sunday mornings – but every moment of every day of every week.

Yeah, you’re probably gonna fail at it, and you might crash and burn in disastrous and spectacular ways. But if you commit, right now, that you will pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and **STAY CONNECTED** with your Savior and your brothers, we guarantee the results will be much different than they have been for you in the past.

So are you ready? God has an amazing journey all planned out for you – all you have to do is take the next step...

We are so very excited that you have decided to join us on our journey. We pray that God will open up your heart, that He would move in powerful ways in your life, and that He would pour out His blessings upon you and the men that come alongside of you, as together you let go of **YOU** and pick up your crosses so that others can find life through Jesus Christ!

Why are we here?

SO OTHERS MAY LIVE!!

*** If you are the leader of your small group, flip back to the end of the book before you go any further. In Appendix A, you’ll find a short Leader’s Guide with some suggestions on how to make this study the most effective for your men.*

*If you’re not leading the group, and one of your buddies roped you into this thing, feel free to check out the Leader’s Guide as well. Not only will it help you hold your Platoon Leader accountable, it will also prepare you for that Platoon **YOU** will be leading soon!!*

MEMORY VERSES

“So I run with purpose in every step...” 1 Corinthians 9:26 (NLT)

“Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all of the strategies of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11 (NLT)

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

“Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers...” Nehemiah 4:14 (NLT)

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Hebrews 12:3-4 (NIV)

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” Psalm 34:18 (NLT)

“Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:29 (NIV)

“The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8 (NLT)

“I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” Acts 20:24 (NIV)

DISCLAIMER...

So this would be the part that most publishing companies or book sales companies would say, "Do NOT put this in your book." But at Band of Brothers, one of our biggest goals is transparency and complete honesty with each other. So here goes...

If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, fully surrendering your life to Him, then this book will not work for you.

Without the power of the Holy Spirit working in your life, you will not see any kind of lasting change in your heart or your mind.

Sure, there are some of you out there that are really good at challenging and pushing yourself to be better men, but the only way you will ever be able to truly succeed at implementing the steps found in this book is to allow Jesus to work them out through you.

Maybe that's a turnoff to you.

You might read that and think, "Well, this ain't the group for me. No thanks. Not interested..."

But just think about this for a moment:

Why did you come to this group? There are plenty of other "better" things you could have been doing, so why did you come here?

Or why did you pick up this book at the store, or download it onto your computer?

Could it be that deep in your heart, you know that what you've been doing is not working?

Could it be that despite what all your friends or family have said, or even what you have told yourself, there is a greater purpose in life than simply 'existing'?

If you have never accepted Jesus into your heart, but you are willing to put yourself up to the challenge, then stick with us. Stay in your Platoon for the next ten weeks. Ask them the tough questions. Ask them WHY they believe the way they do. When it all seems pointless and stupid, stay in the fight and keep leaning on your brothers.

And if at some point you decide that you're ready to push all your chips in on Jesus, then humbly get on your knees, with your brothers around you, and simply confess that He is Lord and ask Him to take over ALL of your life.

But until that point comes, let's walk this road **TOGETHER...**

1

THE DISCIPLINED SOLDIER

MEMORY VERSE:

“So I run with purpose in every step...” 1 Corinthians 9:26

“Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.”

– George Washington

What are these for?

In order to officially “graduate” from BOB, you have to make it to at least 8 of the 10 study nights. Your Platoon Leader will hold you accountable by checking the box.

Also, if you’re not gonna make it a priority to bring your study guide to the mtg to take notes and share what God is doing in your own life, then you will be missing out. So there’s a check box for that too!

DO THE HARD WORK!!

ATTENDANCE
 STUDY GUIDE

Discipline. Simply say the word in today's churches and most people, especially the guys, get turned off. Although they may not say it out loud, what most of them are thinking (and what you and I are thinking if we're really honest) is, "Hey, I'm at church to sing some songs I really like, get fed spiritually by the pastor, and maybe catch up with a few people while I'm here. Discipline sounds too much like hard work, and I do enough of that at my job. Besides, we just want to be about grace, not works... Right?"

The attitude of most Christians in America today is that discipline is too traditional. Too legalistic. It's just not any fun. But if you're willing to dig deep into God's Word, His 'autobiography/instruction manual/historical textbook' for His church, you'll find that the idea of discipline is firmly rooted throughout the Old and the New Testaments.

The apostle Paul was one of the strongest voices for leading a disciplined life as you follow Jesus Christ. In 1 Timothy 4:8-10, Paul tells us that,

"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the Living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers."

Think about it this way: think about an Olympic swimmer, or a NFL linebacker, or a champion marathon runner. To say that they live a disciplined life would be a serious understatement! They each spend countless hours in the gym, or on the field, or at the track, each and every week, year round. They monitor their speed, their calorie intake, their rest – every aspect of their life, with a dedication and drive that goes way beyond that of the normal, everyday guy at the office.

But look again at what Paul says: "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better..." All that time those guys spend training and working out and perfecting their bodies to be the best that they can be – that's good, **BUT** there's something a whole lot better out there to train for.

Paul keeps this line of thought going in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, once again using athletics to paint a picture for us:

"Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should."

When Paul talks about "disciplining his body like an athlete, the Greek word he used was the word, "doulagoeo." The definition of this word is:

“To make a slave and to treat as a slave, i.e. with severity, subject to stern and rigid discipline.”

That doesn't sound much like the half-hearted attempt that most of us make at Christianity, does it? The road that Paul is pointing us down in these verses is not an easy one. It will demand your time, your energy, and ultimately your life. But the prize at the end is well worth the sacrifice. The importance of that statement cannot be overlooked: ***THE PRIZE AT THE END IS WELL WORTH THE SACRIFICE!*** If you truly believe that, then you will begin to order your steps, running with purpose in every single one of them.

At this point, some of you may be thinking to yourself, “What the heck did I get myself into?! I'm really not looking for this kind of challenge in my life right now. All I was wanting was to hang out with these guys for a few weeks and then check it off my list of ‘Things I Need to Do to Be a Good Person...’”

Well, that may be the case. That might have been all you had in mind to get out of being a part of Band of Brothers. But what if God has a bigger plan for your life? Aren't you tired of sitting on the bench? Aren't you ready to get in the game? To make an impact? To leave a legacy? Aren't you ready to become that “one” that truly makes a difference in this world?

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus put forth the challenge in these powerful words:

“Out of every one hundred men, ten shouldn't even be there, eighty are just targets, nine are the real fighters, and we are lucky to have them, for they make the battle. Ah, but the one, one is a warrior, and he will bring all the others back.”

Doesn't that stir something way down deep inside of you? Can't you feel a part of you crying out, “I want to be the one!!” Think of Maximus in *Gladiator*. Or William Wallace in *Braveheart*. Men that stood their ground and made an impact.

Here's a news flash for you: ***YOU WILL NOT GET THERE BY ACCIDENT.*** It's not just gonna fall into your lap one day. The walk of a fully devoted follower of Christ is one that is intensely purposeful. You will have to learn to be disciplined. But again, the prize is worth it. As Paul said, it is an “eternal prize.” It is the embrace you'll get on the other side, as your Savior and King wraps his arms around you and says, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

.

So lets get practical. We know that there is a prize of great worth at the finish line. We know that the road to get there is a long one, and, as Jesus told us in ***Matthew 7:14***, the road is narrow and the gate is small. We also know just from living with ourselves that it's gonna take a ***LOT*** of discipline to keep us heading in

the right direction. So how do we get started on that road? What's our first step? Teddy Roosevelt said,

“I dream of men who take the next step instead of worrying about the next thousand steps.”

So let's take it one step at a time...

.

Let's go once again to the analogy of athletics. With the abundance of fast food chains and 24 hour gyms, we have turned into a culture of “before and after” pictures. Most of us are pretty good at “letting ourselves go” and enjoying our pizza and beer a little too much. Next thing you know, you're looking at pictures from last summer's beach vacation, wondering how in the world did you end up looking like that?! So you get out the camera, stand there in your gym shorts with a pathetic look on your face, and snap your “before” shot. What that photograph represents is an honest, in-your-face pic of where you're at right now. There's no Photoshop editing, no fancy lighting to try to hide the imperfections – it's all there for you to see.

For our purposes, the evaluation on the next page is your “before” photo. Your first step on this road is to take a look at each of these areas, and honestly assess where you're at in each discipline. Where are you the most “flabby?” What are some of the key areas you really want to start working out? Under each discipline, write down **WHY** you rated yourself at that level. Again, be honest in your assessment of yourself. Once you've finished your assessment, and identified why you rated yourself at that level, share with your Platoon what your 2 biggest areas of struggle are.

NOTE: In the training for US Navy SEALs, known as BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL), each training event the men go through is called an “Evolution”. In each chapter of this study, you will have to go through “Evolutions” as well. These will be your action steps – the things that should challenge you and push you to dig deeper in your walk with Jesus.

In BUD/S, their evolutions are taken VERY seriously. If the men skip an evolution, or go through one half-heartedly, their instructors send them off to swim in the frigid waters of the Pacific!

Take these BOB evolutions just as seriously. Be honest with yourself. Be honest with your brothers. Progress comes at the cost of personal comfort. Be DISCIPLINED!

1ST EVOLUTION: personal evaluation

BIBLE STUDY *Poor* *OK* *Great*
(don't forget the WHY!)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

PRAYER
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SHARING THE GOSPEL
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SERVING OTHERS
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

LEADING
(at home, work, etc)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SEXUAL PURITY
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Good. You've got your "before" picture in front of you. You know how you stand right now in your Christian walk. So what next?

It's time to start setting some goals. It's time to get a vision for your life, because as Proverbs 29:18 says,

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Now is where you take a look into the future, and you begin to envision in your mind what that "after" picture could look like. Where is your life falling apart right now as a result of your lack of discipline? In other words, where did it hurt the most as you did your first evolution?

- ***Is it your marriage?***
- ***Your relationship with your kids?***
- ***If you're single, is it your dating life, or lack of it?***
- ***Is it your struggle to find meaning in the mundane, the routine of life?***
- ***Is it your job?***
- ***Your finances?***
- ***Your friendships?***
- ***Or is it your relationship with God? Have you grown distant, or disconnected?***
- ***Or maybe you know deep down that you never really have had a relationship with Him?***

Whatever it is, it is time to get a vision for how you want your life to look at the end of this study. It's time to start exercising and stretching out those "faith muscles" – ask God to show you the impossible that could happen in your life. He is the Restorer of that which was lost, so don't be afraid to ask Him for those things which you thought could never happen! Not to make you feel insignificant, but seriously, who are you to say or think that God cannot or will not heal and forgive and restore and rebuild?

Write down the vision for what you want your life to look like on the next page...

2ND EVOLUTION: vision

NOTE: It is vitally important as you go through this evolution that you realize this – God is not in love with a future version of yourself. He sent His Son to be a sacrifice for your sins because He loves you right where you're at! So as you're writing down this vision for your life, don't think "God will love me more when I get there." His love for you is already greater than you could ever imagine. It's up to YOU though to tap into the promises and the power of all that He has to offer!

Awesome. Now lets connect those two photos. How do you get from that “before” pic of where you stand spiritually today, to that “after” pic of where you want your life to be tomorrow?

The answer is that you **DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN**. As the saying goes, “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” The Bible puts it this way in Proverbs 21:5,

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”

In other words, if you just try to jump right off the couch and start bench pressing 300 lbs, you’re gonna get crushed!

.

Your final evolution in this chapter is this: take a look back at those areas of spiritual discipline that you are struggling with. Now **COME UP WITH AT LEAST 1 ACTION STEP** that you want to work towards in **EACH** of those areas.

EXAMPLE: if you are really struggling with Bible Study, your action step could be that you will commit to read the Bible at least 15 minutes, for 5 days this next week. Then, to keep yourself accountable, you could text or email your Platoon a specific verse that stood out to you each day, with a short explanation of what it meant to you...

Whatever your action steps are,

1. Be specific about what you plan to do
2. Be intentional about including accountability with your brothers, and
3. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO CHALLENGE YOURSELF – YOU ARE CAPABLE OF FAR MORE THAN YOU THINK!!**

3RD EVOLUTION: action steps

“It is one thing to praise discipline, and another to submit to it.” – Miguel de Cervantes

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man...” – Colossians 3:23

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Be accountable to the men in your Platoon for the goals that you have set.*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"So I run with purpose in every step..." 1 Corinthians 9:26

2

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

MEMORY VERSE:

“Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all of the strategies of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11

“It is true that God may have called you to be exactly where you are. But, it is absolutely vital to grasp that He didn’t call you there so you could settle in and live your life in comfort and superficial peace.” – Francis Chan

Got another box for you...

Memorizing scripture is HUGE in your fight to become the man God wants you to be. Again, put in the hard work if you want to see results. Hold each other accountable.

Hold your Platoon Leaders accountable. They’re regular guys just like you, so build them up and encourage them in this area as well.

ATTENDANCE
STUDY GUIDE
MEMORY VERSE



So how did it feel to follow through on those one or two new action steps last week? Stay strong brother, and keep your focus. Remember, you are running with purpose in **EVERY** step now, and you've got a whole marathon ahead of you to perfect your stride. Lean on your brothers, and hang tough!

.

Spiritual warfare. What are your thoughts when you hear those words? Are they familiar terms in your vocabulary? Or does it make you feel like things just got a little weird around here...

For most of us, whether you've grown up in church or not, the whole idea of spiritual warfare, real-life battles between angels and demons and God vs. Satan, really sounds more Hollywood than anything else. Sure, we may acknowledge that we believe in God, and that there might be some sort of enemy out there fighting against us, but it's not something we actively engage our thoughts on throughout the day, is it?

Yet, if we get into God's Word, and start to truly read and study it, we begin to see that the idea of spiritual warfare is not only in the Bible, but it is happening behind the scenes in just about every book of the Bible. Take a look at Daniel 10, verses 12-21. Here we find Daniel in agony and confusion about a dream he just had – so much so that he hasn't been able to eat for three weeks! The Bible says that he is in mourning because of the vision, when an angel comes to him and shares the following:

“Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia... Soon I must return to fight against the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia, and after that the spirit prince of the kingdom of Greece will come. Meanwhile, I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth...”

What an amazing, almost unbelievable passage of scripture! Spirit princes, archangels, heavenly battles... Seriously?!? These verses give us a window into the realities of what is happening all around us. The angel told Daniel that the moment Daniel began praying, he was dispatched to come to Daniel's aid. But along the way he apparently ran into some pretty fierce opposition, and for 3 weeks he had to battle this demon on his own until reinforcements came. Once his fellow soldiers got there, the angel was finally freed up to come to help Daniel out. Pretty crazy story, isn't it?!

In 2 Kings, chapter 6, we find another story that “opens our eyes” to the unseen things that are going on all around us. The prophet Elisha had been thwarting the attacks of the Aramean king upon Israel, constantly using his prophetic powers to warn the Israelites of the Aramean advances. Finally, the king of Aram got fed up with Elisha and had him tracked to a city called Dothan. He ordered his army to lay siege to the city, which is where the story picks up in verses 15-17:

“When the servant of the man of God (Elisha) got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my Lord, what shall we do?” the servant asked.

Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

At times, God didn’t let His people see the spiritual armies around them, but instead He opened up their ears to hear the sounds of battle, as He did for King David and his men in 2 Samuel 5:23-25,

“So David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered, “Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.”

David did as the Lord commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.”

In the New Testament, in the book of Mark chapter 5, verses 2-10, we find Jesus again bringing to the forefront the reality of the “spiritual forces” that surround us:

“When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him... When he saw Jesus, he shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.”

If you skip ahead to the last book of the Bible, all of a sudden the reasoning and the almost frightening truth behind all of this warfare is laid out for us. In the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelations, the Apostle John is given a startling vision of what is happening in the heavens. The saga begins in verse 3:

“Then another sign appeared in heaven; an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born... Her child was snatched up to God and to His throne... And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven...”

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

Seriously, doesn’t that sound like a storyline out of ‘*Lord of the Rings*’ or some movie like that? But that is straight from God’s Word. And in case you haven’t figured it out – the dragon and all of his angels are Satan and his demons, and the offspring of the woman that he is now coming after... yeah, that’s you and me.

So what’s the big deal? Why make so much fuss about something we cannot even see? Because it is absolutely critical that you understand this point:

When you decide be intentional and engage in the battle, you WILL get shot at, and pretty quickly you’re gonna end up taking some hits.

DISCUSSION:

*So now that you have a better foundation to work from, within your platoon, talk about **WHY** you think it is so important to understand that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle. What are the implications?*

“We are locked in a battle. This is not a friendly, gentleman’s discussion. It is a life and death conflict between the spiritual hosts of wickedness and those who claim the name of Christ.” - Francis A. Schaeffer

If you truly understand that you are getting ready to enter into a real battle, where you are going to get shot at, and you **WILL** get hit, are you willing to engage? No matter what is waiting for you on the frontlines?

If your answer is **YES**, make a verbal commitment to your platoon right now, and check the box below.



YES, I AM READY TO ENGAGE!!

Good! You've decided to join your brothers and enter into the battle – that is a **HUGE** decision, so do not take it lightly. Again, be prepared to start taking some shots. Up until now, there's a good chance that you haven't been a very big 'blip' on the enemy's radar. But now that your eyes are opened to his schemes and his desire to take you out, he's gonna do all that he can to get you out of the game. From the very first wave that we have gone through at Band of Brothers, we have consistently seen guys come under heavy fire **directly following this study**. Make no mistake, that is **NOT** a coincidence!

So what do we do now that we've made that commitment?

Any soldier preparing to go into battle would be an absolute fool to walk into the fight unarmed. Yet so many men in the church do that each and every day. Like some hyped-up version of John Wayne or Arnold Schwarzenegger, we walk into the fight thinking we are "man enough" to take it all on in our own strength. And what happens as a result?

You know. You've been there. You've seen the aftermath of trying to fight these battles on our own.

You've been in the car driving who knows where after you just had another fight with your wife, wondering how it got this bad.

You've woken up on the couch, hungover, after binge drinking again the night before, feeling like a failure for falling once again.

You've been in that place where you just feel like giving up, and all your fire and passion and purpose has gone and you can't figure out why.

So what happened??? Well, like so many of us have done countless times before, you walked into the fight without any armor. With no gun or sword. Not

even a butter knife. And when it all hit the fan, all you could do was tuck tail and run.

What you missed in all of your fighting and failing was this: **spiritual battles require spiritual battle gear.** All your bravado and wisdom and street smarts won't mean a thing until you realize this truth, and face it as the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:11-13,

“Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.”

Sounds good in theory, doesn't it? Put on all of God's armor. But what does that really mean? Is that just meant to fire us up, but not really give us any real kind of application? Absolutely not. On the next couple of pages you'll find some real, tangible examples of what God's armor looks like, and how you can put it on every day. Prepare yourself soldier – the battle has just begun!

1ST EVOLUTION: Arm Yourself!

Read Ephesians 6:14-18 (NIV84)

*(** You will not get through this entire evolution in one Platoon Time. Don't let that stop you from digging into God's Word in each of these areas, and praying that God would speak to you on all of them. If you have questions, pick up the phone during the week and call your brothers – discussions aren't limited to just your Platoon Time!!)*

“Stand firm then, with the belt of _____ buckled around your waist,

- *Read Psalms 119:30 and John 14:6 and discuss within your Platoon the importance of knowing the “truth”*

with the breastplate of _____ in place,

- *Read Isaiah 26:7-8 and 1 John 3:7 and discuss within your Platoon the importance of living a “righteous” life*

and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of _____.

- *Read Psalms 37:37 and Matthew 5:9 and discuss within your Platoon why it is so important that the Gospel we preach with our lives and our words is a Gospel of “Peace”*

In addition to all this, take up the shield of _____, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

- *Read Hebrews 11:1 and 1 Corinthians 16:13 and discuss within your Platoon the benefits of living a life of “faith”*

Take the helmet of _____

- *Read Psalms 118:14-15 and Psalms 62:1-2 and discuss within your Platoon the importance of Salvation*
*(** if you have not fully surrendered your life to Jesus, this is a **GREAT** time to talk with your brothers about it. Don't be ashamed to say you are not saved. It would be so much more of a shame to just be silent and live your life not being sure!! Be open with your Platoon, and be open to all that Jesus has for you!)*

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the _____

- *Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and discuss within your Platoon the importance of being in God's Word every day*

And _____ in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

- *Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Philippians 4:6-7 and discuss within your Platoon the importance of prayer and what that looks like in each of your lives*

With this in mind, be _____ and always keep on praying for all the saints."

- *Read 1 Peter 5:8-9 and discuss within your Platoon why it is vital for us to learn to be self-controlled*

As you can see, God is not a "meek and mild" God that is always on the defense. Yes, He provides powerful shields and helmets and all sorts of other armor, but take a look at the force of the offensive weapons he has given us: the sword of the Spirit, God's Holy Word, has been given to us freely – we can study it, memorize it, pray it over our homes and families – it has the answer to every problem, every circumstance we could ever face. And as the writer of the book of Hebrews said,

“The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Now **THAT’S** a weapon you’ll want to have in your arsenal! Hopefully, since your last Platoon Time, you have begun taking steps to bring His Sword into your life every day. If not, start today!!

.

There’s one more thing you’ll need to complete all your gear. You’ve got your armor and your sword – now it’s time to cover all of it with your most powerful weapon: the power of prayer. The Bible says that even the demons know the Word of God. Satan himself quoted scripture when he tried to de-rail Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. So it’s not enough to just study and memorize the Bible. You’ve got to have a constant connection with it’s Author, or it’s just another self-help book.

Picture any group of soldiers as they’re in the middle of battle. They’ve almost always got a radio operator in each unit, who is constantly relaying info back and forth between the men and their commanding officers. That’s what it should look like for each of us as we engage the enemy in battle, with the exception being that we **ALL** have a radio strapped to our back. You can either choose to make use of it, and seek the wisdom and counsel and advice of the only One who can truly give it, or you can shut the radio off, ignore all the chatter, and try to fight the battle in your own strength and limited insight. But remember, Proverbs 19:21 tells us that,

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”

Nehemiah was a great example in the Bible of this kind of life – a life lived in constant prayer. When he went before the king of Persia, who was ruling over the Israelites at that time, he was in mourning because he had heard how Jerusalem, God’s Holy City, had fallen into ruin. Nehemiah was fearful to discuss this with the King, so he prayed for strength and it was granted to him. (Read Nehemiah 2:1-5).

Daniel was also one of the great Prayer Warriors of the Bible. When all the governors and administrators of King Darius’s conspired to trap Daniel

and set the King against him, Daniel fell to his knees in prayer, and he was ultimately freed from the lion's den, unharmed. (Read Daniel 6:1-10)

Jesus modeled this need for prayer time and time again throughout his ministry here on this earth. He was constantly going to His Father in prayer for strength and wisdom and guidance. Even in his final hours, he was on His knees praying in the Garden that God would give Him the strength He needed to finish the fight. (Read Matthew 26:36-46)

The final evolution for this chapter is a short one, but it is imperative that you let it sink in. Keep that line of communication open. **LISTEN** to the Holy Spirit and His leading and guidance in your life. But don't just stop there. Once you've got your orders, follow them up with obedience! Combine that with all of the Armor of God you learned about in the first evolution, and you will have a very effective strategy to fight the enemy with!!

2ND EVOLUTION: Prayer

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your prayer life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What does that tell you about your relationship with, and more importantly, your dependence upon Jesus?

What can you do differently this week to make time in your life for more prayer?

“There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it.” - Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Pray for your brothers this week, either in person, or by text or email. Doesn't matter how, just pray for them!*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all of the strategies of the devil." Ephesians 6:11

3

FEAR

MEMORY VERSE:

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7

“Courage is being scared to death... and saddling up anyway.” – John Wayne

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

Welcome back soldier!!

So how was your week? Did you feel like you were more aware of the “strategies of the devil?” Did you come under fire from the enemy? If you did, then you can be certain that you are now fully on his radar. The great thing about it though is that once you are truly engaged in the battle, you are already on the path to victory!

Here’s a little secret that a lot of Christians forget: Jesus wins!! In the book of Revelation we get an amazing glimpse into the future, where we see Jesus leading His armies, standing triumphantly on the field of battle. There’s no half-hour long battle scene like in the movies, where the good guys take a beating, but then come back strong in the end to barely pull out the win. No, our victory will be quick and decisive, and there will be no guessing who will come out on top. Because Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, we can enter the fight with confidence!!

What a glorious promise we have to hold on to!

.

BUT, let’s be real with each other – that victory is guaranteed, but it is a victory we may or may not see in our lifetime. In the meantime, we have very real battles to face, each and every day. As Oswald Chambers said,

“We look upon the enemy of our souls as a conquered foe - so he is, but only to God, not to us.”

God promises us in His Word that He will go with us into every battle we fight in His name, but that doesn’t change the reality that many times, as we step into enemy territory, we get scared.

Fear is a part of all of our lives, whether we admit it or not. Usually even more so when we enlist into the Kingdom army. When we become followers of Christ, God does not take away all adversity, painful circumstances, or intimidating situations. He does not flip a switch that automatically makes us healthy, wealthy, and wise. No... Instead, more often than not, He calls us to step out of our comfort zones and face our fears on a daily basis. Like all true heroes of any good epic adventure, we are commanded to stay in the fight until the war is won, no matter how tough it gets.

In the first chapter of the book of Joshua, we find one of the greatest leaders of the Old Testament, Moses, dead on top of a mountain overlooking the land of Canaan. We also find his assistant, Joshua, now put in charge of literally millions of refugees, preparing to invade an entire region with the intent of driving out all

of its inhabitants and setting up shop there permanently. God gives Joshua his marching orders, and then in verses 6-7, He gives him this command:

“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous...”

God could have very easily wiped out all the residents of the Promised Land, without even breaking a sweat. He could have made everything nice and easy for His people. They had just endured 400 years of slavery in Egypt and a brutal march through the desert – the least He could do was give them a place to hang their hats, right? But God wasn’t simply going to hand over the Promised Land to the Hebrews – they would have to overcome their fears, and fight for what they were promised.

King Solomon, before he became the wisest man to ever rule the nation of Israel, first had to overcome his own fears. As his father, King David, was lying on his death bed, he handed over the throne and all its responsibilities to young Solomon. In 1 Chronicles 22:12-13, King David gives him the very same command the Lord gave to Joshua:

“May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when He puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.”

Even Jesus had to overcome fears while He was here on earth. Yes, Jesus was fearful. Don’t sugarcoat the fact that although Jesus was God in the flesh, He was also fully human. In the last chapter we talked about Jesus being on His knees in prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane, pleading with His Father to “take this cup away from Him.” What was this “cup”? It was the painful agony of torture and a slow death upon the cross, but even more so it was the separation from His Dad that He knew was coming, as He took all the punishment for **OUR** sins upon His shoulders.

But, like a true warrior, He got up from the Garden, and stood firmly to face His fears. And when the Roman soldiers came to arrest Him, and Peter tried to defend Jesus by hacking off the ear of one of the soldiers with his sword, Jesus told him this:

“Put away your sword,” Jesus told him. “Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don’t you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?”
– Mark 26:52-54

THAT is how you face your fears: Pray about it. Give it over to God. Then stand up and **DO WHAT YOU ARE CALLED TO DO!!**

Unfortunately though, there is a flip side that all of us know too well. There will be days when your fears will overcome your courage, and you stumble in your walk...

Peter, the “Rock” of the early church, just hours after he stood bravely before the squad of soldiers in the garden, crumbled under the pressure. After Jesus was taken captive – hauled off under the cover of darkness to stand trial before the High Priest – Peter was forced to confront his fears when the people accused him of being one of Jesus’ disciples. And just like it’s happened to many of us, Peter fell victim to his fears. He did the very thing he had said he never would – deny his friend and mentor in His hour of greatest need. Matthew 26:69-75 gives us the heart-wrenching account:

“Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee,’ she said.

But he denied it before them all. ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about,’ he said.

Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, ‘This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.’

He denied it again, with an oath: ‘I don’t know the man!’

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, ‘Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.’

Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, ‘I don’t know the man!’

Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: ‘Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.’

And he went outside and wept bitterly.”

We all have fears. Sometimes we overcome them. Sometimes they overcome us. But as long as we are in these earthly bodies, we will have to face them in order to grow, no matter what area of life we are talking about. As C.S. Lewis said,

“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.”

1ST EVOLUTION: face your fears

So what are the fears you are facing in your life right now?

Are you afraid of failing as the spiritual leader of your home?

Are you afraid of leaving the security of your current job to go do what God has called and gifted you to do?

Are you afraid God might call you to STAY in your current job?

Are you afraid to commit to someone because you've been burned before?

Are you afraid of what it might mean to **REALLY** sell out for Christ?

What is it that paralyzes you? Write it down, and be bold enough to share it with your Platoon.

***Don't cop out on this one with some generic answer. You know what you're really afraid of. BE HONEST WITH YOUR BROTHERS. If you've got a leader that's paying attention, he's gonna call you out on it anyways, so just get it out there!*

So here's where we get down to it. As a follower of Christ, you are called to lay down your life for **HIS** cause. Jesus himself tells us in Matthew 16:24-25 that

“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.”

Think about it: isn't pretty much **ALL** fear ultimately rooted in selfishness? Aren't we afraid of what might happen to **US**? What people might say or think about **US**? What **WE** might have to give up?

And here we have Jesus telling us that if we truly want to be His followers, we must turn from those selfish ways. He doesn't give us an option. He doesn't water anything down for us. You either trust Him, and follow where he leads, or you hang on to your fears, and you watch from the side of the road as He walks on by.

The first step in letting go is to identify those fears.

The second step is to figure out what you're gonna do about them.

2ND EVOLUTION: do something about it!

So what is **1** thing you will do **this week** to face your fears head-on? **BE SPECIFIC!** Write it down, and tell your Platoon so they can help lift you up in prayer and accountability this week.

**** Don't put this off till some later date when it'll be "more convenient" for you. Face your fears NOW or they will continue to haunt you till you do!**

The final evolution for this chapter is to answer the two questions below. Take the time to really think about your answer. Play it out in your mind both directions. Then YOU CHOOSE which road you think is best...

3RD EVOLUTION: what if?

1. Do you TRULY believe it is possible to live a life free from fear? Why or why not?
(Be honest in your answer – don't just give in to the "church-y" response)

2. What would your life look like if you could say with complete certainty:
"I have no fear of anything that could happen to me or my family because I know without a doubt that God is in control."

Step out in boldness this week brothers! You cannot discover your purpose until you overcome your fears...

REALITY CHECK...

It's pretty important that we stop and take a moment to do a reality check here. Not all of us can be the "fearless warrior" every moment of every day. There are going to be times in your life where, no matter how awesome things are going for you, some circumstance jumps out of nowhere blindsides you, and you get seized up by fear.

The enemy we fight against loves to capitalize on those moments by heaping a ton of guilt, or shame, or frustration upon our hearts. And so often those feelings just send us in a downward spiral back to our old sinful ways.

We have to realize and accept this: Jesus KNOWS we are going to be afraid. He KNOWS that sometimes we're gonna let those fears get the best of us. He KNOWS, yet He loves us just the same.

And again, what's so awesome about His Word is that He clearly shows us where His heart is on this issue...

Back to the story of Peter getting grilled by a couple of servant girls and experiencing a massive fail in his relationship with Jesus. No doubt that Peter was consumed by guilt and shame in the days after Jesus' death. Maybe that's why he went back to where Jesus found him in the first place, out fishing on a boat. Maybe he just couldn't see himself as worthy of any kind of ministry after letting Jesus down, so he just went back to where he was comfortable.

And then Jesus comes back.

And instead of shaking his head at Peter and saying, "Brother I told you that you were gonna drop the ball," he gently and lovingly restores Peter back to where He wanted him to be. Three times Peter denied his Savior. And three times Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to reaffirm his love for his friend.

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and

others[£] will dress you and take you where you don't want to go."

Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me." – John 21:15-19

Jesus calls us to lay aside our fears and follow boldly His commands. But when we fail, He is there to pick us up and cover us in His limitless grace. Find rest in that truth brothers!

"Those who fear the Lord do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly." – Psalm 112:7-8

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." – Nelson Mandela

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Be bold as you face your fears, and don't try to face them alone. Enlist the support of your brothers – that is what they are here for!*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7

4

BROTHERHOOD

MEMORY VERSE:

“Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers...” Nehemiah 4:14

“American soldiers in battle don’t fight for what some president says on TV, they don’t fight for mom, apple pie, the American flag...they fight for one another.” – LTC Hal Moore

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

Well, men – you are now into week number four of Band of Brothers. What are your thoughts so far? Have those disciplines you began in week one stuck? It's been said that if you do anything for 21 days straight it will become a habit. What do you think – any new habits (good ones, that is!) forming in your life yet?

Before you dive into this next chapter, take a moment and reflect on where you were three weeks ago. Do you see improvement in your life? Then say a quick prayer of thanks to Jesus, and pray that He will continue to shape and mold your heart.

If, as you look back, you don't see any change in your life, don't get discouraged! It takes us years to build up the walls around our hearts. Trust that Jesus **IS** working to break them down, and pray that He will give you the strength to stay the course!

.

This chapter is one of the most pivotal chapters in this study. Buy into it, and you will find not only a group of guys that will hold you accountable for a bunch of memory verses and action steps, but you will also become a part of a fellowship of true brothers for life. The kind of men that you can say without a doubt,

“From this day to the ending of this world, we in it shall be remembered – we few, we happy few, we band of brothers. For he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.” – Shakespeare, ‘Henry V’

Unity. Brotherhood. For a lot of us men, especially those of us that are the “Lone Ranger” personalities that like to get everything done by ourselves, the idea of unity and true brotherhood is a foreign concept. Yeah, you may have your group of buddies that watch the big game together, or play poker together, or go get drinks after work together, but is that really what unity is all about?

Let's dig in, right at the start. Think back over the last three weeks. What were your toughest disciplines that you were struggling with in your life? On what battlefronts were you engaging the enemy? What were your biggest fears that you've been facing? You don't have to write them all down again, just think back on all of it.

Now, being completely honest with yourself, on the next page, ***write down the names of 3 guys in your life that you could open up to with the tough stuff like this...*** anytime of the day or night – you could call them up and they would have your back...

1ST EVOLUTION: pick up the phone...

Who are your 3?

1.

2.

3.

It's harder than you thought, isn't it? It might be easy to come up with the names of 2 or 3 guys from work that you can hang out with and complain about your jobs or your spouses or your favorite teams, but when it comes down to the stuff that really matters, who can you turn to? Yet God's Word is very clear on this point: a true man after God's heart will pursue real, Biblical brotherhood – not as a nice little add-on to give him someone to hang out with on the weekends, but as an absolutely essential part of his Christian walk.

Take a look at the scriptures below, and let the weight of what the Bible says about unity among brothers really sink in:

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” – Proverbs 17:17

*The hard times ARE coming, if you're not already in them. Who will you be able to lean on when those times come? You may have friends that love you, but who are your **BROTHERS** that were born to stand by your side in these moments? Without them, you will continue to fall back into your old sins as your crutch. Lean on one another!*

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” – Proverbs 27:17

*Over time, with use and neglect, every axe head will get dull. And once it's dull, it begins to lose it's purpose. Who are the **BROTHERS** in your life that help sharpen and challenge you to live the life you were called to live? Without them you will lose your spiritual edge, and you will begin to chase things outside of your true purpose. Sharpen one another!*

“Lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.” – Ephesians 3:1-3

*Relationships are messy. We all make mistakes. We all make dumb choices. Who are the **BROTHERS** that will make allowance for your faults and will stand beside you, binding themselves to you, through the good AND the bad? Without them you will quickly fall victim to the enemy’s accusations, and you will be overcome by shame and guilt. Love one another!*

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” – Psalms 133:1

*You were not designed to go it alone. Who are the **BROTHERS** that you will stand in unity with? Not to cheer for some sports team, but to stand for the one true cause that really matters: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Be united with one another!*

The Hebrew word for “live together in unity” in Psalm 133:1 is the word “**yachad.**” Literally it can be translated "when brethren are joined in dwelling" or "when brethren dwell together." Or, in other words, when brothers do life together. Again, it is so much more than just meeting with a group of guys to shoot the breeze or talk about some Bible verses. It’s about inviting each other into your homes. Praying over each other. Digging in and doing battle together when a brother is hurting. Celebrating with all that’s inside of you when he succeeds.

THAT IS WHAT BROTHERHOOD IS ABOUT!!

Can you see that brotherhood is important to God? In His wisdom, when He created each of us, He put inside of us different needs that could only be filled by others. There is the overarching need that He put in all of us to have a relationship with Him. Without that, you will have missed the point of life entirely, and you will have spent your years on this earth in pursuit of a whole lot of things that won’t be worth a dime when you’re dead.

He also placed inside of each of us a need for fellowship and community. You may be thinking you can do life all on your own, that you’ve been successful up to this point. But the truth is – you are missing out. You have settled for what you think is the “good life” because you honestly don’t know any better.

So this is the challenge for you:

Open up.

Drop your guard.

Make the commitment before the men in your platoon **THIS WEEK** that you are ready to make that change. That you are ready to do battle with a Platoon of brothers at your side, instead of charging off to fight the enemy all on your own.

Men, there is something special that happens when you fight alongside your brothers. Those that have served in the military understand this. Even just going through boot camp together creates friendships that last a lifetime. But those relationships are forged with an unbreakable bond when they enter into the fires of battle together.

LTC Hal Moore, Commander of the 7th Cavalry in Vietnam, whose heroic leadership was made famous in the movie *"We Were Soldiers,"* wrote these words about the brotherhood that is found in war:

"We killed for each other, we died for each other and we wept for each other. And in time we came to love each other as brothers. In battle our world shrank to the man on our left and the man on our right and the enemy all around. We held each other's lives in our hands and we learned to share our fears, our hopes, our dreams as readily as we shared what little else good came our way."

He and his men understood what it meant to be brothers. They understood that in the thick of battle, they had to have men around them that would have their back, no matter what. In the movie about their sacrifice, there's a powerful scene where Col. Moore is addressing the troops and their families before they were to head off to Vietnam. He talks about their unity that they have, despite all their differences, and as he focuses on that, he tells them,

"We're moving into the valley of the shadow of death, where you will watch the back of the man next to you, as you will watch his. And you won't care what color he is, or by what name he calls God. They say we're leaving home. We're going to what home was always meant to be..."

We are meant to be brothers.

Or take this quote from the character 'Hoot', who, in the movie *"Black Hawk Down,"* went through hell and back to go deep into enemy territory to rescue his brothers that were in danger:

“When I get home people will ask me, ‘Hey Hoot, why do you do it man? Why? You some war junkie?’ You know what I’ll say? I won’t say a g-----n word. Why? They won’t understand. They won’t understand why we do it. They won’t understand that it’s about the men next to you, and that’s it. That’s all it is.”

These guys got it. There is a strength that is found only in the foxhole next to your brother. When you find those men that will be **TRUE** brothers, you will go through hell and back to fight for them. And they will do the same for you. As King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 4:12,

“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

There’s a great picture in the Bible of what brotherhood looks like. Exodus 17:8-13 recounts one of the major battles the Israelites faced as they were on the road to the Promised Land,

“The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out and fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.’

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.”

You may win a few battles on your own. But the war will only be won as we stand and fight together, lifting each other up when we grow weak, but always pressing forward **TOGETHER**.

So lets go back a few pages. Take a look at the section where you were supposed to write down the names of 3 men in your life that you could truly call a brother. Did you write any names down? If so, after reading this chapter, do you still feel like those are the men that God has called you to do life with?

What if you didn't write any names down? Are you willing to take the next steps? Are you willing to open up to your platoon and let **them** fill those spaces?

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR YOU TO GET TO THAT PLACE IN YOUR LIFE?

For the evolution below, write down at least **2** specific action steps you will take this week to start being intentional about developing relationships with your brothers, and share those steps with your Platoon.

2ND EVOLUTION: action steps

*** It's time to get real. In order for you to **TRULY** make changes in your life, you will have to step out of your comfort zone. You're gonna have to pick up the phone and lay down your pride and say, 'I can't do this alone.' You're going to have to step into relationships that may be awkward at first, and messy in the middle. But in the end, you will find those men that you can call **BROTHERS**. Will you take the risk?*

1.

2.

The sacrifice is worth it. Your brothers need you, and you need them. If you choose to hold out on them, either they will fall in their time of need, or it will be you that falls. What will your choice be?

Going deeper...

Go back to the story of Moses lifting his staff up in Exodus 17. Maybe, as you wrap up this chapter, you find yourself in a good place. You've got your "3" already. Maybe you've even got more. So here's your challenge. Put yourself and those brothers into the the story of Exodus 17. Then complete the evolution below...

3RD EVOLUTION: time to fight

How can you be "Joshua" to your brothers?

Sometimes in life we just get worn out, and we need someone to jump in and lead the fight for us. Most of the time we're too prideful to admit that though. Take the initiative and ASK your brothers, "Where are you struggling? Will you let me fight alongside of you in this battle?" This is more than just praying. This is getting in your car, driving to his house, and helping him get rid of all the alcohol in his house. This is grabbing your other brothers and some lawn mowers and going to his home to mow his yard because you know he's been in a crazy-busy season. This is sacrificing your **TIME** and your **PRESENCE!

How can you be "Moses" to your brothers?

*** We all need prayer warriors in our life. Someone who will lift up their staff, and cover us in prayer. It's easy to say a prayer for a brother when he shoots out a text or email asking for it. A **TRUE** brother is lifting up his friends every day, praying God's protection over them and their families. Praying God's strength and courage over them to stay in the fight. Praying God's peace and faith over them as they lead in their homes and at their jobs. Are you lifting up your brothers in this way?*

(keep going on the next page...)

How can you be “Aaron and Hur” to your brothers?

*** What a boost it is to have men in our life that pour out encouragement over us! Not because of some trial we’re going through or some project we just completed successfully, but just to strengthen us in our daily walks with Jesus. How can you be more of an encourager to your brothers in their lives? A few positive and uplifting words from a friend can mean all the difference to a brother that is in the midst of the ‘daily grind’!*

“The quest stands upon the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail. But hope remains, if friends stay true.” – ‘Lord of the Rings’

“A single twig breaks, but the bundle of twigs is strong.” – Tecumseh

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Be intentional about strengthening your Platoon this week – get together with one or more of your brothers for lunch or coffee – do LIFE together!*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

“Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers...”
Nehemiah 4:14

SPECIAL OPS: COMMUNION

*** Brotherhood week is a great opportunity for you and your Platoon to take communion together. This is one of the great “traditions” that has been a part of the Church since day one. Don’t worry about the logistics – grab some grape juice and a loaf of bread. The ‘what’ isn’t what’s important. It’s the ‘why’ that we celebrate together!*

Let’s go back to the Old Testament, and look at one of the most powerful displays of God’s judgment and mercy as you prepare your heart for communion this week.

At the end of the book of Genesis, we find the Hebrew people, once favored and welcomed by their host nation of Egypt, now enslaved under the rule of a new Pharaoh. In the following book of Exodus, the people have lost hope for their freedom. A Hebrew man named Moses – raised as a child in the Egyptian ruler’s household, then exiled for murdering an Egyptian foreman – now has returned from his time in the wilderness with a vision from God and a mission to free the Hebrew people from slavery.

In Exodus, chapter 7, Moses and his brother Aaron begin unleashing God’s judgment upon the Egyptians, sending plague after plague on the entire nation in an effort to convince Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go free. The Bible says that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened at each punishment though, until the full measure of God’s wrath and glory was displayed in one final plague.

In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, the Bible says that the Lord went through the entire nation of Egypt, sending His death angel before Him, and killing the firstborn son of all the Egyptian families. As He was performing this awesome and terrifying work of judgment, He was also showing His mercy and grace upon the Hebrew people. For any one of the Hebrew families that killed a lamb and painted it’s blood on the doorposts of their home, the angel would pass over their home, sparing their firstborn, and sparing them from God’s holy wrath. As they stayed hidden in their homes throughout that night, they ate a meal together that was very specifically described to the people by the Lord. This meal became known as the “Passover” meal, to celebrate the night that God called His people out of slavery, when He “passed over” their homes and set them apart.

Now let’s skip ahead to the New Testament. In Matthew, chapter 26, we find Jesus and His disciples, just hours before He was to be arrested and beaten and tried before the Jewish Council, reclining at a table, celebrating together that very same Passover meal. It was at

this meal that Jesus shared with His men the very first Communion Service of the Church. Matthew 26:26-28 tells us,

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”

Just as hundreds of years earlier, God had called His people out of slavery, and they commemorated that night by celebrating the Passover meal together, so you and I have been called out as well. God has called us out to be one people, unified under the banner of His Son, Jesus Christ. As you take part in Communion this week, our prayer is that you would realize that you are now part of a Brotherhood of Christ – that you have been called out, set apart to do life together in the service of your King, because of *HIS* blood that was shed, and *HIS* body that was torn. Celebrate in worship with your brothers, and honor the life that was laid down so you could be ‘passed over,’ and experience life and freedom and true brotherhood in the name of Jesus!

ACTION STEP:

Celebrate communion with your Band of Brothers group this week

“When we drink the cup of blessing, aren’t we taking into ourselves the blood, the very life, of Christ? And isn’t it the same with the loaf of bread we break and eat? Don’t we take into ourselves the body, the very life, of Christ? Because there is one loaf, our “many”ness becomes “one”ness.

Christ doesn’t become fragmented in us. Rather, we become unified in him. We don’t reduce Christ to what we are; he raises us to what he is.” – 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

5

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

MEMORY VERSE:

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28

Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.” – St. Augustine

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

Congratulations brothers – you’re at the halfway point of this study!! Let’s keep the momentum going, and continue to press on as, through the power of Jesus Christ, we become more like the men we have been called to be!

.

If last week’s chapter on Brotherhood and Unity was a “turn-around point” in teaching us that life is not about us travelling down the road of independence and doing it on our own, then this week’s chapter is where we put our wheels on new ground and go full speed ahead down the road of living as a servant to all those around us.

If you look at what most of the ‘world’ says is a good leader, you would probably hear things like: ambitious, successful, driven, good communicator, powerful. Even things such as attractive, or wealthy often creep into our image of what we think a good leader looks like.

As He did with so many things that people believe in this life, Jesus took all those thoughts and threw them under the bus. Then, just to make sure we heard Him right, He backed the bus up and ran over ‘em again!

Take a look again at these powerful words spoken by the Son of God in His last few years of His life here on earth:

“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.” – Matthew 16:24-25

Spend just a few moments reflecting on those words. Turn from your selfish ways. Take up your cross. Give up your life. Kind of flies in the face of everything we are bombarded with at our jobs, from the media, and even from our own hearts sometimes, doesn’t it? If we’re honest with ourselves, being a follower of Christ often takes second place to the pursuit of our own success and importance. In the words of Thomas a Kempis,

“Jesus has now many lovers of the heavenly kingdom but few bearers of His cross.”

Take a few moments and reflect on who Jesus was. Really. Jesus Christ was the Son of the Creator of the entire universe. Every blade of grass, every star in the sky, every hair on the head of every man, woman, and child on the entire earth – His Dad made it all. Out of scratch. From just a word out of His mouth. That is power we cannot even begin to comprehend. And it wasn’t just Jesus’ Dad doing it all by Himself. The apostle John tells us in his Gospel, chapter 1, verses 1-4, that,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”

The “Word” that John was referring to was Jesus. So not only was Jesus there at the beginning of all things, He was the very foundation upon which it was all created!

This very same Jesus, the Son of the Most High, by whom **ALL** things were brought to be, gave it all up to come to this earth. To live in a human body, susceptible to pain, discomfort, emotions – everything **YOU** face, he would go through.

The “King of kings” and “Lord of lords” willingly stepped off his throne, KNOWING that He would be sent to earth, not as a powerful King with majesty and fame and fortune, but as a little defenseless baby born in a dirty, smelly stable.

He knew that He was leaving the perfection and presence of his Father, to go be adopted by an earthly father who probably screwed up in being a dad from time to time.

He knew that He was leaving the fellowship of the heavenly angels, who sing His praises day and night, to go live in an obscure village that was occupied by a ruthless and demanding enemy.

He **KNEW** that He would face discrimination, hatred, betrayal, and false accusations, all of which would end with an unimaginably brutal torture, complete separation from His Father as He took responsibility for all of our sins, and ultimately a lonely, painful death on the cross.

He knew it was all coming.

And He left Heaven anyways.

We spend our lives talking around the water cooler about the “heroes” that won the basketball game last night. Or the “heroes” who fought for our country’s freedom. Or the “heroes” that don’t even exist except for on a movie screen.

What about Jesus?

What about the one TRUE hero, that laid down His life, for **YOU**?

How often is the mission that He completed something you think about?

How often are the daring deeds He accomplished the things you’re longing to talk about with other men?

How often do you let His example motivate, and challenge, and inspire you to lay down **YOUR** life for others?

The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:3-8 that that should be our one defining goal,

“Do NOTHING out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

YOUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THE SAME AS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

By choice, He made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. He told His followers very clearly what His mission was for the short time that He had with them:

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” – Mark 10:43-45

Do not think for a moment that He said all of these things because He was weak, or lacking in power. Yes, He was fully man while He was on this earth, but that doesn't mean He didn't have access to all of His Father's power. Remember what He told Peter in Matthew 26 after Peter hacked off the Roman soldier's ear?

He had **LEGIONS** of angels at His command.

And you have to believe that some of those angels were pacing Heaven back and forth as they saw all of this unfolding, saying something like, “Come on God, just let us in the fight! Just for a moment at least! Can't we just go down there real fast and at least wipe that scum Judas off the earth? *Please???*”

But they didn't come to His aid. Jesus didn't call for reinforcements.

He came to serve, no matter what it would cost Him. That is how He led. And He calls **ALL** of His followers to lead in the very same way.

TRUE CHRIST-LIKE LEADERSHIP ALWAYS COMES IN THE FORM OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE.

So what does that look like for you? Let these thoughts below penetrate your heart, and see which ones make you the most uncomfortable. Chances are, that is an area where you are not leading as Christ has called you to lead:

DO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

*Turn off Sportscenter and tell your wife to take the night off while you wash the dishes and bathe the kids. Get off of Facebook or CNN or Fox news and ask her how **HER** heart is doing. Not so you can fix her or solve her problems, but just to listen and understand.*

DO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER TO YOUR KIDS?

*Disengage from your job at 5:00 and go home so you can wrestle with your sons or play dolls with your daughters. Lead the way by praying over them and reading God's Word with them. Show them a little **GRACE** when they screw up like all kids are gonna do.*

DO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER AT WORK?

Show up early, do your job with excellence, and be 'that guy' that is always encouraging everyone with a smile on his face. Regardless of how well, or how badly, you are treated by your boss, serve him with honor and respect and faithful obedience.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER OF MEN?

*Begin to submit wholly to Christ, get in His Word, talk to Him daily, and then pour your life out for your brothers – be the true brother they can go to for wisdom, encouragement, accountability. **BE AVAILABLE!!***

So what about **YOU**? Where are you trying to lead by force or power or position? Be honest with yourself as you jump into this first evolution.

On the flip side, where are you choosing to abdicate leadership to someone else out of fear or just plain laziness? And yes, believe it or not, you cannot lead if you are too lazy to get off your rear end! The Bible says that,

“The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.” – Proverbs 21:25-26

Again, be honest with yourself as you do this evolution. An effective leader is one who is willing to look at himself in the mirror and evaluate where he is falling short...

1ST EVOLUTION: evaluation

So, how would you rate the way you serve those who God has put into your life in the following areas: (DON'T SUGAR-COAT IT!! If the people in each of these areas were the ones holding the pen, how would THEY evaluate you?)

	<i>poor</i>		<i>great</i>		
<i>Your wife (or girlfriend)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Your children</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Your church</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Your neighbors</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Your co-workers</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Before you move forward and begin to dig into serving in those areas, it is very important that you stop at this point and acknowledge the **WHY** behind all of this service and sacrifice.

It's easy, especially as a Christian in the American church, to get caught up in serving others, but all for the wrong reasons. Many times, if we're truly honest, we serve to feel better about ourselves. It makes us feel like we're making a difference, that we are important and needed. Those aren't necessarily bad reason to serve others – they're just not the **BEST** reasons. Again, Jesus points our hearts away from ourselves, and tells us in Matthew 5:14-16,

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds AND PRAISE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.”

And in John 17:4, He says

“I HAVE BROUGHT YOU GLORY ON EARTH by completing the work you gave me to do.”

Jesus did all that He did, went through all the sacrifice and hurt and suffering – yes, so that we could be forgiven and experience eternity with Him and His Father – but ultimately, He did all of it ***so that His Father’s name would be praised and glorified on this earth.*** If you lose that as your driving force behind laying your lives down for others, then you will either burn out, or you’ll just be spinning your wheels in the mud. As C.S. Lewis put it,

“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”

So when we say, “Why are we here?” and you say, ***“SO OTHERS MAY LIVE!”*** – follow the example and passion of Jesus. Don’t just serve so that they may live for their own desires or gain, or so you can give yourself a little pat on the back. Serve so that they will see Jesus in your actions, and that the Name of your Father in Heaven might be praised and glorified!

.

So here’s your challenge for this week: Take a look back at the evaluation you just filled out. Now, come up with at least **1** action step you can do ***THIS WEEK*** in each of these areas that would show those you lead that you love and care for them. Put some thought into it, and try to be a little more radical than “pick up my dirty socks off the floor” or “share my bag of chips with the guy in the next cubicle.” Remember, you are pointing them towards Jesus. ***HIS*** name is the reason for all that you do.

2ND EVOLUTION: action steps

How will you lead each of the people below by serving them this week? Write down 1 thing you can do in each area, and hold each other accountable!

YOUR WIFE OR GIRLFRIEND

YOUR CHILDREN

YOUR CHURCH

YOUR NEIGHBORS

YOUR CO-WORKERS

To finish out this chapter on servant leadership, Paul paints the perfect word picture for us. In 2 Timothy 4:5-6, as he's closing out his letter to his friend and student, Timothy, Paul tells him,

“But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near...”

The life of a servant leader is one that is joyfully poured out as an offering to Jesus. The Greek word that Paul uses for “offering” is ‘*spendo*’. In your mind, picture the triathlete crossing the finish line just inches ahead of his competitor to take first place. He collapses in exhaustion into the arms of his friends and family, completely ‘spent’ in his effort to claim the prize he had worked so hard for.

That is the life of a servant leader.

That is the life of a true follower of Christ.

That is the life of one who is willing to pour himself out for others,

SO OTHERS MAY LIVE!!

“Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.” – St. Augustine

“The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless.” – Billy Graham

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Look for opportunities to lead by serving. If you don't see any opportunities, CREATE THEM YOURSELF!!*
- *Lean on your brothers to hold you accountable*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

SPECIAL OPS: LEADERSHIP

As you read on the first pages of this study guide, this study was inspired by the HBO miniseries, *“Band of Brothers”* and the men of ‘Easy Company’ in World War II.

The undeniable leader of Easy was Major Dick Winters. One of Maj. Winters’ strongest characteristics was that he led his men by example. Rather than just barking orders from the safety of an isolated command post, away from the thick of the war, he was often right on the front lines, being the first to charge out of his foxhole to advance against the enemy. Not out of some reckless or macho attitude of, “I’m not afraid of death!!!”, but rather to say, “If I am going to take these men into the fire, I will be the first one on the battlefield to show them the way.”

He was a true leader of men. Why?

Because he was willing to lay his life down for the lives of his men.

Below are his “10 Principles of Success” from the book, *“Beyond Band of Brothers: the War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters”*

10 Principles for Success

Maj. Richard Winters, 101st Airborne

- **Strive to be a leader of character, competence, and courage.**
- **Lead from the front. Say, “Follow me!” and then lead the way.**
- **Stay in top physical shape--physical stamina is the root of mental toughness.**
- **Develop your team. If you know your people, are fair in setting realistic goals and expectations, and lead by example, you will develop teamwork.**
- **Delegate responsibility to your subordinates and let them do their job. You can’t do a good job if you don’t have a chance to use your imagination and creativity.**
- **Anticipate problems and prepare to overcome obstacles. Don’t wait until you get to the top of the ridge and then make up your mind.**
- **Remain humble. Don’t worry about who receives the credit. Never let power or authority go to your head.**
- **Take a moment of self-reflection. Look at yourself in the mirror every night and ask yourself if you did your best.**
- **True satisfaction comes from getting the job done. The key to a successful leader is to earn respect--not because of rank or position, but because you are a leader of character.**
- **Hang Tough! - Never, ever, give up.**

6

A STRONG DEFENSE

MEMORY VERSE:

“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Hebrews 12:3-4

“Tis the business of little minds to shrink, but they whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves their conduct, will pursue their principles unto death.” – Leonardo da Vinci

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

So how was your “on-the-job” leadership training last week? Were you intentional about serving those around you, leading and pointing them towards Christ? If you fell short of what you were wanting to accomplish, **DON'T GIVE UP!!** You are not only fighting against the culture you live in, but also your own natural tendencies towards selfishness and recognition. It will take time to get where God wants you to be – just make the most of the time you have!

.

Well, if things in your life have not intensified over the past 5 weeks, get ready – the battle is getting ready to blow up in your face!

By the fall of 1944, the Allied Forces had moved swiftly throughout German-controlled areas of Europe. They were making good progress against the Axis Empire, and, according to all of their intelligence reports, they had Hitler and his army on the run. The Allied leadership became prideful. Cocky. They assumed that Hitler was done for. That his men had been demoralized and lacked the will to fight anymore. They believed that complete victory was close at hand.

Hitler wasn't finished though. Planning for a massive counter-attack began in September of 1944. In complete secrecy, he mobilized 4 entire armies to a focused area of the Allied line, the area known as the Ardennes. In order for his plan to work, Hitler needed three things to happen: they needed bad weather to minimize the use of Allied air forces, they needed to move their armies into position quickly and quietly, and they needed to capture the Allied fuel supplies because they did not have enough of their own to complete the offensive. In December, all those conditions were met, and Hitler's army – the army that was thought to be discouraged and defeated – launched what was to be the biggest and bloodiest battles of all of WWII, the Battle of the Bulge. It was the place where American forces would face their toughest challenge as their enemy threw all that they had at them in an effort to change the course of the war. Much of the fighting centered in and around the major crossroads town of Bastogne. That was where the US military would either dig in and make their stand, or they would lose the battle, and the momentum of an entire war could shift direction...

Just like the commanders of the Allied Forces, each of us are also susceptible to being blindsided by our enemy. And just like those commanders, there are often 2 factors that contribute to us getting attacked:

1. Our overestimation of our own strength and abilities

2. Our underestimation of the strength and abilities of our enemy

Both of those factors combined cause us to let our guard down, and tremendous casualties are the end result – both in our own life and those that surround us. At the root of it all, we neglected the importance of one thing: a strong defense.

1 Peter 5:8-9 says for us to:

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. RESIST HIM, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Be self-controlled and alert. Think about the times in life when you have given in to sin and temptation. Were you self-controlled during that time? Were you alert?

Not even close, right?

99.9% of those instances in our lives where we get de-railed and thrown off course by sin, we have done exactly the opposite of what Peter was warning us to do. We let go of all self-control, acting as if someone else had strings tied to our arms and legs, making us do all sorts of things we don't want to do. We become completely unaware of the schemes of our enemy, our alertness gets all hazy, and all of a sudden we lose all perception of what is right and wrong. At least, that's the way we act, isn't it?

So how does our spiritual enemy plan and scheme to try to take us out of the game? Remember back in Chapter 2, we read that Ephesians 6:11 tells us that we need to

“Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil...”

If we can simplify his 'strategies' down to one major plan of attack, what would that plan be? To get us to fall into sin, right? Sin separates us from God. It is what destroyed that bridge that we once had, long ago, when man walked in

fellowship with the God of the universe. But Satan broke through the lines, and that relationship between the Creator and the created was damaged beyond repair. Or so the enemy thought. Praise God, He had an amazing plan of attack that the enemy had absolutely no defense for. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die upon a cross, so that **YOU** could be forgiven, and that bridge could be completely rebuilt using the timbers from that 'old rugged cross.'

But Satan didn't give up. Remember again what we read in Chapter 2. When Satan realized that he had been defeated, he turned his attention towards the "**rest of the woman's offspring.**" Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, Satan no longer had the power to keep us from having that relationship with God that we are in so desperate need of. So he changed his methods. He began to go after our minds, luring us into sin and temptation, feeding us the great lie:

**THAT THOSE SINS HOLD FAR MORE
PLEASURE AND GRATIFICATION THAN
ANYTHING GOD MIGHT BE ABLE TO OFFER**

And what happens when we fall into those sins? We begin to spiral through an endless cycle of sin – guilt – shame – feelings of worthlessness – sin again – more guilt – more shame, and on and on it goes. And that unbreakable bridge that Jesus laid before us? Suddenly we begin to think it's not as sturdy as it looks, and, through the enemy's lies and our own shame, we fall victim to the thought that our relationship with God is damaged, and all that work that Jesus did for us just wasn't enough.

Let's dig a little deeper into the history of the Battle of the Bulge, and see if we can't pull some spiritual application from what happened there. Remember, there were 3 conditions that needed to be met in order for Hitler's counter-offensive to be successful:

- 1) They needed the cover of bad weather so that the Allied forces couldn't use their superior air forces to conduct surveillance of the Axis army's movement, and then bomb their troops or supply lines.**
- 2) They had to move all 4 of the necessary armies into position, quickly and quietly, so that they would be able to have complete surprise at the onset of the attack.**
- 3) They needed to be able to attack and take control of certain Allied fuel depots so that they could use that fuel to keep their massive amounts of tanks, troop transporters, and supply vehicles moving.**

Just looking at those conditions on the surface, you would think that the chances of all 3 of those things coming together to create a successful, large-scale

ambush would be almost impossible. But it worked. And it could have been a devastating blow. Satan's tactics are remarkably similar to those used by Hitler's army...

DISTRACT

One of Satan's best tools to get us to fall into sin is to distract us. Send a "snow storm" of bad weather our way to get us focused on our circumstances, rather than on God. In Matthew 13, Jesus uses a story about a farmer scattering some seeds on the ground to warn us of Satan's tactics. He tells us of four different kinds of seeds. The fourth kind was planted in good soil, took root, and produced all sorts of good fruit – an illustration of a believer that is truly walking with God and living a righteous life. But there were three other types of seed that didn't survive.

“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful...” – Matthew 13:19-22

The “evil one” distracts us by keeping us too busy to study and really dig into God's Word so we can truly understand all that it says.

He distracts us by sending trouble or persecution into our lives, causing us to doubt that God is really for us.

He distracts us by surrounding us with circumstances that cause stress and anxiety and fear.

He distracts us by selling us the lie that we are 'alone' in our trials, and no one really cares what I'm going through.

Or he distracts us by just throwing a bunch of shiny stuff in front of us that we think we 'need.'

The cover of bad weather. It keeps us from being alert and aware. It keeps us from focusing on the enemy's movements. And before long, he's got his entire army maneuvered right into our front lines.

DECEIVE

Our enemy also moves quickly and quietly under the cover of those distractions. His attacks are most effective when we are not looking for them. Again, in chapter 13 of the book of Matthew, Jesus shares another story to illustrate this. It is the story of another farmer planting his field...

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared...” – Matthew 13:24-26

The Bible is very clear when it describes our enemy. No where does it portray him as slow, or stupid, or not very bright. Our enemy is intelligent – far more than what we give him credit for. His attacks will come quickly, and under the cover of darkness, and they will be strong enough to take you out completely if you are spiritually 'asleep.'

Again, back to 1 Peter 5:8, the New Living Translation says,

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil...

The Greek word that Peter used for “watch out” is *gregoreuo*. Thayer's Greek Definitions defines it this way:

- 1) to watch***
- 2) metaphorically give strict attention to, be cautious, active***
 - 2a) to take heed lest through remission (a lessening of intensity) and indolence (laziness) some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one***

He distracts you by sending unfavorable circumstances. Then he lulls you to sleep, making you forget that he's out there.

DIVIDE

His final tactic for trying to lead you into sin is to use your own resources against you. He will do all that he can to steal your “fuel supplies”, and use them for his own gain. He might use your ego. Your pride. Cause you to think you deserve to be treated in this way or that. You deserve that promotion. You

deserve that respect from your wife. You deserve that recognition from your peers. And if you don't get it, you become bitter. You hold a grudge. You use it as an excuse to dive back into those things that used to provide you comfort.

For others of you, he might use your self-esteem against you, using the words and actions of those around you to deliver devastating blows that knock you off course. Where you once felt successful and knew that you had the favor of God, now you are insecure or fearful because of failure or criticism.

His goal in all of this is to

- **put division between you and God**
- **put division between you and those you are close to**

If the enemy can cause you to believe that your relationship with God is damaged, then he will have no problem filling your mind with all that guilt and shame you read about earlier. He will have no problem causing you to forget all of the promises God has given His children through His Word, and suddenly all the enticements of your 'old ways' become more appealing once again. And he will have no problem convincing you that you'd be better off without God and church and 'religion.'

It's the same end result when he damages your relationships with other people. In your mind, no one cares what you're going through. No one understands your pain. No one really wants to be involved in your life. So the easiest thing to do is to check out from any kind of "deep" relationships, and turn back instead to the superficial ones you can find at the bar. Or just leave reality altogether by immersing yourself in porn. It doesn't matter anymore... you're alone anyways. Or so the enemy wants you to believe...

*****Let's be clear here – Satan has absolutely no power to make us think a certain way or believe something about ourselves. But, he has the power to surround us with all the right conditions so that we allow ourselves to think in a way that is contradictory to everything God's Word says about us.***

Sin is a powerful weapon. It can take us out of the game like nothing else. But we do not have to let it. Genesis 3:6-7 says,

“Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, BUT YOU MUST MASTER IT.”

We do this by following the counsel of Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5, when we

“... take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.”

and by always looking for the way out, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13,

“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, HE WILL ALSO PROVIDE A WAY OUT so that you can stand up under it.”

When it comes to the habitual sins in our lives, whether it is looking at pornography, laziness around the house or at work, gorging ourselves to the point of obesity, apathy towards your wife or kids, addiction to your jobs, addiction to your hobbies... Whatever it is, you have to come to a point in your life where you say

I AM DRAWING A LINE IN THE SAND.

YOU have to make a decision to dig in for the long haul.

YOU have to bring your brothers into the fight with you.

YOU have to make your stand. For no one else can do it for you...

.

OK, so far there's been a lot of 'meat put on the table' in this chapter. Now it's time for you to decide what you're going to do with it. In this first evolution, you have the opportunity to get it **ALL** out there. Those secret sins you're still hiding from your Platoon. Those things you've been too afraid to confess the past 5 weeks. **ALL OF IT.**

Before you dive in, there are a couple of things you need to know.

1) Your sin is no worse than the sin of the brother sitting next to you. It's not. It DOES. NOT. MATTER. what you have done in the past – in God's eyes, sin is sin. We've ALL fallen short of the glory of God, no matter how good we may look on the outside. Most likely, your brothers are struggling with confessing their sins as well, so why not get it all out in the open TOGETHER?!

2) God already knows. Let that sink in. HE ALREADY KNOWS. He is GOD. He isn't going to be stunned by the depth of your depravity, or thrown off course by the sins you write down. His jaw won't drop when you confess to your brothers what you're struggling with. He KNOWS. And He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die on a cross so you could have forgiveness for ALL of those things.

So don't hold back. The only thing that does is continue to give Satan a foothold in your life. Get it **ALL** out there...

1ST EVOLUTION: confession

Before you write anything down, ask God to search your heart, and then show you those places in your life where you have let the enemy gain ground. Psalm 139:23-24 says,

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Pray that God would remove the distractions and deceptions in your heart, and show you those things that have been dividing you and Him.

Then **CALL IT WHAT IT IS.**

Don't say, “I struggle with lust.”

Say, “I am addicted to pornography and masturbation, and I cannot get free.”

Don't say, “I drink too much.”

Say, “I am an alcoholic, and it is ruining every relationship I have and I don't know how to stop.”

Don't say, “I'm a little overweight.”

Say, “I am addicted to food and I eat as a way to try to cope with my insecurities.”

Don't say, “I get a little too mad sometimes.”

Say, “I have serious anger issues, and I am terrified that I am going to lash out physically at those I love if I don't get some help.”

**WHERE WILL YOU MAKE YOUR STAND?
WRITE IT DOWN.**

So here's the beautiful thing about being a follower of Christ. You've identified the sin in your life. Now confess it to your brothers in your Platoon Time. Call in for reinforcements. You will **NOT** find healing without them. That's a Biblical fact. James 5:16 says,

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other SO THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

Whether you believe it or not, there is healing and forgiveness for you brothers! All you have to do is follow this simple formula:

CONFESSION + PRAYER = HEALING!

Lean on your brothers. Be transparent with them. Confess your sins before God and your brothers. Again, do you really think God doesn't already know what you've been doing? Let your brothers surround you in prayer, and then do the same for them. God's promise to us is that we would find healing as a result. Doesn't that sound infinitely better than the sin cycle you've been living in?

.

The next evolution is where you have to put your shovel to the ground and start digging your foxhole.

You've confessed your sins.
You've gotten all your junk out in the open.
The healing process has begun.

BUT, the enemy will continue to attack you in this area. He's not going to give up on you just because you confessed. If anything, he's gonna attack even harder in these areas to try to weaken your defenses. So it is absolutely essential that you get some action steps in place. What are you going to do to strengthen your foxhole and fortify your position? You've got to get serious here. If you're struggling with porn, don't just tell your Platoon that you're going to stop going to those sites. That'll last all of about 30 minutes once you get home. Get radical with your action steps. **DO WHATEVER IT TAKES** to keep the enemy from gaining ground.

2ND EVOLUTION: action steps

Write down your action steps to deal with your sin, *and* **HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE!!** Your brothers need you more than ever now to get involved in their lives. And you need them. All of this is just “spinning your wheels” if you’re not asking Jesus to give you strength **AND** letting your brothers hold your arms up when you get tired!

The Battle of the Bulge was one of the toughest, bloodiest, most grueling battles in history. But, because the Allied Forces stood their ground, it is celebrated as one of the greatest victories in history of all warfare.

You’ve been through some tough battles in your life that have almost taken you out. But **YOU ARE STILL HERE!** It’s time to celebrate some great victories now, don’t you think?!

Give Jesus all the credit and all the praise for what He is doing in your heart, and then worship Him in thanksgiving, alongside your brothers!

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...” – Hebrews 12:1

“Farthest from your mind is the thought of falling back; in fact, it isn’t there at all. And so you dig your hole carefully and deep, and wait.” – 506th PIR, “Currahee Scrapbook”

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Draw your line in the sand and HOLD YOUR GROUND!!*
- *Make it your Standard Operating Procedure to confess your sins to your brothers, and let them pray over you – that is where the healing starts!*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Hebrews 12:3-4



WOUNDED WARRIORS

MEMORY VERSE:

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” Psalm 34:18

“God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.” – CS Lewis

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

Wounds. Whether you realize it or not, chances are pretty good that you've taken some pretty serious hits throughout your life. More often than not, the wounds you have received in your past have shaped who you are today. Sometimes those wounds come from those we love or respect. Sometimes they come from those whose only role in life seems to be to tear us down. The wounds could have been inflicted many years ago, possibly during our childhood. Or they could have taken place as recent as this morning. The reality is that, no matter how tough of a 'skin' we put on our outside, the words that are said to us or about us throughout our lifetimes leave an impact – sometimes for the good, but many times for the bad. As much as we hate to admit it, we've allowed many of them to take root deep in our hearts...

"An idea is like a virus, resilient, highly contagious. Once an idea has taken hold of the brain it's almost impossible to eradicate. An idea that is fully formed - fully understood - that sticks; right in there somewhere. The smallest seed of an idea can grow. It can grow to define or destroy you." – 'Inception'

The Bible tells us that our words have great power and influence upon our lives and the lives of others. Proverbs 18:21 says that,

"The tongue has the power of life and death..."

The things that are said to you either bring life to your soul, or they can bring a painful, internal death of the man you were created to be. Take a look at these examples and see if any of them resonate deep inside of you...

- ***Your wounds could have come from a physically or verbally abusive father, or maybe your dad just checked out every day when he got home from work.***
- ***Your wounds could have come from a mom that criticized everything you did, or turned her back on you and the rest of your family, and turned to drugs or alcohol or sex instead.***
- ***Maybe your wounds came from people you had thought were your friends, but they betrayed your trust, or simply disappeared from your life.***
- ***Maybe your wounds came from failure after failure after failure in your quest to find that perfect girl that would meet all your needs and make you feel like the man you knew you were meant to be.***
- ***Possibly your wounds came in the form of rejection for that position at work that you knew in your heart was meant for you, but you get passed up for it again and again.***

- ***Maybe your wounds came from someone in the church, someone who claimed Christ, but instead spewed out judgment and hypocrisy.***

Think back throughout your life? You may not be able to recall a specific time or place when it occurred, but most of us have been hit at one time or another, either literally or figuratively, by someone who held a position of influence in our lives.

How did you respond to those words or actions? Take a few moments and close your eyes. Think back to those hurts. Pray that God would open the doors of your heart that you might have locked shut long ago because they were too painful to open.

DO IT NOW, BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

“The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish...” – Psalm 25:17

.

It is hard to unlock those doors, isn't it? As men, we are practically trained from birth to “suck it up,” “rub some dirt on it,” or “just shake it off.” And yeah, we're pretty good at shakin it off, at least on the outside. But the reality is that it is **MUCH** easier said than done.

“Most of the appearance of happiness in the world is not happiness, it is art. The wounded spirit is not seen, but walks under a disguise.” – Bishop Robert South

So what did God reveal to you? Where did He open up those wounds of your past? Take some time and write those wounds down. Identify them, and be as specific as you can. If you didn't come up with anything, put this book down and try it again... If you have never been wounded in your life, you've either been incredibly sheltered, or you're just not going deep enough. Try it again...

1ST EVOLUTION: open the wound

As you're digging into your past, go slowly. Pray Psalm 139:23 over your heart,

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts...”

So hopefully you have dug deep enough and you have started to uncover some of the things that you have internalized from your past. At this point you may be thinking to yourself, “Why in the world would I want to uncover all these things? I mean, if I wanted to remember I wouldn’t have covered them up in the first place, would I?”

The reason this is so crucial to your growth as a Christian man is that,

WHEN YOU UNCOVER AND ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WOUNDS FROM YOUR PAST, YOU BEGIN TO FIND A DEEP HEALING THAT YOU WOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FIND OTHERWISE.

As John Eldredge said in his book ‘Wild at Heart,’

“A wound that goes unacknowledged and unwept is a wound that cannot heal.”

Yes, it is painful. Yes, it is hard and uncomfortable to go back and revisit the hurts in our past. But it is absolutely necessary for our growth as Christian men.

Think about it this way. Those wounds you’ve internalized deep within you are like a cancer to your soul. The longer you’ve ignored them and just pushed those feelings aside, the more they are infecting other parts of your life. Just like the quote from ‘Inception’, if they’re allowed to take root, they can be almost impossible to eradicate. The only way to get rid of that cancer is to cut deep into your heart, making sure you expose all of the infected areas. Embrace the pain as part of the process.

Now, **GO BACK** to the first evolution, and do it again. Make sure you are getting it ALL out there...

.

So as with any physical wound, before we move forward and fully embrace that healing, we have to find out what damage was done. How deep did the bullet go? Did it hit any major organs or arteries? What kind of lasting damage was caused? In talking about your emotional or spiritual wounds you could ask it this way,

“How have the wounds that were inflicted upon my heart in the past influenced the way I think and act and perceive things in my life TODAY?”

If the first question of this study, “How were you wounded?” had your brain hurting from using areas it hasn’t used in awhile, then this one is really going to stretch you! Here are some examples to help you start heading in the right direction...

Maybe your dad was that dad who was always yelling at you, telling you to “Do it right, kid!” or “That was a pathetic effort!” You lived your childhood feeling like you never measured up to who he wanted you to be. Those verbal knives went deeper and deeper, and now you find yourself as an overly ambitious adult. Driven. A workaholic. Putting in the late hours. Always striving for the next promotion, no matter what it costs you. WHY do you do all that? Is it possible that you are trying to live up to a standard that was forced upon you as a kid, and consciously or unconsciously, you are still trying to measure up?

Maybe it was the words of an ex-girlfriend or your ex-wife. Loser. Failure. Good for nothing. She tore you down and delivered the painful blow of rejection from someone you had given your heart to. And now you refuse to fully commit to any woman. You’re content to float around from relationship to relationship, using women for sex or for a few days or weeks of a good time. Either that, or you’ve decided it’s not worth it anymore, so you just stop caring. You find fulfillment in food or alcohol or drugs. Now you’ve lost your purpose. You’ve gotten fat. Lazy. WHY? Because you internalized those words and all of that hurt, and you believed a bunch of lies as truth.

What is it for you? How have your wounds shaped who you have become TODAY? Again, put down this book, and take some time to ask God to show you the truth of what you have allowed into your heart.

**DO IT NOW, BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO
THE NEXT PAGE**

2ND EVOLUTION: assess the damage

Again, go slowly with this. Pray Psalm 31:4,9 over your heart, and ask Jesus to cover you with His mercy and begin to free your heart from the trap those wounds have set for you...

“Free me from the trap that is set for me... be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.” – Psalm 31:4,9

CAUTION!!

As you are digging into your past and exposing those wounds, and as you ask God to show you how those wounds have shaped you over the years,

DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO FALL INTO A VICTIM MENTALITY.

If you start blaming others for your feelings and emotions and attitude you will miss the heart of God entirely.

Think of it like this: In the company "YOU, Inc" you will always hold at least 51% of the stocks in your company. No one ever has the power to make you do anything, because you are the primary shareholder. When it comes to who you are today, TAKE OWNERSHIP of how YOU let others shape your life...

.

So can you see it yet? Are you starting to realize that, as strong as you might have thought you were, you have allowed your past to guide you down roads you were never meant to go? Hopefully, God has begun to open your eyes and your heart. If so, you are in a **GREAT** place! You've left the road that was paved for you by others, and you've begun to once again travel down that narrow path. And along the way, you are going to find healing and forgiveness and ultimately, freedom. Sounds like a good direction to be heading doesn't it?

THIS is the power of the cross. **THIS** is one of Jesus' primary missions – to reclaim your heart and bring you freedom!

***"He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."* – Isaiah 61:1**

***"Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."* – 2 Corinthians 3:16-17**

When we finally begin to find healing in those areas we have let define us, we find that freedom in Christ that we never before believed was possible. All of a sudden, you realize that **GOD'S OPINION OF YOU IS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS**. And instead of trying to fight and scrape and wear yourself out trying to get to the top, trying to prove yourself and measure up to someone else's standards, you now put your trust in God's Word that says,

“And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, HIS TREASURED POSSESSION as he promised...” – Deuteronomy 26:18

Instead of looking to sex or drugs or alcohol or food to help comfort the rejection you’ve tried to mask for years, you can now rest in His promise that says that you are

“... God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...” – Colossians 3:12

Instead of living in fear because of insecurities that took root years ago in your life as a result of painful discouragement, you can now find courage and say as the writer of the Psalms said,

“When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.” – Psalms 138:3

Instead of being consumed by doubt and hesitation, you can now walk in freedom and confidence in who you are in Christ, claiming as David did in 2 Samuel 22:34-37,

“God is my strong fortress, and He makes my way perfect. He makes me as surefooted as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights. He trains my hands for battle; He strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow. You have given me your shield of victory; your help has made me great. You have made a wide path for my feet to keep them from slipping.”

Here’s the real kicker - the greatest thing of all that you will experience as you allow Christ to heal those places of your heart is this:

YOU WILL FINALLY KNOW THE FREEDOM OF BEING ABLE TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE WOUNDED YOU

When you get to that point of healing – when you realize that the wounds that were inflicted upon your heart were given by someone who had experienced deep wounds in their own lives, but never dealt with them; when you realize that the sinfulness of others and the pain caused by their words or actions was no more sinful than the words and thoughts and actions that are in **YOUR** own heart – when you get to that point, and realize that Jesus has forgiven **YOU**, then your only

rational response will be to forgive the people that hurt you. Choose to not forgive, and you will stop the growth of the Holy Spirit within you.

“He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven.” – Thomas Fuller

3RD EVOLUTION: bandage the wound

Here’s where you begin to really walk the walk. Do you TRULY believe in the grace and forgiveness that Jesus gave to **YOU** when He died upon that cross? If so, are you willing to give that same measure of grace and forgiveness to others, **NO MATTER HOW DEEPLY THEY WOUNDED YOU?**

If you’re ready to climb that mountain and shout at the top of your lungs, “FREEDOM!!!” then you have to start with forgiveness. Write down who you need to forgive, and what you would say to them if they were sitting in front of you right now.

So here's your action step to finish out this chapter. This is a tough study – maybe the hardest one emotionally in this book. It would be good to enlist some help from your brothers in walking all of this out. Your assignment this week is to get together with one of your brothers. Meet up, **IN PERSON**, outside of Platoon Time, and really dig into all that you have written down. Make sure you get some good prayer time over each other. And together, with the power of Christ strengthening our resolve, may we all find freedom!

4TH EVOLUTION: rehab

(Do not leave Platoon Time without setting up lunch, coffee, whatever with one of your brothers)

THIS WEEK,

I AM MEETING WITH: _____

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

LOCATION: _____

“Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish; Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.” - Thomas More

“The boy who is going to make a great man must not make up his mind merely to overcome a thousand obstacles, but to WIN in spite of a thousand repulses and defeats.” - Theodore Roosevelt

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Get together **IN PERSON** with one of your brothers this week. Pray over each other, and allow God to begin to heal your wounds.*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed." Psalm 34:18

8

REST

MEMORY VERSE:

“Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:29

“Grant me, most dear and loving Jesus, to rest in You...above everything that is not Yourself, oh my God.” – Thomas a Kempis

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

Peace.

Rest.

Do those words describe your life right now? If you're like most guys, probably not. Our lives today are characterized by fast food restaurants on every corner, microwave ovens in every house, DVRs so we can fast forward through commercials, and calendars crammed full with work, exercise, activities – you name it, it's probably in there. It seems as if we are **ALWAYS** on the go. See if any of these hit home for you...

- ***In the name of “providing for our families”, we work sixty-plus hours a week, and as a result, hardly even get to see that family we’re working so hard for...***
- ***In the name of “preparing our kids to be more successful”, we cart them around to 3 different activities, 3 different nights of every week, and spend countless dollars and hours getting them ready to go pro, even though they’re only 4 years old...***
- ***In the name of “having good family time”, we take out an extra loan to buy that lake house, or the new boat, or a couple of four wheelers, and then end up having to work even more hours to pay off the loans, and all the toys then become burdens and the enjoyment is gone within a year...***
- ***In the name of “serving Christ”, we show up at the church every time the door is open, leading Bible studies, collecting offerings, going to prayer meetings, discipling others, all while our kids get shuffled off to hour after hour of childcare or late nights when they should be home in bed, or just learning the value of a family...***

And what does it all add up to? Stress. Anxiety. Exhaustion. Frustration. Burnout. Is it any wonder that the writer of Psalms 62 cries out,

“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation...” – Psalms 62:5-6

When was the last time you found **true** rest in the Lord? Not rest as in “Man, I slept really good last night,” or “I love my Sunday afternoon nap in the recliner,” but **REAL** rest in the power and sovereignty of Jesus? Chances are pretty good that

you are saying to yourself right now, “I don’t even know what that means to ‘rest in the Lord...’”

The best place where we can go to figure it out is in God’s Holy Word, the Bible. The Bible is one of God’s great gifts to His Church, but unfortunately (due to our selfish nature) many times we get turned off by all the “do’s and don’ts” everyone is always talking about, and we get the wrong idea that God only shows up when He needs to crack the whip as we get out of line. So we leave our Bible on the bookshelf or in a closet where all it’s doing is collecting dust.

But think of it this way – let’s say your brand new BluRay player just stopped working. Right in the middle of *Gladiator*, or *Braveheart*, or some other epic guy movie, right before Rocky is about to knock the Russian down for the count, the movie just stops. You jump up and check all the connections, change the batteries in the remote. Nothing. So what do you do? You get out the instruction manual. You slow down, and you take the time to figure out how your BluRay player was designed to work. It may take some patience, and you may have to learn some new terminology that you’re not real familiar with, but in the end, you figure out what’s wrong, you fix the BluRay player, and Rocky singlehandedly ends the Cold War and establishes peace on earth.

The Bible has many different purposes. It tells us of the unbelievable greatness of the God we serve. It provides a rich history of how God guides and directs His people. But it is also meant to be the instruction manual for our lives. It is not meant to be a book full of rules and regulations to take all the fun out of our lives.

WE WERE DESIGNED BY GOD TO OPERATE IN A CERTAIN WAY.

When we choose to humble ourselves and acknowledge the fact that maybe, since He’s the One that created us, He knows what’s best for our lives, then things tend to go better for us. That doesn’t mean life is gonna be easy and you won’t ever have any problems – anyone who preaches that ‘gospel’ is selling you a flatout lie.

What it does mean is that, in the middle of **ANY** circumstance, good or bad, you find rest and peace because you have learned how life is supposed to be lived, and you know that the Creator is always there to walk you through those tough times.

So, get into God’s Word!! Read your Bible. **Every day** if you can. It’s going to be virtually impossible to ever find the rest and peace God has promised if you don’t know what it means or where to look for it. So let’s get after it!

**** Side Note: there are some people who read their Bibles, and things just immediately jump off the page at them, and they are filled with wisdom and knowledge from just reading a few passages. For most of us, however, understanding God's Word is a process that happens over years, even decades.**

You might pick up your Bible for the very first time as you're going through this study. There might be a lot of things in there that just don't make any sense to you at all. DON'T GIVE UP!! God Himself promises that His Word will not return void – in other words, if you stick with it, and PRAY that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes, then over time, you will be amazed as it all begins to flow together! Carve out some time in your day. Get some accountability from your brothers. Then dig in!

So let's see what the Bible has to say about rest...

The book of Psalms speaks often of resting in the Lord:

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” – Psalm 91:1-2

When you live under his will and His protection, you'll find rest under His shadow, like laying down in the cool grass under a big old oak tree on a picture perfect spring afternoon...

“Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” – Psalm 116:7-9

When you take the time to slow down and remember all of the good things the Lord has done for you, you will realize that nothing is beyond His control, and you can rest from all of your stumbling around through life...

“I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave...” – Psalm 16:8-10

When you fix your eyes on Jesus, setting Him and the sacrifice He made always before you, you will learn to rest and rejoice knowing that He has paid your debt, and there is LIFE beyond the grave!

“I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.” – Psalms 3:5-6

When you trust in the promises of His Word, and believe that He is all you’ll ever need to sustain you, you will no longer fear anything that man can do to you, and you will find rest and peace as you lay down to sleep...

When we get into the book of Proverbs though, the Bible takes an interesting turn regarding finding rest in Jesus:

“The fear of the Lord leads to life: THEN one rests content, untouched by trouble.” – Proverbs 19:23

Whoa. Hold on now... So how does *fearing* God give us rest? Fear sounds a whole lot more stressful than it does peaceful, right? It does, until you dig a little deeper into the real meaning of the original language. Throughout most of the Old Testament, when referring to “fearing the Lord,” the writers used the Hebrew word ‘yirah’ (yir-aw’), which can be translated as ‘fear’, ‘terror,’ or ‘reverence.’ As one commentator described it,

“It can be compared to the feeling of looking at the nighttime sky and being awed by the immensity of space and simultaneously terrified by the thought of our smallness in such a vast expanse. That is to say, it is the feeling of being overwhelmed by a reality greater than oneself and greater than that encountered in ordinary life.” – Rabbi Jeffrey Goldwasser

When you begin to get an accurate picture in your mind and in your heart of how sovereign and all-powerful our Creator truly is, and you begin to understand that **NOTHING** happens outside of His control, your heart will begin to be filled with an awe and reverence of Him. Then combine all that with Romans 8:28, which says

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

When you bring all of that together and accept it in your heart as truth, all of a sudden it becomes perfectly clear what the apostle Paul meant in Philippians 4:7 when he spoke of

“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, (which) will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Peace.

Rest.

They're sounding pretty good right about now, aren't they? The paradox in all of this is that, to get to that point of finding rest, you are going to have to work at it. You can't just stop working or throw off all your responsibilities and take a bunch of vacation days whenever you want. We all know that, for most of us, vacations aren't near as restful as we imagine them to be in our minds beforehand, plus the work piling up for when we get back tends to stress us out even more.

True rest in Christ Jesus is more of a peace **within your heart**. It is a trusting in God that makes absolutely no sense to the outside world, and most likely doesn't make a whole lot of sense to you either. **THAT IS WHY IT TAKES WORK**. It takes deliberately training your mind to think in that direction. You've got to start exchanging all of the lies and distractions of the circumstances that surround you, for the truth and focus of God's Word. You have to learn to let go of your fear and anxiety about all of the things that could happen, and lay it **ALL** at Jesus' feet, believing that He loves you and cares enough about you to guide you through it.

Take a look at these words of Jesus. Read them slowly. Let every word sink in...

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” – Matthew 6:25-34

Ok, so what do we do with all of these verses and ideas we have been talking about? How do we get them to actually be a part of who we are? Eventually, the goal is that we would be able to rest our minds in Jesus at any time of the day, no matter what our circumstance. But like we said earlier, this is going to take some training to help us move our minds in that direction. The best way to be able to do that is to intentionally create opportunities to rest in Him – to deliberately carve out time out of our day to slow down, and simply enjoy His presence.

ACTION STEPS

So here is your action step for this week. Pick **3** days out of your week where you will give God 30 minutes of your uninterrupted attention. Mornings would be the ideal time to do it, but we're not going to be legalistic about it. Maybe it'll be on your lunch hour at work. Maybe it'll be in the evening after you help get all the kids in bed. It isn't so important *when* you do it, but that you do it, period.

Here are the guidelines for your 30 minutes:

- **GET OUTSIDE.** *There is something special about getting outside in God's creation, almost as if you can hear Him clearer when you get outside the confines of man-made structures. If possible, get to a place away from a bunch of noise and busyness. If not, try to find a nice city park somewhere. Again, the location ultimately isn't what's important. Just try to get away from your daily distractions.*
- **NO MUSIC.** *It's tempting to have your iPod going with your earphones in. But a lot of times, even if it's great worship music you're listening to, even that can sometimes drown out the voice of God in our lives. Minimize the noise as much as you can. Get somewhere where you can hear the wind in the trees, or a stream rolling through a creek bed. But let God have the attention of your heart.*
- **NO BIBLE OR DEVOTIONALS.** *This is not meant to be your time in the Word. God absolutely speaks to us through His Word, as He guides us and teaches us about His story, but He also has things to say specifically to our hearts that don't necessarily come from His Word. (NOTE: that being said, everything that you attribute as coming from God during this time must first line up with what the Bible says, or else it is not from Him. ALWAYS run your thoughts through the filter of His Word!) So make sure you get your Bible reading in at another time during the day, but set it aside for this time.*
- **FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE EVOLUTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:**

1ST EVOLUTION: day #1

- Ask God to calm your heart and remove any distractions from your mind.
- Spend about 5 minutes being quiet. No talking. No praying. Focus your thoughts on Him and Him alone.
- When your mind has quieted down, read these verses again:
“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” – Psalm 91:1-2
- Then ask Jesus this question:
“Jesus, will you please show me the areas in my life where I have stepped out of Your shelter, out of the protection of your will?”
- Now just be quiet. For 20 minutes (set the alarm on your phone if you need to, then **PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY!!**), just be silent before Him. If your mind starts to wander, just refocus, and ask Him the question again. Don’t be tempted to check out because it feels too weird or unnatural. Just like someone with an injury must retrain their muscles to work right, you are retraining the ‘ears’ of your heart to listen for His voice. Be patient.
- For the last 5 minutes of your time, write down what God showed you. If you didn’t hear anything, don’t get discouraged. This might take some time. Spend these last few minutes praising God for who He is, and ask Him to prepare your heart even more for your next time with Him.

2ND EVOLUTION: day #2

- Ask God to calm your heart and remove any distractions from your mind.
- Spend about 5 minutes being quiet. No talking. No praying. Focus your thoughts on Him and Him alone.
- When your mind has quieted down, read these verses again:
“Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” – Psalm 116:7-9
- Then ask Jesus this question:
“Jesus, will you please remind me of all the good things You have done in my life?”
- Now just be quiet. For 20 minutes, just be silent before Him. If your mind starts to wander, just refocus, and ask Him the question again. Don’t be tempted to check out because it feels too weird or unnatural. Be patient.
- For the last 5 minutes of your time, write down what God showed you. If you didn’t hear anything, don’t get discouraged. Spend these last few minutes praising God for who He is, and ask Him to prepare your heart even more for your next time with Him.

3RD EVOLUTION: day #3

- Ask God to calm your heart and remove any distractions from your mind.
- Spend about 5 minutes being quiet. No talking. No praying. Focus your thoughts on Him and Him alone.
- When your mind has quieted down, read these verses again:
"I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave..." – Psalm 16:8-10
- Then ask Jesus this question:
"Jesus, will you please show me the glory of who You are? Show me how I can better fix my eyes upon you as I walk this road You have put me on."
- Now just be quiet. For 20 minutes, just be silent before Him. If your mind starts to wander, just refocus, and ask Him the question again. Be patient.
- For the last 5 minutes of your time, write down what God showed you. **BE AS SPECIFIC AS YOU CAN.** Spend these last few minutes praising God for who He is, and ask Him to prepare your heart even more for your next time with Him.

We pray that these times you spent in quiet and solitude this week with Our Lord will set a strong foundation for the same kind of habit in your future. Make it a priority. Spend time with Him. Not presenting to Him your wish list. Not questioning why you're in this or that situation. But just sitting in the "yirah" of the Lord, humbly listening to what He might have to say to you. Find rest in Him, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

***“Grant me, most dear and loving Jesus, to rest in You
above created things, above health and beauty,
above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity,
above all knowledge and skill, above all fame and praise,
above all sweetness and consolation, above all hope and promise,
above all merit and desire,
above all gifts and favours that You can bestow and shower upon
us,
above all joy and jubilation that the mind can conceive and know,
above all things visible and invisible,
and above everything that is not Yourself, oh my God.”
– Thomas a Kempis***

***“Great peace have they who love your Law, and nothing can
make them stumble.” – Psalms 119:165***

***“A faith that moves mountains is a faith that expands
horizons, it does not bring us into a smaller world full of easy
answers, but into a larger one where there is room for
wonder.” – Rich Mullins***

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Be intentional about your times of rest this week. If you need it, set the times on your calendars, and then have your brothers hold you accountable for those times*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:29

9

HANDS AND FEET

MEMORY VERSE:

“The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

***“To sin by silence, when they should protest,
makes cowards of men.” – Abraham Lincoln***

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

So how did your rest go last week? Like we said in the action steps, don't get discouraged if you never felt like you got any words from the Lord. The important thing is that you continue to make the time to be quiet before Him and listen. In time, you WILL learn to hear His voice!

.

Why are we here?

SO OTHERS MAY LIVE!!

Our rallying cry at Band of Brothers. By now, if you've given your Platoon and this study a hundred percent, then those words, 'SO OTHERS MAY LIVE' should mean a whole lot more to you now than they did a few weeks ago. We exist to serve. That's it. That is the common denominator of all of our 'purposes' here on this earth. We are called to lay down our lives for others, so that they may see Jesus in us and make the choice to accept Him, and then turn around and do the same for others. It is all for HIS name, and HIS glory!

"Real living is living for others." – Bruce Lee

Back in chapter 5, 'Crossroads,' we talked about leading by serving. We learned that the only way you'll ever truly be an effective leader in your homes, or your workplace, or your church, is when you realize that the most powerful leaders are those that serve their followers, rather than their own egos or selfish ambition.

This chapter will have similar concepts, but this is where you step out of your circle of influence, and begin to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the rest of the world. For it is a world full of people who desperately need Jesus in their lives – people in 3rd world countries, and people just down the street. Romans 10:14-15 says,

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Those people that you interact with every day – your mailman, the guy behind the counter at the convenience store, the lady that bags your groceries. They all need Jesus in their lives. Could it be that the reason God has put them in your path on a regular basis is so **YOU** can be the one to point them towards Him?

Imagine what our days would look like, how our focus would shift completely, if we intentionally viewed those around us as potential targets for the Kingdom! It would make it pretty difficult to lead a self-centered life, or to fall back in to our self-gratifying sins and addictions, if our one goal was to point others to Him, wouldn't it?

“The only way you can serve God is by serving other people.” – Rick Warren

So how do we serve others? Do we just strike up a conversation with everyone we meet, and boldly tell them that they need to accept Jesus into their lives? Possibly. For some people, that is exactly what they need to hear. But honestly, especially in the US, you're not gonna get very far with that approach. So what do we do? How do we most effectively reach the world for the Lord? There are countless methods and strategies within the church community that we could look at, but for this study we are going to focus on 3 tactics:

- 1. USING YOUR EARS**
- 2. SACRIFICING YOUR TIME**
- 3. OPENING YOUR WALLET**

.

LISTEN

One of the hardest things for people in America to do these days seems to be slowing down enough to hear what people are saying. We're always on the go, always going to the next appointment, the next activity, the next errand that has to get finished. And every day, we speed by people who are dealing with internal struggles and fears and addictions. For many of them, the solution to their problems could easily be found if someone would just stop and listen, but you and I are just too busy.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, you can almost feel the weight of King Solomon's regret as he looked back on his life. Throughout that book, he tells all about how he had spent his life pursuing riches, education, wisdom, fame, pleasure – always on the move, always going forward. And in the end, after all of his many accomplishments and experiences, what was his conclusion when looking back on his life? It was all meaningless. The only thing he found that truly mattered was to

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” – Ecclesiastes 12:13

And what are those commandments? In the words of Jesus they are:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” – Matthew 22:37-40

So the question is, can you really love your neighbor if you won't take the time to slow down and listen to what is going on in their life?

1ST EVOLUTION: listen

Is there someone specific that comes to mind, outside of your close friends and family, that you need to intentionally spend some time listening to? Maybe a neighbor that you usually try to avoid because they talk so much. Maybe the greeter at the grocery store that you see every week but never say more than “hello” to.

Think about it.

If you cannot think of anybody, pray that God would open up your eyes to see the opportunities that are all around you, and that you would have the willingness to slow down and make time for them.

Share with your Platoon this week and let them know how you did.

Who, outside of my circle of immediate family and friends, can I sacrifice my schedule for this week, just to listen to them talk?

"The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer." – Henry David Thoreau

TIME

Our time is valuable to us. “Time is money,” right? That’s an interesting statement when you look at it in light of what Jesus says in Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

So if time really is money, then how we spend it is a pretty good measure of where our heart is. And ultimately, we really only have two places we can spend our time – on us, or on others. If we buy too much for ‘us’ then we will not have anything left in our account for ‘others.’ Make sense?

It takes time to slow down and listen. It also takes time to serve those in need. Chances are good that you have a single mom in your church that could use some help mowing her yard every once in awhile. Chances are good that you have an elderly neighbor down the street that could use some help shoveling snow out of their driveway, or raking leaves, or carrying in their groceries. Chances are good that you live in a city where there are homeless that could use a meal, or kids in a shelter that could would love for someone to come play with them, or elderly in a nursing home that just want someone to come sit and talk with them. There are needs that can be met **ALL AROUND US**. Open your eyes. Pray that God would open your heart. Chase after the heart of Jesus that we see in Deuteronomy 10:18-20,

“He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing... Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name.”

Love those that have no one to love them. Hold fast to the ways of the Lord. Serve Him, by serving others with your time. **GET OFF THE COUCH**. Besides, you never know who you might really be serving.

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” – Hebrews 13:2

2ND EVOLUTION: act

1. Identify someone in your life, outside of your close friends and family, that you can be intentional about serving this week. How will you serve them with your time?

2. Prayerfully seek out a ministry or organization that you can begin to serve at on a regular basis. Some examples are:

Mentoring at a local school

Serving meals at a food bank or homeless shelter

Volunteering at a nursing home

Playing with kids at a shelter for foster children

BY GIVING JUST ONE HOUR A WEEK, WHO KNOWS WHAT KIND OF IMPACT YOU COULD MAKE ON SOMEONE'S LIFE FOR AN ETERNITY?

“If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.” – Chinese Proverb

GIVE

The final arena in which we will challenge you to serve others is with your money and your possessions. Regardless of what class of society you belong to, or what tax bracket you are in, there is **ALWAYS** someone that is worse off than you. Always. It is one of the more subtle attacks of the enemy that he causes us to believe that no one has it as bad as poor, pitiful little me. We buy into his lies, and we use it as an excuse to close up our wallets and cling tightly to all the stuff that belongs to us. But listen to the words of Deuteronomy 15:7-11

“If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs...

Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE POOR PEOPLE IN THE LAND. THEREFORE I COMMAND YOU TO BE OPENHANDED toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.”

You might want to go back and read those verses again. You’ll notice that it isn’t a suggestion to give to those in need. God didn’t say, “Hey, I know money’s a little tight right now, so I understand if you just want to hold onto all you’ve got and show the rest of the world your lack of faith in me. It’s cool. I’ll just send that guy someone else that has plenty to spare...”

No. God **COMMANDS** us to be openhanded. His expectation for His followers is crystal clear: give **GENEROUSLY**, and do it with a **HAPPY** heart!

Yes, you might be going through a hard season in life. You may not have much to your name at all. But look at the story that Jesus shared in Mark 12:41-44. Like He does so many times, he highlights an extreme example to show us that **none of us** have any ground to stand on in our excuses.

“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.’”

Unfortunately though, the problem for most of us is not so much that we don't have the money to give, but that we really just don't want to. We like our stuff. We like our oversized homes, our jacked-up trucks, and our supersized combo meals. We like our big screen TVs, our DVRs that can record 16 different shows at once, and our smart phones with all the latest apps and updates. We like our jet skis, our motorcycles, our boats, and our vacations that we have to have at least once a quarter. We like our stuff. And stuff costs money. If we give our money away, we can't buy more stuff, can we? If we sell our stuff, and use the money to give to those who really need it, how will we survive?

Now you and I may not voice our thoughts like that out in the open, but be honest – isn't that really how you feel deep down inside, especially when the pastor passes around the collection plate? It's almost as if we lock all the doors, bolt all the shutters closed, and go hide in the cellar when people start talking about giving to the poor. We all want to be followers of Christ, just as long as it doesn't infringe too much on my lifestyle. But God's Word does not leave room for that. Take a look at the brutal, in-your-face honesty of 1 John 3:17-18

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, HOW CAN THE LOVE OF GOD BE IN HIM? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Or these words of Paul in 1 Timothy 6:9-10

"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Or the words of King Solomon, one of the wealthiest men in history, in Proverbs 28:27

"He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses."

The love of God is not in those who do not give to those in need. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Your stuff that you value so much is not blessed by the Lord when you shut your eyes to the needs of those around you... Pretty harsh words, aren't they? But look at your heart as you read all of this. Is it on the defensive? Are you looking for reasons why this doesn't apply to you? If so, it might just be that you have let your bank account get a hold on your heart. It is time to release it! The solution is easy – start giving stuff away! Go around the house and start gathering all the things you haven't used in the last 6 months. Throw it in the trunk and take it down to the local homeless shelter. Or have a

garage sale and give all the proceeds to that family down the street that is struggling to make ends meet. Commit to give above and beyond your ten percent of your paycheck that you should be giving to your church already, and be creative about looking for ways to give that extra money away. Or get really crazy, and downsize to a smaller house, or give your car to someone who needs it rather than trade it in. Be like the men and women of the early Church, who were so generous that the Bible says,

“There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.” – Acts 4:34-37

3RD EVOLUTION: give

Commit to give *intentionally* to someone in need this week. It may be someone you know that is hurting financially. It may be a ministry that is meeting needs in your community, and you want to bless them by donating to their cause.

Maybe you don't have anything specific on your heart. OK, so get \$50 out of the ATM when you leave Band of Brothers tonight and ask God to bring someone across your path that could use it. And when He does, give it away, no questions asked.

What will **YOU** do?

“As base a thing as money often is, yet it can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor. It can keep a missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality.” – A.W. Tozer

WARTIME MENTALITY

In John Piper's book, *'Don't Waste Your Life'*, there is a great chapter where he talks about having a "wartime mentality" when it comes to living your life for Christ.

In World War II, especially after Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into the war, the citizens of the US were called upon by their government to sacrifice for the greater cause. They rationed their food and grew their own vegetables so that more could be sent overseas to the troops. They drove less so that more fuel could be used by the military to keep all their machinery going. They went to work in factories all over the nation to help produce parts for tanks, and weapons, and fighter planes.

They sacrificed their comfort.

And they did it cheerfully and enthusiastically.

As we read way back in Chapter 2, we are in the middle of a war right now. There is an intense spiritual battle going on all around us. It is a battle for the hearts of your family, your friends, your co-workers, your church family, your brothers in your Platoon, the homeless guy on the corner, and even YOU.

Are you willing to make whatever sacrifice is asked of you, for the good of the cause?

Are you willing to set aside your time, your schedules, and your budgets, so that you might play a part in the Kingdom's victory?

There is no doubt about it. We are at war. You are needed, not only on the front lines of battle, but also behind the scenes – praying, giving, sending, equipping – whatever God calls you to do, **THAT** is where you are needed!

.

If you consider yourself to be a follower of Christ, then you must live as He did. While He was here on earth, He gave absolutely no indication that He valued money or possessions of any kind. They could be used as tools in furthering the Kingdom, but any use otherwise would simply be a distraction to take His eyes off of the prize – glorifying His Father's name.

When you begin to let go of the idea that all of these things and money are 'yours' and that you earned the right to have so much, when you realize that **EVERYTHING** was given to you so that you could be a blessing to others, then you will become passionate about the things God is passionate about. You will find inside of you a voice that speaks out for things that really matter, instead of the latest toy that you just have to have. You will find a cause worth giving your life to.

Not for fame.

Not for reward.

SO OTHERS MAY LIVE!

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” – Proverbs 31:8-9

“Be without fear in the face of your enemies. Be brave and upright, that God may love thee. Speak the truth always, even if it leads to your death. Safeguard the helpless and do no wrong; that is your oath. Rise a knight...” – ‘Kingdom of Heaven’

NOTES:

MISSION OBJECTIVES:

- *Don't forget your memory verse!*
- *Be intentional about seeking out people to serve, by listening, giving your time, or giving money – DON'T WAIT FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES TO COME TO YOU – CREATE THEM!!*

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(please write down the requests for all of the members of your platoon for this week, and be diligent about lifting them up throughout the week)

"The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

10

FINISH STRONG

MEMORY VERSE:

“I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”
Acts 20:24

“The mass of men worry themselves into nameless graves while here and there a great unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

- ATTENDANCE**
- STUDY GUIDE**
- MEMORY VERSE**

Congratulations brothers!! You've made it! We pray that over the past 10 weeks God has gotten hold of your heart. We pray that God has begun a shift within you, moving your focus off of yourself, and onto Him alone.

We pray that you have begun to discipline and order your steps, taking control of your thoughts and words and actions so that you may be able to run this race with excellence.

We pray that you have begun to engage your heart in the spiritual battle that rages all around you. That you would intentionally put on God's armor, each and every day, and that you have begun to live a life of prayer.

We pray that as you step into the battle, that you will continue to let go of your fears, and place all of your trust and faith in the Lord, believing with all that is in you that He is who He says He is.

We pray that you have begun to learn the importance of having a group of brothers around you that will have your back in all of the battles that really matter, and that you would continue to strengthen those friendships long after this study is over.

We pray that you have begun to lead those around you by laying down your lives for them. That you are intentionally looking for ways you can lead by example those in your family, your work places, and your churches.

We pray that you have begun to rid yourself of all of the sins that have been holding you back, and that you would continue to rely upon the Lord to give you the strength you need to make your stand against sin in your life.

We pray that you have begun to look deeply into your past, revealing the wounds you have internalized and allowed to shape who you are today, and that you would have the courage and fortitude to forgive those that have hurt you.

We pray that you have begun to learn what it truly means to rest in the Lord. That you have begun to intentionally carve out time within your day to just sit quietly before the Lord and allow Him to speak to your heart.

We pray that you have begun to purposefully open your eyes to the needs that surround you, in your neighborhoods, your city – wherever God has placed you. And that in obedience to His Word, you have begun to create margin in your schedules and your wallets to be able to help meet those needs.

And now, at the end of this Wave of Band of Brothers, we pray that you will begin to learn the importance of leaving a legacy. A legacy of discipline and courage and faith in Jesus Christ. A legacy of self-sacrifice, honor, integrity, and strong spiritual leadership.

Imagine your life as you wish it to be, and then take steps to get there. There is a great scene in the movie 'Gladiator' where Maximus is preparing to lead his fellow soldiers into the final battle in the campaign to expand the Roman empire. He rallies their courage, inspiring them to run head-on into possible death with these words:

“Three weeks from now, I will be harvesting my crops. Imagine where you will be, and it will be so. Hold the line! Stay with me! If you find yourself alone, riding in the green fields with the sun on your face, do not be troubled. For you are in Elysium, and you're already dead! Brothers, what we do in life echoes in eternity.”

Imagine where you will be, and it will be so. But to get there, you must hold the line. You must be willing to lay down your desires, your wants. You have to be willing to lay it all down and say, “Lord whatever it takes to glorify your Name in my life, I am willing to do it.”

And what if it does take your life? Maybe not literally, but what if you are called to live the rest of your life not being able to do what **YOU** want to do?

What if God has called you to stay in that job that you despise, because you are the only one there that carries the name of Jesus into that place? And you make the decision to humbly submit to him and work not only diligently, but also cheerfully, when everyone around you is saying quit and move on...

What if God has called you to stay in that marriage where you are constantly being either verbally beat down, or just thrown aside? Where you have not been truly loved for year after year? But you make the choice to not only stay, but to cover your bride with a love and a grace that makes absolutely no sense at all...

What if God has called you to sell the stuff you have been placing so much value in – your motorcycle, your boat, your lake home, whatever – in order to free up more of your time and resources to build His Kingdom? What if He has called you to move out of that big, fancy new house into a smaller, more modest home, so that you could live on less income, and give abundantly to those in need?

What is it for you? God calls us to a life of radical obedience. Or, as Oswald Chambers says it, “reckless abandonment.”

**WE ARE NOT CALLED TO LOOK LIKE THE
WORLD. WE ARE CALLED TO BE DIFFERENT.
TO STAND OUT. TO BE SET APART.**

Take a look at your life right now. Are you striving after the things the world strives for? Or are you swimming against the current, choosing the narrow path instead? Brothers, what we do in life, echoes in eternity.

We will all leave a legacy behind us. The question is: what kind of legacy will it be? Will it be of a life lived for this world, or for the next? Will people talk of all your worldly achievements and success, of the size of your bank account or the amount of toys you owned, or, like Tristan in the movie 'Legends of the Fall,' will your life be lived in the 'borderlands?'

"He had his honor and a long life, and he saw his children grow and raise their own families. Tristan died in in the moon of the popping trees. He was last seen in the north country, hunting. His grave is unmarked, but it does not matter. He had always lived in the borderland, anyway. Somewhere between this world and the other. IT WAS A GOOD DEATH. "

.

Before you really examine your legacy and what it will take to get there, let's go all the way back to week one of this study. One of your action steps was to fill out an evaluation of where you stood on various spiritual disciplines. It was to serve as your 'before picture' as you began your spiritual fitness program. Go back and look at how you rated yourself in all of those areas. Look at **why** you rated yourself at those levels. Take a look at the action steps you were going to take to begin moving forward.

Now here's the challenge: fill out that same evaluation. Take your time as you examine your life in each of these areas. Prayerfully ask God to reveal to you the truth of where you stand. Do not simply rate yourself higher because that is what was expected of you. If you haven't changed or seen any improvement, don't fake it. That won't do you any good at all. Be honest with yourself and with your brothers.

1ST EVOLUTION: re-evaluate

	<i>Poor</i>			<i>OK</i>				<i>Great</i>		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
BIBLE STUDY										
PRAYER										
MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE										
SHARING THE GOSPEL										
SERVING OTHERS										
LEADING <i>(at home, work, etc)</i>										
SEXUAL PURITY										

.

So how did you do? Was there improvement? If so, then stop and take a moment to give thanks to Jesus. You are on the right path. Continue to push hard, asking Him to give you the strength to press forwards.

Here's the tough part... what if you haven't seen any improvement at all? What if, after this entire study, you are exactly where you were 10 weeks ago? If that is the case, as harsh as it may sound, you have missed the point of this entire study. You might have gotten in some great fellowship, and had a good time hanging out with a bunch of other men, and we are ABSOLUTELY glad you were a part of it all. BUT, somewhere along the way, you missed Jesus in all of it.

In Mark 6:47-50, the disciples have moved on in their journey, but without Jesus by their side. The story picks up with them on a lake in the middle of a storm...

“When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.’”

The disciples were overtaken by their circumstances. All they saw was the wind and the waves that surrounded them on all sides. So much so that Jesus was about to pass them by. And when they did finally see Him, they were terrified because they did not recognize who He truly was.

Many of you are in that same boat right now. Over the past 10 weeks, you might have put on a good show, but honestly you are terrified. Your circumstances haven't changed. Inside your heart, you're still dealing with the exact same problems you had when you showed up that first night. And Jesus is about to pass right by you. The problem is that ***you have not truly seen Him for who He really is***. You have not believed the Scriptures you have read, or the testimonies you have heard. You may have attempted to put a fresh coat of paint on everything, but in reality the walls of your house are crumbling because you have built it on a weak foundation.

But there is good news brother! God knows right where you are. It doesn't matter if you dropped the ball during this study. His promise to you is the same right now as it was 10 weeks ago, and it'll still be the same 10 years down the road: Put your faith in Him. Completely. Wholeheartedly trust him with your life – every bit of it. When you do, when you acknowledge Jesus as the only one who can calm the seas in your life, that is when He will step towards you, get in the boat, and take control of the rudder. But ***you*** have to let go first. ***You*** have to let go of your security, your addictions, your fears... all of it.

His promise is forever, but why wait? Why put it off until tomorrow? Your legacy could start today. Right now. For 10 weeks you have said, 'So others may live!' But before others can find life, you must first find it yourself. And ***TRUE*** life

comes only through laying yours down completely at the feet of Jesus, humbly submitting to His will for your life, and accepting Him as your Lord and Savior.

Now is your time.

Now is when your story begins.

Forget about all that stuff you have been dragging along behind you for so long, and fix your eyes on Jesus. As Hebrews 12:1-2 says,

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...”

Forget about all of that, and lay your life down at His feet. All it takes is a simple prayer. There aren't any magic words, it just has to come from your heart. Romans 10:9-10 says that,

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

Stop what you are doing right now. Dig deep into your soul, and ask yourself: Have I ever truly submitted my life to Jesus? If your answer is no, then the next question has to be: Why not now?

Just the fact that you have given up night after night to be a part of this ministry, and you've sat in on multiple Platoon Times when you could have been out doing countless number of other things; just that alone should show you that God is doing something in your heart. So why fight it? Make this **YOUR** moment, **YOUR** time, when **YOU** decide to change your legacy.

PRAYER OF SALVATION

If you're ready, all you need to do is say these simple words, from your heart:
(If you're alone, consider calling one of your brothers and praying together with him. If you're at Band of Brothers, let your brothers surround you, and pray together with all of them at your side.)

***Lord Jesus,
I come before you in humility.
I confess that I am a sinner, and I am in desperate need of
a Savior.
I ask that you would come into my life right now.
Be my Lord.
Be my Savior.
Forgive me of my sins, and bring me into an eternal
relationship with You.
Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and create in me a clean
heart.
I love You Jesus, and I praise You for your wonderful gift
of salvation!
It is in your holy name that I pray, AMEN!!***

AMEN!!! The Bible says that all of heaven is rejoicing right now because of the decision you just made! WELCOME into the family of God!! You have made the most important decision you will ever make in creating a lasting legacy – don't ever let go of the feelings you have right now!

.

For the rest of you – those who are walking boldly before the Lord, growing in faith and good works, here is your challenge: DON'T LET UP!

You've pushed hard the past 10 weeks. You've grown closer to God, and you have grown closer to your brothers. But don't put it on cruise control just because you've finished this study. If anything, all this was over the past 10 weeks was Basic Training. The real battle starts when walk out the doors and start putting all these things into practice.

