



MONTHLY
DEVOTIONAL



DAY ONE

CALL OF DUTY

"I know the plans I have for you," announces the Lord. "I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come."
Jeremiah 29:11 NIRV

It may seem that some people have a touch of destiny about them. After a particularly fierce battle on July 18, 1755, this man wrote afterwards, "I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat...yet escaped unhurt..."

There were many enemies that tried to bring this man down. One enemy gunner explained later, "I had seventeen fair fires at him with my rifle, and after all could not bring him to the ground."

The man who could not be killed in battle was George Washington. An enemy chief summed it up best when he later said to General Washington, "...'twas all in vain, a power mightier than we shielded you."

Indeed! George Washington was known for his life of prayer and fasting, and would be later known as our first President. It was God who shielded him from harm, because God had a great plan for George Washington. The incredible thing is that God has a great plan for you too. Pray today for God's will and that His hand would be with you and keep you from evil. Two words at the top of the Washington Monument in our nation's capital sum it up best: "Laus Deo," which translated from Latin mean "Praise God."

DRILL: We've all had some near misses. Think back to a time that you almost got hurt, or almost lost something. Thank God for His protection today, because for every near miss you remember, there are plenty of other times God shielded you without you even knowing about it!



DAY TWO

CALL OF DUTY

"The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. He said, 'Mighty warrior, the Lord is with you.'" Judges 6:12 NIRV

Don't tell Gideon about the odds. He had himself an army of 32,000 soldiers, which seemed pretty strong until it was matched up against the enemy's army of 135,000 soldiers! Yikes! With those odds, it might be a good idea to think twice about an attack plan. In fact, God agreed. But not in the way you'd think!

Get this: God had Gideon make his troops do a few exercises that might seem odd, but it was all part of God's plan to reduce Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 men. That's right, just 300 men. For those of you reading this that are math fans, that's a 1 to 450 ratio. That means for everyone in God's army, there were 450 to fight!

But if you're reading this devotional, odds are you know that odds don't matter with God. Things looked impossible, but victory was just around the corner. All Gideon had to do was obey and step forward. Don't worry about the odds when you've got God on your side. He'll even the odds, even if the odds seem odd!

DRILL: Write down some of your biggest dreams – the things that may seem like the odds are against happening. Now remember that with God behind you, nothing is impossible!



DAY THREE

CALL OF DUTY

"Announce freedom all over the land to everyone who lives there."
Leviticus 25:10 NIRV

Francis Scott Key was an American lawyer who was also a poet during the time of the War of 1812. On a diplomatic mission to free a doctor held captive on a boat in the Chesapeake Bay, his boat was captured by the British. There, on the night of September 14, 1814, he was forced to watch as the British army relentlessly bombarded an American fort. The violent night passed, and the dawn's early light filled his eyes. To his amazement and joy, he saw the American flag still standing. This inspired him to write what we still sing today – the National Anthem of the United States of America.

You're familiar with the first verse of our National Anthem – but do you know the fourth verse? Not many do, but here are a few of the words written by Francis Scott Key that fateful night:

*And this be our motto, "In God is our trust!"
And the star spangled banner in triumph
shall wave O'er the land of the free and
the home of the brave!*

Through the long night, the fort and the flag were still there. And through the dark battles of our history, America and her flag are still there. It says it on America's money and it says it in our national anthem: "In God is our trust."

DRILL: Today's Biblical verse is actually engraved on the Liberty Bell in Independence Hall. Liberty – or freedom – has a heavy price, which our soldiers have paid throughout the years of our nation. Remember our soldiers today – and remember that price that was paid.



DAY FOUR

CALL OF DUTY

“Do all that you have in mind,” his armor bearer said. “Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.” 1 Samuel 14:7 NIV

Jonathan’s armor bearer could have said something to the effect of, “What are you kidding?” That’s the sort of response many of us could have said if we heard Jonathan explain how he could – with just one other person’s help – defeat twenty Philistines.

But Jonathan’s armor bearer said this: “Go ahead. I am with you heart and soul.” Wow, what a supporting force! God helped these two overcome the Philistines in battle, but you have to admire that armor bearer’s attitude. Here was one courageous guy, covering Jonathan’s back. The Bible records how the two of them – and not just Jonathan alone – shifted the momentum in a day of battle. God’s army won the day, just because these two watched each other’s backs.

As a soldier in God’s army, that’s what you’ve got to do for your friends when they go out to do battle. Of course, it might not be a battle like Jonathan and his armor bearer were fighting, but life can be filled with challenges on a daily basis. So support your friends, and realize that you can’t do it on your own either. We all need each other to win the battles and keep moving things in the right direction.

DRILL: Think of one or two of your good friends. Now, think of ways that you can help them. It could be something simple, like helping with homework or helping with chores. Or it could be something bigger. Either way, showing your support for your friends is a winning thing to do!



DAY FIVE

CALL OF DUTY

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
Psalm 119:11 NIRV

General Ulysses S. Grant of the Union Army has been described as the greatest general of his age and one of the greatest strategists of any age. His military victories in Vicksburg and other Civil War battles helped bring about the restoration of the United States of America. He was a brave soldier, running out into the open to save the life of a friend on the battlefield. His achievements and character helped win him the office of President of the United States much later.

While President, the *Sunday School Times* had asked him to send a message out to the children of America. President Grant wrote, "My advice to Sunday schools, no matter what their denomination, is: Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties, write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives."

It's obvious the Bible was important to him, as later on he once said, "the scriptures are Man's best guide..." If he were hanging around today, it is reasonable to assume he'd be saying the same thing to the army of youths across America: "Read the Bible, keep it in your hearts and practice its truth all your lives."

DRILL: Read your Bible, soldier! Write down a time that you plan to read it each day – it doesn't matter how much or how long. Just as long as you do it!



DAY SIX

CALL OF DUTY

“Then Deborah said to Barak, ‘Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?’” Judges 4:14 NIV

Girl power! Some say that girls don’t belong in battle, but no one bothered to tell Deborah that. She was leading Israel at the time, and saw the wicked things an enemy king was doing to the people of the land. So she sent for one of Israel’s supposed ‘mighty men’ by the name of Barak and told him this message from God: “Go and whoop up on the enemy.” Of course, that’s not the direct translation, but you get the point.

Unfortunately, Barak was not the right man for the job. He told Deborah, “I ain’t going unless you go with me.” Again, not the exact translation. Deborah heard this reply and saw his lack of faith and courage. That’s why she told him, “Okay, but because you’re doing it this way, you are not going to get any credit for this. No, all the credit is going to a woman.”

And that’s just how things unfolded. God helped the Israelite army win the battle, all because of Deborah’s leading.

If God has told you to do something, and you don’t do it – He’ll get someone else! Don’t miss out on anything in life because you’re too afraid to step out or believe in God. Take that leap of faith and go for it!

DRILL: With your parents help, you can do a little research at the library or on the internet to find out about someone you admire who has accomplished something great. How did they get there? Find out what it took for that person to get a great victory in their life, and see how you can apply those lessons in your own life.



DAY SEVEN

CALL OF DUTY

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5 NIRV

It was June 10, 1943, and right in the middle of one of the biggest wars this world had ever seen. General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces during World War II, had just observed the armada of 3,000 naval ships he had just recently ordered to go off into battle. It was a solemn time, watching those brave men sail from Malta off to the shores of Sicily. He saluted his men and bowed his head for a moment of prayer.

During one of the darkest times in our history, he turned to God for advice and protection, and then said to the officer next to him, “There comes a time when you’ve used your brains, your training, your technical skill, and the die is cast and the events are in the hands of God, and there you have to leave them.”

America may be the might of the world, but Eisenhower knew the truth: we are *nothing* without God. Perhaps that is why, during his time as President of the United States, the Pledge of Allegiance was altered to add the phrase first coined by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address: “One nation, under God.”

The moment we begin to lean on our own understanding is the moment we start forgetting to trust Him, so remember that every blessing we have comes from above and not our own doing. When we do that, He will make straight our paths.

DRILL: If you haven’t said the Pledge of Allegiance in a while, now might be a good time. Do you know it? Find a flag and say the whole pledge. Don’t forget to say, “under God,” because it’s the truth!



DAY EIGHT

CALL OF DUTY

“So Joshua fought against the Amalekites, just as Moses had ordered. Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held his hands up, the Israelites were winning. But every time he lowered his hands, the Amalekites began to win.” Exodus 17:10-11 NIRV

Though they don't go on tours of duty like soldiers overseas, our pastors fight a good fight of faith on a daily basis, and sometimes it is a tough struggle. That's why we have to help lift them up in prayer and kind words whenever we can.

In the book of Exodus, there was a famous battle against the Amalekites that Moses was watching over. He sent Joshua in to battle the enemy, and kept his hand and his staff up – and Joshua began to win. However, whenever his hands lowered from fatigue, Joshua would begin to lose. Moses' friends saw what was going on and immediately helped him to keep those hands up. And sure enough, the momentum changed in Joshua's favor.

This is a perfect illustration of what we are to do for our pastors and leaders. Though you don't have to physically lift their hands, it does help tremendously when you lift their spirits with kind words, and when you lift them up in prayer.

DRILL: Lift your pastor up today by writing him a kind word of encouragement. It could be a simple message that says how much you appreciate what he does. Or, it could be a kind word about an awesome time you had at church recently. Whatever you write, be sure to write it so he can read it, and be sure to lift his spirits up!



DAY NINE

CALL OF DUTY

"I tell you, the tax collector went home accepted by God. But not the Pharisee. Everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down. And anyone who is brought down will be lifted up." Luke 18:4 NIRV

During the first Gulf War in Iraq, the Commander and Chief of the Coalition Forces in Operation Desert Storm was General Norman Schwarzkopf, who often said, "When placed in command, take charge." That he did, bringing success to the Coalition Forces and a quick end to the Gulf War.

He became an American hero very quickly, and was asked frequently about his views on leadership. Like many Americans, he kept a Bible by his bed, which may explain where some of his wisdom came from. One of his more intelligent answers was this: "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy."

Whether you're a leader or not, character is key. That's what's in your heart. Having all the information in your brain and all the resources in the world aren't worth much if you don't have the character to back it up.

Jesus spotted this right away when he was watching a Pharisee and a publican pray. How ironic that the Pharisee looked so grand, yet had such character problems that Jesus had to point it out to the whole world in the Bible.

Before you charge into battle – or anywhere else – check your character. That's your heart. Make sure you're doing things with the right motivations. Those are the motivations that are inspired by a love for God and others.

DRILL: Get a piece of paper and draw yourself a heart on it. Now write inside that heart all the things that you can do for others, or do for God. How much can you write? How much is in your heart?



DAY TEN

CALL OF DUTY

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." 2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV

The American Revolutionary War was supposed to be a short one. The British had a far greater and superior army than the Americans. A few events happened though, ones that let the British army know this wasn't going to be something easy.

One of those events involved some really heavy cannons. Incredibly, the Americans had captured a lot of British cannons and carried them a very long distance in a very short time. It was an amazing feat, and done so quickly and quietly that the British army was surprised. You see, each cannon was then positioned over Boston in a way that actually drove the bewildered British away. But where did those cannons come from?

Ethan Allen was the Commander of the Green Mountain Boys, and he wasn't just moving furniture around back then. In an amazing surprise attack, he and about eighty- three others got sneaky on May 10, 1775. They surrounded a British fort before dawn and demanded a surrender immediately. The stunned captain of the British army asked Allen by whose authority Allen was making such a demand. Ethan Allen told him this: "In the Name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress."

Though we don't need to capture forts, we too walk around in authority. In fact, Paul once wrote that we are ambassadors of Christ while here on earth. That's a pretty important role! Though we are given a bit of power with that authority, we should always be careful to remember Who it is we're representing. You may not be walking up to people to say you're doing things "in the name of the Great Jehovah," but if you call yourself a Christian, everyone already knows it!

DRILL: Surprise attacks are some of the most effective! Practice a surprise attack drill by doing something unexpected and nice for someone you know. Invite them to church, if they're not going already!



DAY ELEVEN

CALL OF DUTY

*"The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle."
Psalm 78:9 NIV*

Don't go AWOL! That means absent without leave, which is basically running away from service. As soldiers of Christ, we won't win any battles if we are moved by what we see. If we don't learn Biblical principles and keep our eyes completely focused on Jesus, we will be like Ephraim's sons in the Bible, who turned back, gave up and gave in. In other words, they went AWOL.

It can be tempting to drop our weapons and run when we've let the enemy talk us into something that is contrary to what God's word says. If we listen and believe this lie, then we're deceived! The enemy has a way of illuminating what we see, hear and believe and making it look pretty bad.

So why do some soldiers turn and run? It's because of fear, which is the first thing we have to deal with in the battle. But in Deuteronomy 20:1-4, God says do not fear! And don't panic, because when you do, you forget everything you've ever learned.

The enemy wants you afraid so you'll go AWOL, but God has plans for you to overcome and have victory in every battle if you'll continue to stand and encourage yourself in God's word as David did in the Bible.

No matter how distressed, weak or fearful you feel, get up, get your armor on properly and encourage yourself in the Lord. Go forward soldier, because there isn't anything worth turning back to!

DRILL: Find some classic scriptures from the Bible to memorize about the promises of God. There are a few in this devotional, but you'll find many more in the Bible. God's got big battle plans for you!



DAY TWELVE

CALL OF DUTY

*“Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth.”
Isaiah 42:10 NIV*

The most famous battle of the Spanish-American War would have to be the Battle of San Juan Hill, which made a hero out of Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders. It was a brave charge up a hill to take enemy territory, but they were fearless in their attempt – and successful!

It was a courageous and risky thing to do, but it matched Theodore Roosevelt’s character. Our lives parallel the famous Rough Rider in that we are all charging forward, day after day, amidst an onslaught of danger whizzing by left and right. How do we keep on doing it?

The key to our success may be found in the words of Theodore Roosevelt himself. He said, “After a week of perplexing problems...it does so rest my soul to come to the house of The Lord and to sing and mean it, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.’”

Without worship, we might as well retreat or stay in the trenches. Worship was so important as the Bible was being written that armies in the time of Israel marched their worship music ahead of the actual fighting soldiers. Worship comes first, so sing to the Lord a new song – and charge!

DRILL: Worship is key! In the car, or in the house, get your parents to play some music that glorifies God. Worship in your home and car can change the whole atmosphere!



DAY THIRTEEN

CALL OF DUTY

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36 NIRV

Soldier, there are a few days a year that we all focus our thoughts on veterans, from Memorial Day to the Fourth of July to Veterans Day. The truth is, we should honor them all year long for the sacrifices and battles they’ve fought to make us all free.

Veterans Day was a day set up at the end of World War One, the so-called “war to end all wars.” Sadly, as you probably know, the wars did not end. But our remembrance of all those that have served in our armed forces – or are serving even now – must never stop. That’s why when you see a veteran, you should be sure to thank them for their service to our country.

We have so many freedoms here and if not for these veterans, you wouldn’t be able to enjoy them. What kind of freedoms are we talking about? Let’s bring it down to your level, soldier: picture in your mind video games, ice cream, action figures, television, amusement parks, great food, a place to live and even your local church. These are just a few of the many things to thank a veteran for, but the list could go on and on.

So remember America’s heroes, our veterans, not only on those special holidays but all throughout the year.

DRILL: What can you do for a veteran? Find out through your parents if there are any veterans in your church who bravely went off to defend our country. If there are, make a nice card for them, or even just a letter that says how grateful you are for the things you have.



DAY FOURTEEN

CALL OF DUTY

"Look to the Lord and to His strength. Always look to Him." Psalm 105:4 NIRV

King David was a skilled soldier. From taking down that giant in the days of his youth to the years spent fighting off Saul and his army and eventually becoming the leader of his own huge army, King David learned to be skillful in battle.

How do we become a skilled soldier like David? Well, there isn't anything that can actually prepare you for battle. The best and just about the only way to be a skillful soldier in battle is to be in the middle of a battle.

When it feels like you are all on your own in something, you really aren't. Welcome to God's Training Ground! Our Heavenly Father is there and He has allowed you to get into that situation so that you can be like King David and look to Him. When you are placed in a situation where there is no one or nothing that can save you, that can seem like the middle of a battle. That's when you look to God, in His training ground.

Things happen in life that might not go the way you want, and sometimes they may seem like a battle. That's when you have to remember that these battles are preparing you for the major mission God has called you to be on. So be encouraged, even through those tough scrapes. Stand tall and He'll promote you and send you off on some incredible missions!

DRILL: Think back on a tough time in your life if you can, and share it with someone you know. Don't forget to share how God has always been faithful to you, and that He brought you through the battle and not just into it!



DAY FIFTEEN

CALL OF DUTY

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Romans 5:3-4 NIV

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a young man joined the US military in 1943, just days before his nineteenth birthday. He was part of a successful torpedo squadron that helped make victory possible in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and was soon promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade with a tough mission to bomb some enemy locations on an island in the Pacific Ocean.

Unfortunately, during the attack, he encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire and his plane was hit! His engine caught on fire, but he still went on, completing his attack and releasing bombs over his target, and causing serious damage to the enemy. With his engine still on fire, though, he had to bail out in a hurry. He flew as far away as he could, and got out of that plane! His parachute opened and he landed in the sea, where he had to wait on a floating life raft for four hours until a submarine could come and pick him up.

This heroic pilot knew he had orders from above to get a job done, and was going to do his best to accomplish his mission, despite bullets and a flaming engine. We too have a mission – it’s a mission from God. Each one of us is called to do something great for God, but the enemy doesn’t like that too much. Challenges are going to come, and we’ve got to keep flying high and follow our orders from God, no matter what. Are you up to the challenge?

This brave pilot certainly was. He had the right stuff. In fact, that’s what the American people thought when they voted for him as forty-first President of the United States, George HW Bush, who said, “aboard the submarine Finback after being shot down in the war, I went up topside one night on the deck, on the conning tower, and stood watch and looked out at the dark. The sky was clear. The stars were brilliant like a blizzard of fireflies in the night. There was a calm inner peace. Halfway around the world in the war zone, there was a calm inner peace: God’s therapy.”

DRILL: We all have a dream and a mission from God, but there can be challenges and obstacles. Quickly write some of these challenges down, and then brainstorm some ways to get around them and accomplish your mission! With God’s help you can do it!



DAY SIXTEEN

CALL OF DUTY

“So stand firm. Put the belt of truth around your waist. Put the armor of godliness on your chest. Wear on your feet what will prepare you to tell the good news of peace. Also, pick up the shield of faith. With it you can put out all of the flaming arrows of the evil one. Put on the helmet of salvation. And take the sword of the Holy Spirit. The sword is God’s word.” Ephesians 6:14-17 NIRV

This grandmother was surprised by her young grandson one morning. He had made her coffee! She then drank what was pretty much the worst cup of coffee in her life.

When she got to the bottom there were three of those little green army men, and she asked her grandson why they were there.

He replied, “On television, they say, ‘The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup!’”

Even though things didn’t turn out as expected, you still have to give that little soldier some credit for taking the initiative in the morning. It takes work, discipline and hard training to start each day out right. And everyone knows if you start your day out right, the rest will go well. That’s why you have to remember to suit up with the full armor of God that Paul speaks about in Ephesians. So start well, soldier! Suit up and you can cruise through any battle you face today. Gear up. That’s an order!

DRILL: Put on the full armor of God! Get a blank piece of paper, and for fun draw out the different items Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:14-17. Label them the way Paul does and see how they can work to put a whooping on the enemy!



DAY SEVENTEEN

CALL OF DUTY

"He promised to save us from our enemies, so that we could serve Him without fear." Luke 1:74 NIRV

Can you believe we've all been POWs at one point? A POW is a Prisoner of War. In our Bibles, Paul says we were all sinners, captured by the enemy. Yikes! But Jesus paid the price for our freedom, and we're no longer a POW.

Think of the times the enemy encouraged you to leave the battlefield in the middle of a fight due to fear, anger, impatience, weakness, feelings of defeat, depression, or a lack of trust in Him.

Everyone else had given up on you when you were MIA, that is, Missing in Action. But God didn't give up on you. He continued to search for you; He never gave up on you because He called you to be one of His own in His army.

Keep that in mind each day you serve in your call of duty, and serve in the freedom He has given us. A soldier never forgets when another soldier sacrifices his life for him on the battlefield, so onward Christian soldier!

DRILL: Jesus died on the cross for each of us, so that we wouldn't have to be a POW. Today, spend some time thinking of the best way you can serve him in God's army. It could be with giving of things you haven't used in a while, or it could be in service. No matter what you do, remember there are other POWs out there that need to be rescued.



DAY EIGHTEEN

CALL OF DUTY

*"For He views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens."
Job 28:24 NIV*

In the heart of our nation's capital is a tomb for a very special soldier. It is guarded twenty four hours a day by only a handful of soldiers who are trusted with the responsibility of watching over this most sacred grave. Who is buried there, you ask?

No one knows – except for God, that is. The inscription on the tomb itself reads:

HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD

It is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It was set up shortly after World War I to acknowledge the sacrifice of those whose names the world may never know.

It is important to recognize the sacrifice paid by even those whose names we may never know. We are here because of the prayers, hard work and sacrifice of others who have gone before us. It is important to be grateful, and it is important to realize that what we do today affects people many, many years later. Will your actions affect the future in a good way, or will it be a negative way?

Even if you aren't given credit or glory for what you do with your life, your actions will be rewarded, because they are known but to God.

DRILL: Learn the name of someone new today that works hard in your church or school. They are an unknown to you, but not for long! Thank them for what they do – you'll make their day!



DAY NINETEEN

CALL OF DUTY

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.” Psalm 100:4 NIV

It was last Thanksgiving when one soldier asked another, “Hey, can you pass me the pumpkin pie?”

The other soldier said, “No way!”

The first soldier asked him, “Why not?”

The other said, “It’s against regulations to dessert!”

Thanksgiving may be a holiday for some, but for everyone it should be a frame of mind. We should be thankful for so much, especially those valiant soldiers across the globe who sacrifice so much to keep us free.

Thankfulness is important to God. In fact, He wants us to approach Him with a thankful heart. Really, how can we approach Him with anything less? If you’re reading this now, odds are that even if you think you have very little here, the truth is you have been blessed mightily by a loving God.

So enter His gates with Thanksgiving in your heart, and enter His courts with praise! Or, as the military might say – give *tanks*!

DRILL: Get a piece of paper out and challenge yourself to write down as many things as you possibly can that you are thankful for. It should be quite a list!



DAY TWENTY

CALL OF DUTY

“No matter what you do, work at it with all your might.” Ecclesiastes 9:10 NIRV

Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Marion could have been upset. General Horatio Gates had no confidence in his ability, and rather than keep him around to help in battle, he told Francis Marion to undertake scouting missions and impede the expected flight of the British after the battle. What that meant was this: get in the way of the British army, and not his.

But Marion took his orders seriously, no matter how minor they may have seemed. Indeed, he impeded the British with surprise attack after surprise attack! Marion’s Men seemingly came out of nowhere – and then disappeared. He and his men were based in a swamp, and developed a style of fighting the British couldn’t counter. The locals called him the Swamp Fox, and he was rewarded for his outstanding service with a promotion to brigadier-general.

No matter what the task you are given, the Bible says to work at it with all your might. Clearly, the Swamp Fox did just that, and was rewarded with promotion. The same rules apply to all soldiers in God’s army. Our standing orders are given, and we are to work at them with all our might. Keep that in mind, because promotion comes from above!

DRILL: Next time you have to do chores, no matter how small they are, do them with a spirit of excellence. You’re just like the Swamp Fox, working hard in the little things!



DAY TWENTY ONE

CALL OF DUTY

"When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan." Genesis 14:14 NIV

The first mention of soldiers in the Bible goes back to a man named Abram, who would later become the father of many nations. Things weren't looking too good for a time though, because his nephew Lot was captured by an enemy army, along with many others.

When Abram found out about this, he didn't back off of his call of duty. It didn't require any thought. He immediately gathered up an army of his own, and in the first tactical battle of the Bible, Abram routed the enemy and got his nephew back, along with many others.

The nearby kings were incredibly grateful for Abram's actions. After all, he saved the day! But Abram wouldn't accept anything from them in gratitude. It was all in a day's work.

There are times when we'll all need to jump up and be the responsible party, like Abram. There's no thinking involved and no thinking is needed. Character and common sense will tell us immediately that we need to do something. It may be difficult, or a great personal risk, but just like Abram, when there's a need, we have to get up and answer that call of duty. That's what being a soldier in God's army is all about.

DRILL: When trouble popped up, Abram dropped everything and saved the day. Write down a time when you yourself stepped up and answered the call of duty! It could be something simple, like helping someone with their homework, or something more dramatic. There's a hero in all of us. We just have to answer the call of duty!



DAY TWENTY TWO

CALL OF DUTY

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 NIV

Lieutenant General James Longstreet was known as "the old war horse" during the Civil War, leading many campaigns of victory over the Union Army up until the battle of Gettysburg, where things started to turn south for his army of Confederates. It was there that the Union army crushed the hopes of the Confederate States Army, and it was there that Longstreet was criticized years later for decisions that some believed ultimately cost the South the war. Many Southerners held unforgiveness towards him for what they perceived as a lost war that was all his fault.

But there are problems with blaming him, and history is redeeming General Longstreet. Though accusers set out to blame him and taint his honor, the truth has come out about his actions, life and character. And with the truth there is forgiveness.

Longstreet himself knew about forgiveness. He once said, "Knowing myself a sinner, I am greatly relieved by the happy assurance that for such our Savior died."

He was aware of the simple fact that Jesus died for his sins. He was a forgiven sinner, and despite the accusations of the enemy, he was still forgiven. We all mess up, but Jesus forgives if we ask him, no matter what we've done.

DRILL: James Longstreet is buried in Gainesville, Georgia and now has monuments built in his honor. Remember his words about forgiveness, and imagine writing a list of your sins down. Now ask Jesus to forgive each one, and in your mind, bury that list. It's gone forever, so don't go digging it up!



DAY TWENTY THREE

CALL OF DUTY

"The people of the world believe certain basic things. You died with Christ as far as things like that are concerned. So why do you act as if you still belong to the world?" Colossians 2:20 NIRV

Camouflage is something soldiers wear to hide a bit better in the areas they work. Their clothing is covered in various splotches of green if they're in the jungle and wooded areas, or beige and tan if they're in the desert. The enemy has a hard time seeing soldiers dressed in camouflage, so it is harder in battle. During the Iraq war, it was harder to spot our soldiers dressed in camouflage, even when they were sitting there right in the middle of the desert wilderness.

As Christians, we're not supposed to be camouflaged like that. God has called us to stand out, and to be a light unto the world. John the Baptist lived in a desert wilderness, and he stood out with boldness, preaching and telling others to repent. The Bible says we are to be in this world, but not of it.

It's okay to have fun while we're here, but it's not okay to act like sinful people in this world. We've got to act and be different. We've got to be the light of the world!

DRILL: At night, get a flashlight if you can. Shut the lights out, and imagine the room around you – or the backyard around you – is the entire world. Now turn that flashlight on and imagine that flashlight is you. Isn't that bright? That's how God wants you to stand out and spread his love.



DAY TWENTY FOUR

CALL OF DUTY

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Genesis 50:20 NIV

One day can change everything. Just ask Vietnam Veteran Clebe McClary. Shortly after midnight March 3, 1968, McClary and his unit were under enemy attack. He lost his left arm in the initial attack but kept fighting. As the battle wore on a grenade tore out his left eye and burst both his ear drums. Another grenade shredded his legs. Miraculously, he survived, but doctors told him he would never walk again, or be normal again.

But you can't count out a Christian soldier who still has some fight in him. McClary underwent 35 major surgeries and endured countless hours of rehabilitation, and the Lord worked through this tragedy and turned it into triumph. Yes, he can walk. But he can do so much more than that. He has run in marathons and become more physically fit than others who should be in much better shape than he. But that's not all he's done.

Since 1972, McClary has spoken in all fifty states and thirty countries, telling groups of people in corporations and in the military about the amazing love and grace of God. What a testimony! He has taken something truly terrible and turned it for good.

No matter what happens in your life, keep your spirits up and keep on fighting. Even if bad things happen, God can help you turn them around for good. Just keep on fighting!

DRILL: General Norman Schwarzkopf once said we can learn more from the negative than the positive. God uses those tough times to build our character up. Can you think of a bad time in your life? Now, can you think of a way that it made you a better person?



DAY TWENTY FIVE

CALL OF DUTY

“Never stop praying.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NIRV

The Civil War was a long and brutal battle, a tough time that tested our country’s resolve to its core. Our President during that time, Abraham Lincoln, led our country through its darkest hours with such wisdom that he is considered one of our greatest Presidents ever.

During the course of the war, Lincoln overheard someone else say that they hoped, “the Lord was on the Union’s side.”

Lincoln immediately replied, “I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord’s side.”

Many times we’ll do things in our lives with an inner belief that it is the right thing to do. But is it? How and where do we get our guidance that tells us something is right to do? Or wrong to do?

We should get it from God. The Holy Spirit speaks to us, if we’ll listen, and guides us through the battles of right versus wrong. Prayer with God can reveal answers, as well as time spent in God’s Word, the Bible.

Abraham Lincoln was right. Before we do anything, we should always make sure that we’re on the Lord’s side.

DRILL: How often do you pray? If you’re not doing it already, set up a time each day that you make sure you pray with God, asking Him for guidance and help to do what is right.



DAY TWENTY SIX

CALL OF DUTY

“David said to Saul, ‘Don’t let anyone lose hope because of that Philistine. I’ll go out and fight him.’” 1 Samuel 17:32 NIRV

He was more than nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head. He wore a coat of bronze javelin on his back. His spear was as big as a weaver’s rod. Its iron point weighed 15 pounds. This was a big guy! They were calling him Goliath. Then, out of nowhere comes a kid. He seems to be wearing the commander’s suit of armor! Do they think they are going to send this child to fight the giant?

Look at him trying to walk around! Wait - he is removing the battle gear. He leaves the group of soldiers and is walking toward the valley with nothing but a few stones and a sling. It seems he is going to face this giant by himself. He keeps going forward. The troops behind him are slowly retreating the other way. What is this he is saying? Goliath seems to be laughing.

David was not afraid of Goliath and said, “You are coming to fight against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin. But I’m coming against you in the name of the Lord who rules over all. He is the God of the armies of Israel. He’s the one you have dared to fight against. This very day the Lord will hand you over to me. I’ll strike you down... Then the whole world will know there is a God in Israel. The Lord doesn’t save by using a sword or a spear. And everyone who is here will know it. The battle belongs to the Lord. He will hand all of you over to us.”

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly to the battle line to meet him. He reached into his bag and took out a stone. He put the stone in his sling then slung it at Goliath! So David won the fight against Goliath with a sling and a stone. He did it without even using a sword.

What a battle! David went to check on his brothers and bring them food, not to fight a giant! But when he saw a wrong that needed to be made right, he got up and Goliath went down!

DRILL: People will try to get you to “wear their armor.” But like David, be yourself, rely on God to go before you and to be with you. What matters is who God called you to be.



DAY TWENTY SEVEN

CALL OF DUTY

"The Lord has done it on this day. Let us be joyful and glad in it." Psalm 118:24 NIRV

As soon as you hear that morning bugle, it's time to rise and shine, soldier! Get up and face the day with courage, determination and a joyful attitude. Remember, this is what you've been training for, and the joy of the Lord is your strength!

Now before you go anywhere, you've got to stop at the check-point. That's where you'll check out your battle plan – that's your Bible, and talk to your High Commander – that's praying to God. Make sure you head to the mess hall for some healthy food in the morning and head off into the battle zone!

There's only one way to attack your day, and that's with courage and confidence that you're a soldier in God's army. He recruited you because He knew you could get the job done. If you come under heavy fire out there – that's persecution – just remember to dig in and hold your ground. Reinforcements are on the way, trooper!

So put on your armor, grab your gear and get ready to go over enemy lines if you have to in order to deliver God's message. It's an important message, one of love that will win this whole battle!

DRILL: Tell yourself at least twenty-seven times today that you are a soldier in God's army, and if God is for you, nothing can be against you. Believe those words and move out, soldier.



DAY TWENTY EIGHT

CALL OF DUTY

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13 NIRV

Sergeant Jim Baxter had experienced combat during World War II and hoped that'd be the last of it. Unfortunately, in 1950, the Korean War broke out and he found himself being sent off once more to fight with his fellow Marines.

Speaking Psalm 91 over her son and giving him a New Testament, his mother sent him off with her blessings and prayers. Now he hadn't given his life to Jesus at this point and saw himself on the brink of eternity time and again. The horrors of war surrounded him and he began to wonder if he would die, and where he'd spend eternity?

One awful day, he was struck down by machine gun fire, but managed to crawl to safety, where a fellow corpsman covered his body with his own. Sergeant Baxter survived that day, but others did not. He was flown to a naval hospital in Japan, where he had an encounter with Jesus. You see, Sergeant Baxter was loyal to his fellow Marines, but only Jesus can forgive our sins, and only belief in Jesus can get us into heaven. It was there in the hospital that he made Jesus Lord of his life, answering that nagging question in his mind of where he'll spend eternity.

Jesus wants all of us to go to heaven, and it is really easy if you want to go. Just ask Jesus to forgive you of any sins in your life, promise not to do them anymore, call on his name and be saved! Commit your heart to follow and serve him, because he is the light, the truth and the way to heaven.

DRILL: *Pray this special prayer of salvation today: “Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ, died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”*



DAY TWENTY NINE

CALL OF DUTY

*“What should we say then? Since God is on our side, who can be against us?”
Romans 8:31 NIRV*

Gideon was a powerful soldier – but not in his own eyes. Even after God had told him he was a mighty warrior, Gideon thought of himself as small and the least of his family. The truth was quite different, because when we are weak, God makes us strong.

The keys to Gideon’s victory were simple: Gideon had to tear down those idols around his life. What’s an idol? Simply put, it’s anything that you think is more important than God. We need to remember to put Him first, and then everything else will fall into place. If we follow Gideon’s example and focus on God, we too can have the victory.

Another thing he learned is that the enemy is scared silly of us, because the battle has already been won. When Gideon heard the fear in the enemy’s camp, he was filled with confidence for the day of battle. Your enemy isn’t a neighbor or classmate. We battle not against flesh and blood. But we do have a fight of faith, and the simple truth is that our Heavenly Father is with us. You got this!

Giden was a bit hesitant at first, but he got confident really quickly. You too can get that confidence by tearing down the idols, and remembering that when you are weak, He is strong. That’s right, you are the enemy’s worst nightmare!

DRILL: *Get a piece of paper or sticky note and write down that scripture found in Romans 8:31. Put that scripture in a place where you’ll see it before you go out each day.*



DAY THIRTY

CALL OF DUTY

*"Above everything else, guard your heart. It is where your life comes from."
Proverbs 4:23 NIRV*

It's been said that the Navy gets the gravy but the Army gets the beans, but for many years every soldier could count on this one food item on the menu. It's a military staple, easy to store, cook, and containing plenty of protein.

Soldiers might get sick of beans on the menu, but here's a question for you: are beans worth fighting for? If you ask Shammah that, you might get a surprising answer. This soldier stood tall in the day of battle and against overwhelming odds, he defended a bean patch!

Why a bean patch? Why not! An invading army was attacking, and he decided to draw a line in the sand right there proclaiming to the world, "Keep away from my beans!"

Okay, he may not have said that exactly. But he did stand up for the little things in his life. And in our lives, we've simply got to stand up for the little things too. Every day we fight a battle with the world to be in it and not of it. We have to stand our ground!

We can't compromise with the enemy, because if we give any ground, we could be losing even more territory in the future. It's a slippery path that can lead to complete defeat, so we have to stand up and protect even the small things in our lives.

The great thing about this battle is that we are never standing alone. God is right behind us with the biggest arsenal ever. All we've got to do is stand up and hold our ground. Guard the bean patch!

DRILL: *How often to you pray or read your Bible? Do you spend a little time each day in God's Word? That's God's time, and it's holy ground. If you don't want to lose it, be sure to fight for it. Guard that bean patch!*



DAY THIRTY ONE

CALL OF DUTY

Freedom isn't free – it has a cost. Jesus gave his life so that we can be free from the curse of sin and death, and the price of liberty in our nation was paid by soldiers who put their lives on the line for the freedoms we enjoy today.

We are only free because of those soldiers who have gone to the battlefield to defend us. Each year, holidays like Memorial Day, Veterans Day and the Fourth of July serve to remind us of how blessed we are because of those who fought for our freedoms.

Rather than wait for any holiday, find a soldier or veteran to thank for their service to our nation. Simply saying thank you is a good way, but you can also write a letter or card.

Get your parents or even your pastor to help if you must, but be sure to show those who have served to defend us how grateful you are for their sacrifice.