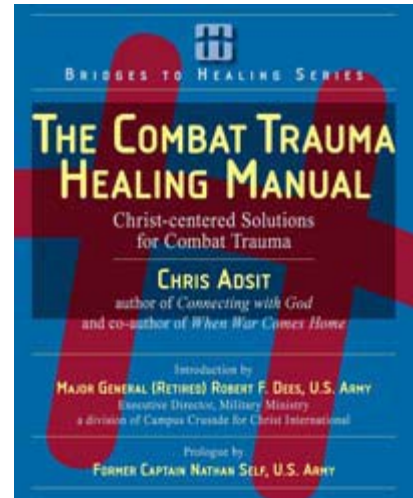




TM

BRIDGES TO HEALING SERIES

# The Combat Trauma Healing Manual Christ-centered Solutions for Combat Trauma



# Leader's Guide

Chris Adsit  
Cru Military

***“Bear one another’s burdens  
and so fulfill the law of Christ.”***

– Galatians 6:2

***“And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men.  
And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven . . .  
Get up, pick up your pallet and go home.’”***

– Mark 2:1-12

**Observation:** The wounded one might lack the strength and faith to go on, but God will honor the love and determination of those around him who come to help. Think about this: it only takes *one person* to make a difference, to call the other three and say, “I’ve got a mission. Join me.” *You, Group Leader, can be that one!*

– *Chris*

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We are eager to receive any comments, corrections, questions or encouragement that you would like to share. We are especially interested in how this Leader’s Guide may have helped you as you used it with a spiritual care group. Please direct your feedback to:

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**John & Karen Blehm** are Associate Staff Members of Military Ministry, Campus Crusade for Christ, living near Phoenix, AZ. Sergeant First Class John Blehm served in Vietnam from January 1969 to August 1970 with the Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and later with a Special Forces unit as part of the Army Reserves. He and Karen co-wrote *Angel of Death* about his experiences in Vietnam and their battle with John's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the years following. Both are ordained ministers. Together they have led several small groups using *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* and *When War Comes Home*. John and Karen have three sons who have served honorably in the US Army, another son who is a firefighter, and a daughter who was involved in ROTC in high school.

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In addition . . .

I would like to thank **Sue McLain** for her valuable help in editing and contributing her insights for the Leader's Guide for *Bridges To Healing – Africa*, a condensation of *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* for use in Africa, where so much of the population has been deeply traumatized by war, genocide and atrocity for decades. Sue worked with Wycliffe International and Global Teams for eight years in Rwanda, Zaire (now Congo) and Kenya. She currently works for BEE World, training church leaders in closed and restricted-access countries in discipleship, editing courses, managing translation and facilitating adult literacy. Much of what is in *this* Leader's Guide came from *that* Leader's Guide.

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# General Principles for Leading a Combat Trauma Care Group Using *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual*

## 1. FIRST OF ALL, THANK YOU.

Thank you for being willing to take on the leadership of a Combat Trauma Care Group. Just as serving in the military is a high calling, this too is a high – and holy – calling, and we appreciate your courage, faith and selfless servant’s heart in answering the call.

One of the main activities a Combat Trauma sufferer can engage in that will help him or her heal is to *process* their traumatic episodes by thinking and talking about them in a safe environment. When we first released *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* we envisioned it being useful to an individual who would progress through it applying the scriptural and medical principles it offers. In this way, they would put themselves in an environment where God could have full access to them and bring healing.

However, along the way we have learned that there are only a few who are emotionally and physically able to work through the manual by themselves. Of necessity, it takes them to dark and dreadful places that they’d just as soon *forget* – not revisit. And so, rather than face the horrendous memoirs of their trauma, it’s much easier for them to abandon the manual and the difficult process of healing.

But we’ve also discovered that if a Combat Trauma sufferer can be a member of a small group of veterans working through the manual together, the camaraderie, encouragement and accountability makes a *huge* difference in their willingness to stick with the process. You know what it’s like. If you’re with others who have experienced the same sort of difficulties you have, there is a bond that helps you face your dark places with more courage – because you know they understand both the situation and *you*.

In this environment, the group members can identify with each other, watch each other’s backs, help each other through the difficult parts, experience the comfort of not being judged or misunderstood, and learn how invigorating and strengthening it is to serve others. They teach and are taught by each other, which improves their positive self-image and sense of worth. They learn important principles about how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and how to help others become disciples too – which is the core of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

And we thank *you*, because you’re the one that God will be using to provide that place of discipleship, camaraderie, safety, encouragement, cross-training and healing. You may be a combat veteran yourself – which will help your group members identify with someone who has struggled as they have and come out on top (or, at least, closer to the top than they currently are). But even if you’ve never been in the military, God can and *will* use you to accomplish this ministry. A person doesn’t need to experience a heart attack to become an effective heart surgeon. As long as he or she applies the principles that have been shown to work, many lives can be saved.

In the same way, as long as you look to God to be *your* leader in this ministry, and teach and apply the principles found in this Leader’s Guide and *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual*, great good will come of your labor.

## 2. MAIN PHILOSOPHY OF THE “BRIDGES TO HEALING” APPROACH.

- God is the Healer (Exodus 15:26) and you are NOT. Don’t put pressure on yourself thinking that you must try to figure out a way to “heal” those in your group. *You* cannot do it!
- But God wants to partner with you to construct an environment that will enable His Holy Spirit to have optimal access to the Combat Trauma sufferer’s body, soul and spirit for healing. He *can* do it! You are like a ***Bridge*** to the Healer. You can’t heal, but you can help transport them to the One who *can*.

- Or, to use another analogy, it's like in agriculture: the farmer makes sure that the seed's environment is the best it can be (proper soil, fertilizer, irrigation, pesticides, herbicides, sun, scarecrows, etc.) but he can't do anything to *make* the seed grow. That's God's job. Nevertheless, if the farmer does his job well, the seed will grow well. Conversely, if he does a poor job, the seed will grow poorly. It is a crucial relationship with true consequences. The farmer takes it seriously, and we should too as group leaders. We are spiritual farmers. This manual will give you suggestions and insights about how to do an excellent job of creating that optimal environment for your group members.

### **3. WHY YOU ARE SUCH AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THIS MINISTRY.**

Whenever someone experiences an event in which they fear they may suffer severe physical injury or death, or when they witness atrocity or horror, God enables their brain to react in a way that will help them survive during the crisis. The brain does two things simultaneously. First, it suppresses the person's normal emotional and analytical response so they can focus on the threat at hand. Secondly, it coordinates all of the body's abilities in such a way that he or she can either fight the attacker with uncommon strength, quickness and endurance, or run like a gazelle to escape ("fight or flight" response).

When the crisis is over and the almost-victim has escaped and is in a safe place, these suppressed emotions and analysis need to be addressed and processed. They need to allow the memories of the traumatic event to come back into their conscious mind and be thought about, evaluated and expressed. This allows their normal emotions about the event to be experienced. They may become angry, sad, depressed, weepy, fearful or indignant, but that's *good*. They may need to consider the injustice of what they saw or experienced. They may even need to express deep disappointment or anger at God over the incident. This is all part of processing the trauma. If it isn't done, and the person tries to continue suppressing his or her emotional responses, or tries to act as if what happened wasn't significant, the symptoms of PTSD will show up before long.

It's not enough for the trauma sufferer to merely *think* about his or her traumatic event. It is *crucial* for them to put those thoughts into words (either written or spoken) and to share them with someone who understands and can supply sympathetic, compassionate responses. This significantly opens a person up to God's healing influence. As long-time trauma and abuse expert Dr. Judith Herman wrote:

The "action of telling a story" in the safety of a protected relationship can actually produce a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory. With this transformation of memory comes relief of many of the major symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The "physioneurosis" induced by terror can apparently be reversed through the use of words."<sup>1</sup>

As you lead a small group through *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual*, you are giving them that safe place where they can gain an understanding of what happened to them physically, mentally and spiritually. You're helping them to share their experience and thereby process their traumatic event(s). In addition, you're giving them practical steps that will enable them to address many of the difficult responses that are common to those who have encountered a traumatic event. This includes such feelings as guilt, grief, fear, anger, depression, loss of self-identity, and anger with or mistrust of God. You're showing them that they are not alone and that there are others they can count on. Most importantly, you are showing them how they can make and maintain a strong connection to their Creator and Healer.

### **4. WHAT ARE THE MAIN NEEDS OF COMBAT TRAUMA SUFFERERS WHO ATTEND?**

- Forgiveness – forgiving themselves, forgiving those who hurt them, seeking forgiveness from God.
- To understand what happened to them – physically, mentally and spiritually.
- A place and a way to process their trauma, grief and loss.

- To understand and to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit – His controlling, empowering and guiding influence day-by-day and moment-by-moment.
- Control of their symptoms – recognizing what triggers them and managing their responses to these triggers to help them decrease in severity.
- To gain hope for the future.
- Friends who understand their condition and who know how to help them construct their environment of healing.
- Respect and honor for the sacrifices they have made and for the struggles they are experiencing.

## 5. WHAT SHOULD YOUR MAIN OBJECTIVES BE?

- To deliver some helpful material regarding their Combat Trauma. The more they understand their condition, the less anxious they will be, and the more they can concentrate on their healing.
- To provide an environment where the Holy Spirit can work on them directly. It is the Holy Spirit who can truly *heal* them, so we want to help them focus on *Him*, not you, as their primary avenue of support and healing.
- To provide an environment where they can feel safe to verbalize their traumatic experiences to people who know, love and accept them unconditionally. In this setting they need not fear being misunderstood or judged.
- To help them become involved in helping and serving others. Their own needs will seem smaller as they shift their attention to the needs of others. They will learn that “the more you give, the more you will receive.” (*It is more blessed to give than to receive* – Acts 20:35; *Give and it shall be given to you* – Luke 6:38.)

## 6. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

- Though the title of this Guide refers to “leading” a Combat Trauma Care Group, you are not truly the “Leader” – a better term would be the “Facilitator.” God is the Leader. Your role is to facilitate what God wants to accomplish, and you must seek His counsel as to what that is for each meeting. You are His assistant. Expect *Him* to lead you and the group.
- When we were in school, we were rewarded for solving problems and participating in class discussions. We were *driven* toward these behaviors. But you can’t solve the problem of Combat Trauma, or talk a Combat Trauma sufferer out of his or her symptoms. You must come as a *listener* and *observer* of how *God* will bring the healing. Don’t let yourself be “driven” somewhere you shouldn’t go!
- Requirements of a Facilitator:
  - ♦ A heart to love, care and listen.
  - ♦ Willingness to look to God and move in response to His leading.
  - ♦ Humility. A prideful heart will make you less effective as God’s partner. (*God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble* – 1 Peter 5:5.)
  - ♦ Willingness to “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2) and “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).
  - ♦ The ability to resist the urge to preach. Instead, motivate group members to share *their* thoughts. (Good educational maxim: “He who is talking the most is learning the most.”)

- **To be the most resourceful Facilitator you can be:** Before beginning your Combat Trauma Care Group, read *all* of *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* so that you'll know what to anticipate. You may run into an area of concern early on with your group, but if you know it will be covered in-depth later in the manual, you can reassure the group members that it will be dealt with – or you can skip right to it then and there. Reading ahead in the manual will give you insights that will be useful as you lead. For instance, you'll learn how you can partner with God to create the optimal healing environment if you have first read Steps 3A and 3B, and you'll know how to be a better “Bridge Person” if you have first read Step 9. If you know where the manual is headed Step by Step, you'll be in a better position to lead your group there. It's your map; know where it's taking you.

To gain even more insight, read *When War Comes Home* as well. Some of the men in your group may be married, and you will be a much better resource and advisor for them if you're aware of the needs and struggles of their wives.

## 7. HOW MANY WEEKS SHOULD YOU MEET?

- How long do you think it's going to take for them to experience healing? No one can say for sure, but it won't happen overnight. Even though the book is only twelve chapters long (10 “Steps”), don't think that you will get through it at a pace of one chapter per week. It *may* take as long as six months or even longer. The objective is *not*: “Getting through the material.” Our goal *should* be: “Getting the group members to interact with, absorb and apply the materials.” Allow God and the group members to set the pace.
- However, most people don't like to commit to something of unspecified duration. So ask them to commit to a definite period – perhaps eight or ten weeks. Tell them that at the end of the period they can re-evaluate and decide if they want to continue for an additional eight or ten weeks. After only a few weeks, most of them will see how much they are being helped and will want to stay with the group indefinitely.

## 8. HOW LONG SHOULD EACH CLASS BE?

- An hour isn't really enough time to get a good discussion going and to make much progress through the lesson – but if you have no other options, take it.
- An hour and a half would be better. Two hours even better – but not everyone likes a meeting that lasts that long, especially someone struggling with PTSD. So once again, let the Holy Spirit (and the wishes of the group members) guide you.
- Whatever you decide, show respect to your group members by starting and ending on time.

## 9. END EACH CLASS ON A POSITIVE NOTE.

Many of the subjects and much of the sharing within the group will be difficult and heavy – especially as you work through the early chapters. It is good, necessary and therapeutic for group members to unburden themselves emotionally and spiritually during your times together, but if heart-wrenching sharing constitutes 100% of your interaction, it won't be long before group members will want to avoid this weekly “bumming out” session.

Some sessions will trend toward positive, victory-flavored discussions. But if it's been a tough one, shift gears toward the end of your class toward something positive:

- Ask a discussion question that will elicit a positive response – a happy memory, an accomplished goal, the best thing about getting back home, how God has blessed them during the past week or



month, a goal they want to achieve within the next couple of months, what made them the proudest while they were downrange, etc.

- Take them to “This Is Who I Am” on page 107 in the manual. Even if they haven’t covered this Step yet, thinking about these truths could help shift their mindsets in a more positive direction.
- Take them to the section on “Promises To A Wounded Warrior” and “Praises From A Wounded Warrior” on pages 167-170 in the manual. Have them read through a few of them, and ask individuals to share what they mean to him/her.
- Take them to one of your favorite passages in the Bible and share with them why it brings you so much comfort and confidence, and how they might meditate on it throughout the coming week.

## 10. GROUP DYNAMIC ISSUES

- Three basic approaches:
  - ♦ **Solo** (a person going through *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* alone) – This is **okay**. But – as we mentioned earlier – there is a difficulty. In order to bring about a Combat Trauma sufferer’s healing, it will be necessary for him or her to work through some of the most traumatic and painful memories of their life. The manual helps facilitate this, which is why some people would rather abandon it and *not* engage those memories. So it may *not* be the best thing to give the manual to a Combat Trauma sufferer and simply say, “Here – I hope this helps you.” Most people need someone to help hold them to such a difficult task as this, otherwise they may become discouraged and set it aside. However, there are some people who are so motivated, are good self-starters, and are so desperate to pursue their healing that they will not be put off by the difficult things the manual (and God) asks them to do.
  - ♦ **One-to-One** (a person acting as a mentor to a Combat Trauma sufferer and helping him or her progress through the manual) – This is **better**. When the manual asks him or her to go to those difficult places, the mentor can be there for encouragement, prayer, strengthening and assurance. In addition, while the Solo approach doesn’t provide the Combat Trauma sufferer with anyone to share his or her stories with, the one-to-one approach does.
  - ♦ **Small group** – This is **best**. There are many benefits to this approach:
    - ▲ There will be several people present with similar experiences to listen to each other’s stories – with great interest and compassion. This motivates them to want to *tell* their stories.
    - ▲ Each one will feel encouraged by the fact that the other group members understand at least some of what they experienced. This will also prompt them to share more deeply and honestly without fear of judgment, which helps them in the processing of their trauma.
    - ▲ Each one will learn more from other group members through the rich cross-talk and discussions that are generated. Because of this interaction, they will probably learn more than an individual would in the one-to-one approach.
    - ▲ As one group member shares their insights with another, and they counsel and encourage each other, each will feel more useful and gain self-esteem and confidence as they see how their words helped someone else. It goes back to the need these men and women have to *serve others* in order to help themselves heal. This is one important way of doing that.
- Group Size
  - ♦ It should be big enough for good interaction and discussion...
  - ♦ ...and yet small enough so no one will feel too shy about speaking up. People can get lost in a big group. If there are too many, it’s easier to stay quiet and not be noticed. Staying quiet will *not* be helpful for any group member.
  - ♦ Minimum: 3 group members plus you.

- ♦ Maximum: 10 to 12 group members plus you and at least one assistant (suggestion: one leader can normally handle a group of up to six members, but add an assistant if there are seven or more).
- Group Makeup. Here are some things to think about as you consider the numerous qualifiers that could (and perhaps should) govern the group's makeup:
  - ♦ **Gender.** Should it be all men, all women, or a mixture? Some would say that a mixture could be distracting. Men might not want to share as deeply, honestly or graphically if there are women present, so they will be hindered. Women might feel intimidated to share some of the trauma they suffered at the hands of men, so they would be hindered. Or a person might want to impress certain members of the opposite sex who are present, so they might put themselves in a more positive light than they truthfully should.

On the other hand, these may *not* be issues with the people you are working with. Sometimes, for instance, a group made up of both men and women generate some open and honest discussion. Issues that would not be brought up if it were all men or all women are discussed with great interest, and both genders gain from it.

So, as you will read often in this section, bring the question before God and see what He has to say about it. Seek *His* guidance regarding each particular group you lead. There is no absolutely wrong or right approach to this issue.

- ♦ **Singles/Couples.** Should it be all single people, or should we allow married couples to be mixed in too? Or should we split couples and singles? There are issues that are not relevant to singles, and some might think that time spent in the group on those subjects is a waste of time for the singles. On the other hand, there are issues that singles need to discuss that are not relevant to couples. So for these reasons, you might want to segregate singles and couples.

But others would observe that many – if not most – of those singles will someday be married, and the things they could learn from the couples could be of great benefit to them. And the richness of the insights from the wives could add great perspective to the single men. In addition, the married men, in a noble but not-helpful attempt to protect their wives from the gruesome experiences they had, might not share as deeply or honestly with the group if their wives are present. By this they are limiting communication with their wives. But the single men might not feel as hesitant to bring up many of these traumatic incidents, giving the wives an idea that perhaps their husbands aren't telling the whole story. They could then lovingly urge their husbands to be more complete in their sharing.

So again, seek God's guidance on this issue. What do you and the Lord think would be best?

- ♦ **Combat/non-combat; military/non-military.** A person can get Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in both combat and non-combat situations. A person can experience war-related PTSD as a member of the military, or as a civilian who was unjustly traumatized by an occupying military force or terrorists. And one doesn't have to be in actual combat – you could have been a support person way behind the front lines, and still develop PTSD. Should you mix these groups together? Again, the various groups may feel hesitant to share some of the aspects of the trauma they experienced if they feel some members of the other groups would not be able to understand what they went through, or if they might feel judged by them. Then again, it may not be an issue. So as before, you and God decide.
- ♦ **Christians/non-Christians.** *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* takes a definite Christ-oriented approach to Combat Trauma. It makes no apologies about presenting God as the One who made us and who can heal us, and urges the reader to pursue a deepening relationship with Christ. If we back away from that stance, then we really have nothing new to share with those who suffer from Combat Trauma. So, many would say that it would be a bad idea to include non-Christians – they may distract the group with theological arguments that the Christians have already settled in their own minds.

On the other hand, many would say that it would be *great* to include the non-Christians, because they might find Christ during the meetings! This is true, but it would be important to let the non-Christians know right from the beginning that this study is being presented from a Christian point of view. They don't have to be Christians to attend the study, but the study will present God as the most vital element of a healing environment. If they're okay with that, they are welcome to attend.

- ◆ **Combat Trauma sufferers/caregivers/friends/family.** Would it be alright for those who provide care for someone suffering from Combat Trauma to attend? The argument is similar to what we presented in the Singles/Couples discussion above. The presence of caregivers, friends and family *may* make the sufferer reluctant to share all of the difficult details of their trauma – out of a desire to protect them.

But if he or she felt comfortable sharing openly and honestly, the caregivers et al could gain a great deal of insight into what the sufferer is going through. It will be important in this case for them to communicate to the veteran that they don't want him or her holding back for their sake. They need to lovingly urge them to share their pain openly and honestly, so that they can be more supportive.

- ◆ **Different wars, conflicts.** Each conflict is fought uniquely. The amount of casualties, the tactics, the number of people involved, the nations or factions involved – all of these are different. Some soldiers may feel that, "If you didn't fight in the war I did, you couldn't possibly understand what I went through." There may even be a harmful sense of pride: "My war was worse than your war – so my trauma is greater than yours." If you think this might be an issue, it would be best to keep your group closed to all but those who fought in the same conflict (suggestion: host several groups).

On the other hand, if pride isn't a problem many warriors will have the attitude of, "You fought, I fought, we are brothers and we can help each other," regardless of the specific conflict. Many of the young men coming back from the present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan seek out the older men who fought in the Vietnam War, to get their advice on how to cope with their PTSD symptoms. Unfortunately, many Vietnam vets don't know how to advise them (PTSD wasn't recognized until long after most of those veterans had left the service), but the camaraderie is there nonetheless. It would be very useful if the older soldiers *knew* what to say to the younger men and women who come to them for advice. This could be accomplished if you mixed troops from different conflicts in the same group.

But again, you and the Lord need to decide what would be best.

- ◆ **Basic principles to use regarding these qualifiers:**
  - ▲ Be creative and innovative in how you lead the group, but trust God to direct you.
  - ▲ A group made up of similar people with similar experiences may generate more relaxed, honest, and deeper sharing, but a diverse group may accomplish more extensive healing as they consider issues that might not have occurred to the less diverse group.
  - ▲ If you facilitate a group of mixed genders or singles with couples, consider having a few sessions where they are separated for part of the study, and then come back together later. In these separated groups, you (and an assistant) could address issues that are more applicable to them and which may be hindered if they were all together.
  - ▲ If you are a man leading a group that has some women in it, get your wife involved.
    - She will understand the needs and responses of the women better and act as your "interpreter."
    - She can add the necessary feminine touches to the meeting environment and discussions.
    - She can defend you from any women who may try to make advances on you.
    - Don't get involved in any one-to-one time with a member of the opposite sex.

## 11. FIRST SESSION – THINGS TO GET ACROSS . . . AND REVIEW FREQUENTLY.

- Emphasize Jesus as the Healer. (*For I, the Lord, am your Healer* – Exodus 15:26.) Their healing won't come from you, from a doctor, from a manual or from one of the other group members – *God* is the one they need to be looking to for help. (*I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth* – Psalm 121:1,2.) You might say something like, "I'm not going to be able to fix you; no one here can fix you; this manual won't fix you – God is the only One capable of helping you at all."
- Make it clear that this group will be approaching PTSD and Combat Trauma from a Biblical perspective. Help them understand that the purpose of this group is to try to build an environment in their life where God has the best possible access to their body, mind and spirit for the purpose of healing – and that you want to help them build that environment."
- If a group member hasn't yet made that decision to connect with God, let them know that the group will be looking at that important issue in the first Step and in Appendix A. Help them feel relaxed and *not judged* about not being a Christian. Our objective is to let our lights shine and to *love* them into the kingdom. Our objective is *not* to force them into the kingdom through guilt or intimidation just so they will feel more comfortable around us.
- Let them know that, if they want, they can talk with you privately and in more depth about this issue of becoming a Christian.
- Ask them a few questions about their **expectations**. "What do you hope to get out of these meetings? What are your expectations for me? For yourself? For that person sitting next to you?" Make sure their expectations are realistic.
- Help them understand the concept of "New Normal," and that positive growth can result from negative experiences. By "New Normal" we mean that, if a person has experienced an event so traumatic that they end up with PTSD, it is probably not possible for their lives to go back to how things were before the traumatic event – though they probably want this more than anything in the world. But God will help them come to a *new* normal, where they are once again strong and stable and reconciled with their trauma and the changes it brought to their lives. The "New Normal" could even be better than their "Old Normal," because God frequently uses trials to build good things into us. (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10)
- Help them understand that progress may be slow, but persistence and consistency will carry them along.
- Nothing happens by accident for the Christian – God has brought you here for a reason. You might share, "If you are here today and not yet a Christian, it may very well be that God has brought you to this group so that he can make you one of His own, and heal you. This, too, is not an accident."

## 12. SESSION FORMAT.

### • Homework or No-homework?

Which would be best – to require your group members to read a few pages ahead before each meeting, filling in the blanks and doing the various exercises that the manual instructs them to? Or would it be better *not* to require them to do anything between meetings, and go through the pages together?

The old learning principle will always apply: "You'll get out of it what you put into it." If each group member takes the time and effort to do homework before each session, think through each principle on his or her own, interact with the questions, with the Scriptures and with God, he or she will get much more out of it when everyone comes together and discusses the lesson. But many people who

are suffering with Combat Trauma simply don't have the patience and focus to sit down and *do* the homework. We certainly don't want to exclude them. So once again we would encourage *you* to make the decision about this. At the beginning of your series of group meetings, you might encourage the group to read the next couple of pages before the next session and just see how it goes. Never assign more than three or four pages – even just two pages is okay if the group is progressing slowly. If the majority of the group members keep coming to the study without having looked at their manuals, don't require them to do so.

It would still be a good idea to let them know at the end of each session what you plan to cover next – in case any *do* want to work ahead.

- **Have a plan, but be willing to depart from it.** Below we will be giving you a suggested format for your meetings. But don't let this be carved in stone! Allow the Holy Spirit to change your plans along the way! Achieving your written objectives for each chapter or session is not nearly as important as allowing the Spirit to achieve *His* objectives!
- **Preparation.** First, spend some time in prayer asking God to prepare your heart and the hearts and minds of those in your group. Ask God to help each person to remember the meeting time and place and to make it there with no problems. Ask God to help them come with attentive and learning attitudes.

Next, go over the Chapter Objectives in the section of this manual entitled “**Discussion Questions – Step-by-Step**” (starting on page 23) so you'll get the main idea of what each Step will be trying to accomplish.

Then, read through the suggested discussion questions. **By no means should you try to discuss all of the questions that are suggested!** We have provided many more than you will need to generate good discussions. Just pick out the ones that seem the most interesting to you, and which will connect best with your group members. It works best if you write the questions you choose right into your manual. This way you won't have to keep flipping back and forth between the manual and this guide, and your questions will flow better as you ask a variety of Opening, Content, Follow-up and Application questions in each section. Of course, you may think of many other questions that could be even better than the ones that are suggested in this manual. Please use the questions that God gives you!

- **Suggested format:**
  1. **Welcome any newcomers.** Once the study series has started, some people don't like to admit any newcomers because they have to continue bringing them up to date on what has been discussed. Others allow newcomers to add new energy and perspective along the way. Again, it's up to you.
  2. **Tell them what's on the agenda.** Those who have experienced traumatic wounds have more anxiety if they don't know what is coming next. Give them a general idea of what you have planned for them today.
  3. **Opening prayer** (one person – asking for God's guidance and praying for special needs that are already known). Call attention to – and thank Him for – His presence there in your midst. Don't throw it open to prayer requests from the group at this time – you might not have time for the study! Either you lead the opening prayer or ask someone else ahead of time to do it.
  4. **Warm-up sharing.** Rather than jumping right into the lesson, share something of interest with the group. Don't make it too heavy or time-consuming – just something to catch their attention. It might be late-breaking news that's relevant to them, an interesting article you found, or other resources or books you might be aware of. You might ask someone (ahead of time) to share their testimony. Perhaps you could bring in a special speaker, do some kind of a interesting game, show a video clip, share insights from your personal study time in the Bible, etc.

5. **Reiterate the rules** which you will read about below (especially “Respect members’ privacy.”). Don’t go over *all* the rules every time – just review and remind them about a few of them as needed.
6. **Quick review of last week’s study** (five minute maximum).
7. **Start into this week’s content.** See below for suggestions about how to do that.
8. **Pray through the rough spots.** From time to time, someone may have a difficulty with some of the content, memories or discussions. They may become angry, sad, stop participating or emotionally leave the building. When those times come, stop right then and pray as a group for that person. This will really aid in your group becoming a band of brothers (or sisters)!
9. **Preview of next week.** Share your objectives for next session (pages to read, what the topic will be).
10. **Close in prayer.** Now would be a good time to ask the group if they have any prayer requests they’d like to share.

### 13. HOW TO COVER THE CONTENT.

- Unless you have already agreed otherwise, assume they have all read ahead. But feel free to read (or have someone else read) a section before you start to discuss it.
- **Opening question.** Come up with a question designed to engage them with the topic of that section or chapter. Examples of each type of question mentioned below will be suggested later in this guide.

For instance, with Step 5 on Grief . . . “Outside of your war-related experiences, what is something that you have grieved about in the past?” This would be a wide-open question that they could answer from their personal experiences or observations, even if they haven’t read the chapter.
- **Content question.** Ask a question that can be answered by the content they read (or which you just read to them).

For instance: “What triggers grief?” What you’re looking for is found in the fifth paragraph of page 65: LOSS triggers grief.

Think of a couple of Content questions for each section in the study ahead of time (or choose a few from the ones that are suggested later in this guide).
- **Follow-up questions.** Build on that answer with a Follow-up question:

“As a result of your traumatic experiences [or combat experiences – whatever is appropriate for your group], what are some of the things that you have lost?”

Note: the *content* of the study will lead into this Follow-up question. It will help the members start looking inward – moving from the theoretical to the personal, specific and practical.

You could then follow the Follow-up question with more Follow-up questions, depending on what was shared, such as:

  - ▲ “How were you able to handle that loss?”
  - ▲ “How did it affect you?”
  - ▲ “Think back. Can you think of any ways that God helped you through that difficult time?”
  - ▲ “Do you think you’ll ever receive back what you lost, or be able to replace it? How does that make you feel? What do you think you should do about those feelings?”

**Redirect.** A very useful tool for follow-up is a practice known as “redirecting.” After someone has responded to one of your questions, redirect it to the group in general. “What do some of the

rest of you think about what John just shared?" Or to a specific individual, "Sam, would you agree with what John shared?" Or, "Joan, how about you? What do you think about what John said?"

- **Application questions.** Try to compose a few questions for each chapter (not necessarily each section) that will prompt the group to make some kind of a personal, practical response to the issues that are being brought up. Examples:
  - ◆ "Does this suggest any course of action that you ought to take?"
  - ◆ "What could you do about this? When?"
  - ◆ "Can any of you think of a practical way to respond to this issue within the next 48 hours?"
  - ◆ "Is this something we just need to think about and be aware of, or do you think we're actually supposed to DO something about it?"
  - ◆ "When you've encountered this issue in the past, how have you dealt with it? Did that work for you? Could you do it again now?"
  - ◆ "What do you think it would take to integrate this concept into your life?"

By the way, you **don't** have to ask discussion questions in the order in which you find them here, as in: asking all the Opening Questions first, then ask all the Content Questions, then all the Follow-up Questions, etc. It's best if you mix them in section-by-section, page-by-page, point-by-point according to the flow of the chapter. For instance, in the section entitled "The Purpose of Grief" on page 66, you may start off with an Opening Question, then a Content Question, next two or three Follow-up Questions, then another Content Question followed by two or three Follow-up Questions, *another* Content Questions with a Follow-up Question, and finally an Application Question. Then you move on to the next section, "What You Can Expect To Experience – 'Normal Grief'" starting with an Opening Question – but this time you might skip the Content Question and go right to a Follow-up Question (following up on the Opening Question). Mix it up as God leads you.

- **Other ways to generate discussion:**
  - ◆ "What thoughts came to your mind as you read this section?"
  - ◆ "Did this raise some questions?"
  - ◆ "Could you identify with this quote (verse, paragraph, story)? How?"
  - ◆ "Here's what I thought . . . what did you think?"
  - ◆ "How does this part affect you personally?"
  - ◆ "How did this section (quote, verse, paragraph, story) make you feel? Why do you think it made you feel that way?"
  - ◆ (Regarding a point made in a section) "Has anybody here ever experienced this?"
  - ◆ "How has this issue changed you? Changed your opinion about God? The Church? The Military? Yourself?"
  - ◆ "What bothers you about this?"
  - ◆ "How do you deal with this?"
- **Exercises or fill-in-the-blank parts**
  - ◆ When you come to a place in the manual that directs the reader to fill in some blanks or do a certain exercise, ask if anybody did them. Then ask if they would like to share their response.
  - ◆ If they haven't filled in the blanks before the study, give the group time right then to work through them, and share what they wrote afterwards. If writing is a problem for any of them, you can just ask them to respond verbally if they'd like to.

## 14. THE RULES.

As with any group meeting, there needs to be some understanding about what is appropriate and what is not. The following are a few rules that will enable the group to function effectively, efficiently, and with a minimum of interpersonal friction. We would suggest you make a separate document for these rules (and any others you might want to include) and pass them out to the group during your first session together.

1. Respect each group members' privacy. Keep everything that is shared strictly confidential. Don't pass on what is shared to anybody – not to superior officers, friends or even to your spouses. Don't share with non-group members about who else is in the group.
2. Since this is a faith-based trauma healing group, we will start and end each meeting with prayer.
3. Share your own thoughts, feelings and experiences, using "I" statements and not trying to speak for others.
4. Try to accept people just as they are and avoid making judgments. Respect each person's right to their own values, beliefs and perspective.
5. Look for opportunities to affirm and honor each other during the meeting. Be intentional about this.
6. Alcohol and/or drugs will not be brought into Care Group meetings.
7. Do not dominate the discussion; let others share. Avoid long, detailed descriptions of your experiences. Make your point quickly – we don't have all night!
8. Have the courage to share what's on your mind or what you're feeling: it is part of your healing process. The more you share, the safer you'll feel here, and quicker you'll progress toward strength, stability and your "New Normal."
9. But realize that you have the "right of silence." No one will be forced to share if they don't feel like it. It's okay to "pass" in a discussion or during prayer times. If you can overcome your reluctance to share, it will be better for you, but no one will *make* you speak.
10. Be prepared and willing to hear some difficult and distressing comments and stories. Try your best to extend grace, and not react negatively or judgmentally. Be ready to show understanding, empathy and mercy – just as God has shown them to you..
11. Don't interrupt. Listen actively and deeply. No side conversations. Honor all contributions.
12. If someone in the group has a crisis during the meeting, that person will be accompanied by another group member before walking out of the room.
13. Try not to compare yourself with others in the group. Each person is unique, and at a different place in their healing journey. Focus on how God is working in *your* life.
14. Be consistent in your attendance. Try to be there on time.
15. Share ownership of the group. We're not here to entertain you – all must be willing and hold themselves responsible to contribute to the good success of the group and its mission.

## **15. MEETING DO'S AND DON'TS**

Here are a number of general principles that will prove useful no matter what kind of a small group you are leading – *especially* useful as you lead a Combat Trauma Care Group:



- Get there early, prepare the room, set out refreshments, perhaps put on some worship music, pray, be ready to welcome them as they come. Set the pace regarding punctuality!

- Don't be a lecturer. Encourage *discussion* among the group members. As mentioned earlier, "He who is talking the most is learning the most." If you are lecturing the group on certain topics, you can be sure that you are *giving* the information, but you cannot be sure if they are *receiving* it. If only one or two participants dominate the discussion, the rest feel left out and don't enter into the learning process very effectively. The sessions end up being boring, and the participants learn less. A person will retain and apply only about 5% of what they hear in this manner.



- On the other hand, if you can encourage group members to interact with each other, share their insights and experiences, ask each other questions and *talk*, the group sessions will be much more productive, interesting and enjoyable for everyone involved. People learn, retain and apply new information *much* better if they can discover the answers and come up with insights on their own, rather than having someone simply tell them what they should know. Teaching experts call this,



"Giving them an 'aha!' experience," calling attention to the delight one feels when they figure something out for themselves. As Dr. Norman Wright, expert in trauma counseling tells us, "If you're talking more than 25 percent of the time, you're probably talking too much."<sup>2</sup>

Remember that the manual supplies a format and some useful content, but the real healing will come through the sharing, the interaction, and the application as God works on them directly.

- If no one answers a discussion question right away, just wait a few moments. Silence isn't a bad thing – it could mean that people are thinking. If there is no response after a minute or so, you could ask the question in a different way, or call on someone who looks like they may want to say something, but needs a little encouragement. Or you could share *your* answer to the question, and ask what others think about what you shared, or ask if there's anyone who could build on it. Dr. Norman Wright advises:

When silence occurs, just let it happen. Those in crisis have slowed reactions. Often, their ability to respond to questions is impaired. If their personality preference is introversion, they need to think quietly on their own in order to formulate their response.<sup>3</sup>

- Take every opportunity to affirm, honor and encourage each member of the group. Make a "big deal" of the fact that it takes a tremendous amount of courage for them to even show up at these meetings. Their participation shows that they are willing to do the hard work that will be required to come to a place of healing.
- Try not to correct group members who say things that are obviously wrong. Say something like, "That's a very interesting thought (or "perspective," "insight," "point of view"), Joe. I hadn't thought about it in that way before. What do some of the rest of you think about that?"
- If you ask a question that requires a number of short answers, write down their responses – either on a whiteboard, large piece of paper, or even on the notes you hold in your hand. This will help you to remember peoples' responses so that you can go over them again with the group in summary. In addition, those who offer responses will feel affirmed that you find their contributions so valuable

that you would write them down. Plus, it helps you to listen more closely if you have to condense their responses to writing.

- Experts tell us that about half of what we communicate is through “body language.” When someone is responding to your question, your body language needs to be encouraging and not dismissive. Every culture is different, but doing the following things in America expresses interest and affirmation:
  - ♦ Look at the one speaking directly, square your shoulders to them, and even lean forward a bit toward them.
  - ♦ If you are leaning back, folding your arms in front of you, looking around as they are speaking, checking your notes, etc., you are communicating, “What you are saying isn’t really very interesting to me. Would you hurry up and finish?”
  - ♦ As was just mentioned, if you take notes on what they say, this will also communicate that, “I feel that what you are saying is *so* important that I *have to* write it down so I won’t forget!”
- “Listen with your eyes as much as with your ears,” Dr. Norman Wright says. “You may pick up more information this way, or it may contradict what is being verbalized.”<sup>4</sup>
- Be sure you are praying for your group and each individual in it – daily!
- Get other people praying for your group too.
- Don’t be concerned if group members feel the need to get up and walk around the room a bit or change their seat during the study. Most people dealing with Combat Trauma feel antsy all the time, and simply *must* get up and move from time to time or they feel like they’ll explode! They might also feel safer if they can peek out a window or the door occasionally. “Situational awareness” is always a priority for those who are hypervigilant – and it is “normal” for them.
- Always serve refreshments! Even if it’s just some water and inexpensive cookies or chips, it helps provide a comforting and refreshing atmosphere. Jesus engaged in some of his best discipling times over a meal.
- Pay attention to the environment of the study.
  - ♦ Someone’s home is a very relaxing, comforting, non-threatening setting. Having the study in church is okay – especially if you have a large group and need the space. But a home is usually more welcoming.
  - ♦ Arrange the chairs in a loose circle if possible. It’s good for all group members to be able to see each other.
  - ♦ Be aware of such things as the temperature of the room, lighting, comfort of the chairs, ventilation, and distractions from the neighborhood.
  - ♦ Be sure there are windows in the room – most Combat Trauma sufferers prefer knowing what’s going on outside. However, some of the attendees won’t want to have their backs to the windows, so you may need to adjust the seating configuration accordingly.
- Be patient – with group members, with the process, with participation, with church administration.
- Allow them to express their anger, frustration, confusion, etc. This is all part of their processing.
- But don’t enter into their negativity. For example, if someone is complaining about a certain church, don’t say things like, “Yeah, I know that bunch – they’re so into their ‘Holy Huddle’ they don’t care about anybody but themselves. You’ll never catch *me* going there!” Develop the skill of letting them vent, being understanding of their pain, but not participating in or agreeing with their verbal attacks.
- Expect them to bring up blasphemous or taboo subjects, use profanity, express disappointment or anger with God, the Church or Christians. Again, it is a necessary part of their processing. Eventually

they will calm down. In the meantime, try not to react or judge them. Show kindness, compassion and understanding.

- If someone is dominating the discussions, it's alright to gently interrupt them if necessary. A gentle "I just want to be certain I'm hearing you correctly" is appropriate. You could also talk with him or her afterwards: "You find it so easy to share – but I think some of the others are shy [or lack your confidence]. What can we do to try to draw them out more, and give them the opportunity to share?"
- Don't publicize names, addresses or email address lists of your group members without permission.
- If possible, recruit an assistant. He or she can act as a substitute, help with making arrangements, help keep discussions on track, and can be trained to eventually lead their own group.
- Most of the sessions are pretty intense. So try to include some *positive* things whenever possible. One group leader reported a member sharing at the end of several meetings, "I learned all about PTSD and how bad it is. It would have been nice to hear something *hopeful*." You can be sure that group leader made changes by his next meeting! They need to hear success stories.
- Give the manuals to the group members without charge if possible. "You've done your service. We want to honor you for that. It's our way of affirming you for taking the first step to come here."
  - ♦ If they insist on paying, say "okay. But I'll use that money to buy a manual for someone else."
  - ♦ In your publicizing of the Care Group, note that the materials will be free – "Our gift to you."
  - ♦ Consider it a gift of healing; an investment in their healing.

## 16. RELATIONSHIP DO'S AND DON'TS

These are helpful principles you need to be aware of as you relate to each group member on an individual basis. Opportunities to apply these principles may occur in the context of the group meeting or as you get one-to-one time with them.<sup>5</sup>

- Don't tell a Combat Trauma sufferer to "Get over it," "Let it go," or "Forget the past." Those things are *so* much easier said than done. Don't you think they'd do those things if they could? Pushing them to "hurry up and recover" can be a secondary wounding experience and make PTSD worse.
- Don't show pity. Veterans want empathy, not sympathy. Nobody who has had the courage to engage in combat wants to hear, "You poor thing."
- Don't use Christian clichés such as "Let go and let God," "What would Jesus do?" "Forgive and forget," "You just need more faith," "Have you prayed about this?" "Everything is going to turn out for the best." There is no denying the truth and spiritual power behind most of these sentiments, but if a Combat Trauma sufferer senses that you think he or she can be "fixed" by a few glib, obvious, one-size-fits-all religious phrases, they will think you don't value them as an individual or appreciate the depth and complexity of their situation. A wall will go up between you.
- Don't call a Combat Trauma sufferer a crybaby, psycho, sicko or whiner. Always show them respect and honor. Never mock or make fun of their symptoms.
- Don't blame relationship problems on his or her traumatic combat experiences. For example, don't say, "We can't really have a good relationship because you have all these triggers," or "You and your darned PTSD," or "I can't trust you because you're always freaking out on me." Accept them unconditionally, just as Jesus does.
- It's not your job to make them "feel better" about things. As Dr. Larry Crab wrote:

When life kicks us in the stomach, we want someone to be with us as we are, not as he or she wishes us to be. We don't want someone trying to make us feel better. That effort, no matter how well intended, creates a pressure that adds to our distress.<sup>6</sup>

- Don't interpret emotional coolness as a sign of disinterest. It's a common symptom of PTSD.
- Don't expect them to react to death or illness of friends or family as others do. Part of their symptomology is a "flatness of emotions."
- Ask them how they're doing, but *mean* it. Wait for a real answer. Let them know that you want the truth – and that you can handle the truth. Listen.
- Look for opportunities to tell them about the *strengths* you see in them, their progress, their honorable character qualities, their selflessness and sacrifices.
- If he or she talks about horrific experiences with you personally, consider yourself blessed that they trust you enough to share these painful memories. Stay connected. It's all about staying engaged and actively listening.
- Don't *press* them to disclose details of their traumatic episodes. As trauma expert Dr. Judith Peterson says, "You don't have to dig – don't even *own* a shovel!"<sup>7</sup> No one likes to be interrogated. Respect their need to keep some things private. They'll open up when they're ready and feel safe.
- Don't *press* them to solve a problem or do something if they clearly indicate they have reached their limit and feel like exploding or shutting down.
- Teach and give advice sparingly. Sometimes you will need to "teach," but don't overdo it. Be the "professor" only when you know there is receptivity. As Dr. Norman Wright says,  

Use the teaching technique when, and only when, a person needs new information that would be difficult for a person to acquire on his or her own. Find out if they already have this information or have access to it. Invite them to describe what they know. Be sure the person is ready to hear what you have to say.<sup>8</sup>
- Don't try to be your group member's therapist, hero, rescuer or resident James Bond. Get used to saying, "It's so hard to understand what you're experiencing. I wish I had a quick and easy answer for you." You can be supportive without making him or her your "project." People don't need a superhero – they need faithful friends who will walk along with them.
- Do whatever you can to establish a relationship of trust. But . . .
- Expect that there will be times when a group member *doesn't* trust you and needs to be distant from you.
- Always be honest with them. Admit your own struggles. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone – after all, that's what you're asking of them.
- Know the signs of impending suicide and take action immediately. As in, IMMEDIATELY!
- Don't tolerate emotional, physical or sexual abuse of yourself or others by the Combat Trauma sufferer.
- If your relationship with a group member is sufficiently deep, work together on an "emergency plan" for unpredictable times when he or she may feel out of control, extremely depressed or about to relapse into an addiction. This plan should include names and phone numbers of doctors, therapists, family members and close friends, as well as medications.

## 17. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO AVOID

This is a list compiled by Andrea Westfall, former Army National Guard Medical Platoon Sergeant (2/162 HHC) during Operation Iraqi Freedom, August 2002 to May 2003 and affiliated with Campus Crusade's Military Ministry. She cautions that this is a *general guideline*, not absolutely true for every troop. How they deal with their stresses will depend on a variety of factors. Ask the Lord for discernment about what to say, and what *not* to say.

- **“Did you kill anyone?”** If they did, they probably don't want to talk about it; they feel you will judge them inappropriately – either too positively or too negatively. As you develop a relationship of trust, they may eventually be willing to open up about it.
- **“What was the worst thing you saw over there? Did you see any dead bodies?”** They don't want to relive those details until they are good and ready to, in a safe environment. Don't take them back there unless they are prepared emotionally and spiritually.
- **“Aren't you glad to be home?”** It may simply be a stupid question – *of course* they're glad to be home, away from war and back with loved ones. On the other hand, they might have come home to a situation that is just as traumatizing as the one they left: betrayed by a loved one, abandoned by friends who think they're weird, financial difficulties, loss of employment, etc.
- **“How are you doing?”** Don't ask this unless you're willing to stay and listen to the answer.
- **“Do you feel guilty about what you had to do over there?”** Most do – at least concerning some aspects. It may be true guilt, false guilt, survivor's guilt or some other form. It's an issue that will be addressed in Step 6, and not one that should be addressed casually or flippantly. Don't make them feel worse by suggesting he or she might not be forgiven for the things they did in the fog of war.
- **“Do you want to go get a drink?”** Self-medicating with drugs or alcohol can become a *big* problem, so don't be the one to help them start or join them in their self-destructive behavior.
- **“Do you want me to pray with you?”** Don't need to ask – this should be automatic. As you see a need just say, “Let's pray about this right now.”
- **“What do you think about the war – should we get out?”** Don't get tangled up with political questions – you could alienate your group member if you have a point of view they don't agree with. It's not worth it. If they bring up the subject and it seems the two of you are in disagreement, listen politely, let them vent, but don't engage them in an argument.
- **“I know just how you feel. I saw a dog hit by a car once.”** . . . or some other civilian-based story. You really *can't* know how they feel. Unless you've been in combat, there are very few things you've experienced that can come close to the stress, terror or guilt of war-related trauma. And even if you *have* been in combat, what you experienced is probably *not* the same as what they experienced. Better and more honest to say, “I *can't* imagine how you feel. But I can tell how painful it is for you, and I want you to know I appreciate and honor the sacrifices you made.”
- **“You should be grateful you made it home alive. Many didn't, you know. Be happy!”** There is a good chance that they wish they *would have* died over there. For some, coming home is harder than being in combat. They may struggle with survivor's guilt. They may have lost some of their best friends over there. It's not easy to be “happy” about that.
- **“If you need anything, just let me know.”** In large part, they don't know what they need, or if they do, they lack the energy or will to pursue it or ask for help with it. If you see a need and you can fill it, don't wait to be asked. Take the initiative and – as Nike advises us: “Just do it!”

## 18. WHAT TO DO IF A GROUP MEMBER HAS A FLASHBACK DURING A MEETING

As you touch on issues that could stir up fear, anxiety and traumatic memories, it is possible that a group member might be triggered and experience a “flashback” – vivid memories of past traumas including sounds, smells, body sensations, or feelings (or the lack of them – numbness). They may have a sense of being trapped, or feel powerless and panic-stricken. They may even experience a “psychotic break” when their present reality temporarily slips away and they think they're back in combat – being shot at, shooting at others, barking orders, yelling, hiding, etc.

If someone in your group experiences a flashback during one of your times together, here are a number of helpful ideas to consider. They have been compiled by Rahnella Adsit from several authoritative sources

and from her experiences working with trauma survivors. Please check the footnote and consult them further if you would like deeper input.<sup>9</sup>

- Things for YOU to know ahead of time:
  - ♦ In a flashback-sufferer's mind, they are re-experiencing their trauma all over again – it's absolutely real to them.
  - ♦ A flashback is the mind's attempt to make sense of a very significant life-changing event. Both you and your group members need to know it's a common way of adapting and relieving pressure.
- Usually, someone experiences a flashback because they feel threatened in some way. Their "fight or flight" response kicks in, and their body is ready to take action. So, the first thing to do is to help the person feel safe and try to remove the perceived threat.
- Before approaching someone who is experiencing a flashback:
  - ♦ Pray. Ask the Lord to guide and protect you. Count on Him to do so.
  - ♦ Be careful how you physically approach them; never come up behind them.
  - ♦ They *can* become violent. Be ready to protect yourself and back off if they do.
- Approach them calmly.
  - ♦ Speak softly and gently, like you're waking someone out of a sound sleep.
  - ♦ Call their name and say, "Come back to me . . . come back to me . . ."
  - ♦ If you see no response, call their name a bit louder.
  - ♦ Identify yourself.
  - ♦ If you feel safe, gently touch their arm – be sure they're aware that you're there.
  - ♦ Name it – tell them they're having a flashback. People don't usually realize it.
  - ♦ Remind them where they are, and when it is. "Joe, you're not in Iraq – you're here in Virginia, in my house. We're having a Bible study. You made it back from Iraq and you're okay. All that is in the past."
  - ♦ Remind them to breathe. When a person is scared they don't breathe normally. As a result, their body begins to panic from lack of oxygen – which causes even more panic, pounding in the head, sweating, faintness, shakiness and dizziness. Have them put their hand on their stomach and breathe deeply enough that it causes their hand to rise and fall. Urge them to inhale slowly and deeply through the nose and exhale through the mouth.
  - ♦ Tell them that you know it feels real to them, but that it isn't actually happening again. Remind them that what they're sensing right now happened long ago, and they survived, and they are safe.
  - ♦ Remind them that they are not alone – he or she is surrounded by their friends who are here to keep them safe, and Jesus Christ is here to protect him or her as well.
  - ♦ If they can communicate, ask them to tell you what they are seeing, smelling, touching or hearing. Often, they want to know if what they're sensing is real – we can give them the feedback that it is not. Talking about it helps them come away from the fantasy and back to the real world.
  - ♦ **Grounding Techniques** – ways of coping that are designed to "ground" a person to the present moment using their five senses:
    - ▲ **Sound:** turn on loud music, or get them to listen to their breathing, traffic, birds, the wind, people, etc. Ask them, "What are you hearing right now, Jim? What's that sound?"

- ▲ Touch: have them grip a piece of ice, touch their clothes, the chair or floor supporting them, stomp their feet so that they know they *have* feet and can get away, etc. Ask them, “What is this? What are you touching (feeling) right now?”
- ▲ Smell: have them sniff something strong like peppermint or perfume. “What’s this smell?”
- ▲ Taste: have them bite into a lemon or eat something spicy hot. “What did you just eat? What did it taste like?”
- ▲ Sight: have them look around and identify colors, the shapes of things, the people nearby, etc. Ask them to describe their surroundings. “Where are you, Jim? What do you see around you?” If they are wearing something with personal meaning, like a ring, a pin, an item of clothing, say, “Tell me about this. What does this mean to you? Where’d you get this?”
- ◆ Sometimes they may need to reestablish their boundaries. They lose their sense of where they leave off and the world begins, as if they have no skin. Suggestions: Have them wrap in a blanket, hold a pillow or stuffed animal, sit in a closet – any way they can feel themselves truly separate and protected from the outside.
- After the flashback is over:
  - ◆ Flashbacks are usually very powerful and debilitating. Adrenaline, noradrenaline and other “fight or flight hormones” are dumped into their system, and it may take some time for these chemicals to dissipate and transition back to “normal.” Let them know that it’s okay if they want to go home and sleep it off, or if they’d just like to relax and sit quietly during the rest of the group time. Let them lie down on the floor, the couch or a bed for a while.
  - ◆ It’s not uncommon for people to cry, weep or apologize afterwards. Let them know it’s not their fault, it’s part of their PTSD, and no one blames them or thinks any less of them. If there are others in the group who experience flashbacks, they should reassure him or her that they also struggle with them and know just how they feel. Don’t let them beat themselves up about their flashback.
  - ◆ Let them know that flashbacks are important and – in a way – *good*. They are an opportunity for him or her to learn and understand more about what they experienced. They are often an indication that the person is ready to remember some traumatic events, and that the body has some important information to share.
  - ◆ Suggest that they honor their flashback experience for what it is: a testimony of the fact that they went through a horrendous experience and survived.
  - ◆ Pray with them. Thank God for helping them survive (both their original trauma and the flashback); ask Him to shine His light into the darkness of their memories and flashbacks, and help him make some sense out of it all.
  - ◆ Share comforting passages of Scripture with them, such as Psalm 23; Psalm 27; Psalm 71:1-6; Psalm 91; Isaiah 42:16; 45:3; John 16:33; Romans 8:26-39.
  - ◆ Assure them that they’re not crazy – they’re *healing*.
- Plan ahead with those that you know may be prone to flashbacks:
  - ◆ Be sure you have the names and numbers of their spouse (if married), therapist (if they have one), doctor or any other friend that they feel safe with and who is aware of their condition.
  - ◆ Ask them what you should do for them if and when they have a flashback. Has anything worked for them in the past?
  - ◆ Ask them what has triggered them in the past. Obviously, try to exclude those triggers from your group times. If, despite your best efforts, a triggering event occurs you’ll be immediately clued in to the situation and can act quickly.

- ◆ Ask them if they have any early warning signs for their flashbacks. Sometimes a person's surroundings might begin to look and feel out of focus and fuzzy. Other times it may feel like they're separating from or losing touch with their surroundings, other people, or even themselves
- ◆ Ask them what gives them the greatest sense of safety. Ask them what it looks like, smells like, sounds like, etc. Refer to that image, thought or memory to help them calm down and get grounded during a future flashback.
- ◆ Have them select an object which can be a cue for them – such as a watch, ring, necklace, cross, Bible, or something else of special significance. This item will become their symbol for their current reality, a touchstone to bring them back to the present. As they are experiencing a future episode, call their attention to the item and tell them, “Look – remember this? This is what we talked about before, to let you know when you're having a flashback. Remember – we agreed that when you see this, you'll be able to calm down and come back to the present.”

## **19. THINGS TO DO BETWEEN MEETINGS**

- Trauma usually leads to hopelessness, silence and isolation. Sufferers are not motivated to seek out social interaction – they'd rather stay home. Alone. This will deepen their hopelessness. If you can take the initiative and reach out to them, or organize activities that will involve several group members in a non-threatening setting, you can help reverse that downward spiral. The more “touches” the better.
  - ◆ Call or stop by their house or office to chat briefly, find out about a prayer request they shared, see if they need a ride next week, meet their family, etc.
  - ◆ Utilize email, Facebook, Twitter, or even actual paper, envelope and stamp to send them an encouraging message.
  - ◆ Find some time to spend one-to-one with individual group members.
  - ◆ Plan a group outing – either a fun event or a service project.
  - ◆ Plan a dinner and invite spouses.
  - ◆ Plan a weekend retreat – either with or without spouses.
  - ◆ It's already been mentioned, but it bears repeating: **PRAY FOR THEM!**



## DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS – STEP-BY-STEP

**Note:** We are offering Objectives and Discussion Questions for the opening sections of the manual: “Before You Begin,” “Introduction” and “Prologue.” You don’t *have* to cover these sections in your group meetings – but there are a lot of helpful and motivational points in those three sections. And you don’t have to spend an entire session on each one either. As has been mentioned frequently above, you and the Lord should decide what your Care Group needs, and make plans based on that.

### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .** (PAGE 3)

#### **Objectives:**

- To let them know that God will be a primary element in the healing environment that we are proposing.
- To be sure they understand that the “brand” of Christianity we are advocating in this manual is not “religion,” but involves a personal *relationship* with Jesus Christ.
- To get them thinking about whether or not they actually have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and if not, to direct them to “Appendix A” starting on page 153 to learn about, confirm and/or begin their relationship with Christ.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

First, go over the things you read about above in “**10. First Session – things to get across**” that you feel would be important. Then, get into the content of the “Before You Begin” page. Either you read it, have a group member read it, or assign one paragraph to each group member to read.

Don’t use *all* of these questions. Just choose the ones that you think will be best for your group. **Note:** Not every section will have all four types of questions in them. You can always add some of your own!

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ Most of us experience trauma of one sort or another during our lives. Probably all of us. Would a few of you mind sharing some of the difficult events you’ve had to endure in your lifetime? [*They can be war-related or not.*]
  - ◊ How have these events changed you?
  - ◊ How many of you have ever heard about PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder? What have you heard about it? [*Let them know that we’ll be learning a lot more about it in Step Two.*]
  - ◊ What have some of you done to this point to help yourself with your Combat Trauma?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ From this “Before You Begin” page, how does this manual propose to help you with your trauma-related (or war-related) difficulties?
  - ◊ A distinction is made between Christianity as a “religion” and Christianity as a “relationship.” What do you think the differences are?
  - ◊ This section says that God is many things, but that one of His primary characteristics is . . . what? [*He is our Healer.*] Have any of you ever experienced direct healing from God? Do you know of anyone who has?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ How do you think a person goes about obtaining healing from God? Do you think it’s possible?
  - ◊ How important do you think it is to have a personal relationship with God in order to receive His healing?

❖ Are there some of you here who already have a personal relationship with God through asking Jesus Christ into your life as your Savior? Are there some of you here who are still “on the way,” and investigating what it means to have Christ as your Savior? Are there some of you here who simply don’t want to consider that idea? *[If there are some in that third category, don’t condemn them or dismiss them. Just be accepting of their current opinion and assure them that “being a Christian” isn’t a prerequisite to attending the Care Group meetings. No one will force them to become a Christian and they won’t be looked down upon as “second class group members.” But encourage them to keep an open mind, and let them know that you’d be willing to answer any additional questions they might have about the Bible and Christianity outside of the normal meeting time. Then, pray for them, love them unconditionally, be their friend, encourage them, and don’t hold back sharing the Bible with them! God’s Word will affect them in profound ways that you probably cannot anticipate. No need to defend a lion, just unleash it! Hebrews 4:12.]*

➤ *Note to the leader: If it seems that the majority of the group doesn’t have an understanding of the gospel, and hasn’t taken that step of inviting Christ into their life as Savior, you may want to go directly to Appendix A as a group, and read through it with them – if they’re open to the idea. You can ask some Content and Follow-up questions as you go along (whatever God puts into your mind), but you won’t need to do much more than to simply read through the “Four Principles” that are presented. Literally millions of people over the past sixty years have begun a relationship with Christ by simply reading and understanding this four-point presentation. At the top of page 156, ask each person to consider which circle represents their life, and which circle would they like to have represent their life. They could either respond out loud or silently. Then lead them through the prayer that is presented. If they prayed along with you, congratulate them for the step they have taken – be excited about it! A new, eternal creation has just been born! Finish by going over the points made on pages 156 and 157.*

*If it doesn’t seem like a good idea to take your whole group through Appendix A, but there are some in the group who need to and would like to, approach them separately and share it with them alone.*

• **Application Questions**

- ❖ Take a look at the Table of Contents page. Which of these Ten Steps do you think will be the most difficult one for you to take? What can you begin doing *today* that will prepare you for approaching and take that Step (or Steps)?
- ❖ At the bottom of page 3, the verse (1 John 5:4,5) states that “whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” What do you think the term “born of God” refers to? *[Note: “born of God” overcomes the world, v. 4; “he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” overcomes the world, v. 5; so “born of God” = “he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”]*
- ❖ What are you willing to do to pursue the healing of your Combat Trauma? *[Hopefully someone will mention that they see The Combat Trauma Healing Manual as one of the tools God could use to help them experience healing, and that they will be willing to come back to future meetings.]*



**INTRODUCTION BY MAJOR GENERAL BOB DEES (PAGES 5 & 6)**

**Objectives:**

- To help the group members know that the ones behind this manual understand and honor the courage and sacrifices they have made as members of the Armed Forces.

- To help group members catch the idea that wounds aren't just physical – there are psychological and spiritual components that also must be healed.
- To reiterate that God is the Healer and Jesus Christ is the avenue to comprehensive healing.

**Discussion Questions:**

Again, don't use *all* of these questions; just pick the ones that you think will generate good discussion among your group members. Write the ones you pick into the margins of your manual.

• **Opening Questions**

- ◇ General Dees was expressing his respect and appreciation for the services you have performed for your country as a member of the military. Do you feel that your country has held and expressed this same appreciation for you? How do you think this affects the trauma you struggle with?
- ◇ General Dees mentions three types of wounds: physical wounds, wounds of the heart and soul (psychological), and wounds of the spirit. Do some of you feel you have suffered all three of these wounds? Your physical wounds are easy to see and describe, but how would you describe your psychological and spiritual wounds?

• **Content Questions**

- ◇ General Dees referred to the military as the “exoderm” of our country. What do you think he meant by that? Do you agree with him?
- ◇ The Armed Forces and the Department of Veterans Affairs are working “feverishly” to help with the wounds of war – but what is it that they are not adequately addressing? [*Second paragraph: “faith gap” – the spiritual components of healing.*] How important do you think it is that this “faith gap” be addressed? How do you intend to address the “faith gap” in your own life?

• **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ As you read through the bullet points that General Dees said would be covered in this manual, which do you feel you will need help with the most?
- ◇ General Dees shares Joshua 1:9 – where God commands His leader Joshua to be strong and courageous. We all know that there are certain things we can *do* in order to gain strength, but what can one do to gain *courage*?

**PROLOGUE BY FORMER CAPTAIN NATE SELF (PAGES 7-10)**

Consider reading this story to them as a group, and then discussing it.

**Objectives:**

- To help the group members realize that the ones behind this manual understand the devastating effects of Combat Trauma and PTSD.
- To help group members identify with someone who has experienced what they have experienced, and to realize that he was a strong, intelligent, well-trained Christian man, and even *he* could experience PTSD. *Anybody* can, and it doesn't mean they are weak or deficient in any way.
- To help them realize from Nate's story that it is possible – with God's help – to experience healing and restoration, no matter how bad their PTSD was.

**Discussion Questions:**

• **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Can any of you identify with Captain Self's experience up on Takur Ghar? In what ways?
- ◇ Nate Self had a lot going for him. West Point graduate, beautiful wife, two healthy sons, strong family background, intelligent, responsible, competent, athletically gifted, had the

admiration of his President, superior officers and his country. Yet he still developed PTSD. What does this tell you about this disorder?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What was the creed that Nate Self and his Rangers lived by which motivated them to go to Takur Ghar to rescue downed SEAL Neil Roberts? [*Leave no man behind – be ready to give your life to save one of your comrades.*] As you look around the room tonight at your fellow troops who are struggling with Combat Trauma, how can that creed be applied to your current situation?
- ◇ Did Captain Self begin to experience PTSD symptoms right away after his 15 hour firefight? [*No – it was months later.*] This is an example of “delayed onset PTSD.” How many of you have experienced PTSD in this way? Tell us of your experiences when the symptoms began to surface.
- ◇ When applied to a military context, what are your thoughts about the verse that Captain Self shared – John 15:13?
- ◇ As Captain Self’s symptoms began to manifest, what are some of the changes he began to see in himself? Have you seen any of those same changes in yourself?
- ◇ How did his PTSD affect his relationship with God and his family? Have any of you experienced something similar?
- ◇ What was the horrible question he began asking himself? [*How should I kill myself?*] Have any of you asked that question?
- ◇ Nate Self came back for Neil Roberts. Who came back for Nate Self? [*God, his family, a small band of Christian brothers and a counselor.*] Do you have those elements in your “rescue team”? Who’s coming back for you?
- ◇ What was the tool that Satan used to disassemble Nate’s faith? [*Fear*] What is the opposite of fear? [*Courage: “Taking action despite fear.” Relate back to what General Dees wrote about Joshua 1:9.*] What is the antidote for fear? [*Love – 1 John 4:18: “Perfect love casts out fear.”*] When it comes to dealing with Combat Trauma, how could love cast out fear? Where is this fear-reducing love found, in God or in man? [*Possibly both. Most soldiers fight and die because of the love they hold for their battle buddies. It’s the strongest motivation on earth – they won’t let their fear keep them from performing heroic acts to save their friends. But in addition, if someone is convinced of God’s love for him, His sovereignty and His power, fear will also subside and he can do whatever he needs to do.*]
- ◇ Captain Self has written a book entitled *Two Wars*. What would you guess the “two wars” are that Nate writes about in his book? Are you fighting those same two wars currently? How is it going?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Has reading (or hearing) Nate Self’s story inspired you, or changed how you are going to approach your struggle with Combat Trauma? If so, how?



## **STEP 1: WHERE WAS GOD?** (PAGES 11-19)

### **UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL CONTEXT OF YOUR TRAUMA**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help them understand that their traumatic experiences in combat and their current condition is a result of free will, the fall, Satan’s objectives on earth, and man’s inhumanity to man.
- To help them understand that God is their greatest ally, not their enemy, and as such it would make much more sense to run *toward* Him rather than away from Him.

- To help them identify with King David – a great warrior, king and man of God, and yet a man who apparently also struggled with PTSD.
- To help them identify with Jesus Christ – God Himself come in the flesh, and yet a man who suffered trauma and atrocity to a degree unmatched by anyone else in history. As such the Combat Trauma sufferer can never say, “He doesn’t know what I’m going through.”
- To help them conclude that good can come from the suffering they are experiencing.

### Discussion Questions:

Again, don’t use *all* of these questions, just choose the ones that you think will be best for your group. Remember to **write the questions you want to use right into your manual**, so you don’t have to keep flipping back and forth between the Leader’s Guide and your manual. It will make your questions flow better as you cycle between Opening, Content, Follow-up and Application questions on each page or section.

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ When you were experiencing your traumatic situation, did you find yourself asking the question: “Where was God?” Did you come up with any answers?
- *Leader: Have them share their answer to the question posed on page 11: “What are your thoughts at this moment about the existence of God?” As with all subsequent “fill in the blank” questions, if they haven’t done it ahead of time, stop for three or four minutes and let them think about the question and write down their thoughts. Then they can either read what they wrote or simply share from their heart.]*

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ If you *did* ask that question, what does this section say about how good or bad it is to feel that way? [*Bottom of page 11 – it’s okay, you’re not alone . . .*]
- ◊ What other famous, godly person asked a question similar to that? [*Jesus Christ – Matthew 27:46; top of page 12.*]
- ◊ Since God is so good and powerful, why *does* He allow bad things to happen in this world? What does His love have to do with it? [*Paragraphs 5 & 6, page 12.*]
- ◊ How does man’s free will and all the atrocities of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [*bottom of page 12 to top of page 13*] relate to each other?
- ◊ Your enemies when you were downrange wanted to take your physical life. What are some of the things your spiritual enemy wants to take from you? [*Middle of page 14.*]
- ◊ What is Satan’s ultimate objective for you? [*Paragraph 2, page 15: devour you.*]
- ◊ Would some of you like to share your answers to the questions asked on page 16? [*Note: Spend a little extra time on the third set of questions which ask about running toward or away from God. What are some of the factors that would cause a person to run away from God?*]
- ◊ Why was Jesus willing to suffer all the traumas He did? [*Paragraphs 2 & 3, page 17.*] Do you see similarities between Jesus’ motivation and your motivation when you joined the military and went to war? [*Obviously, you couldn’t atone for anyone’s sin, but you did put yourself in harm’s way in order to keep others from having to experience it. You, too, faced evil and allowed yourself to be spent in order that others wouldn’t have to face it.*]
- ◊ Would some of you like to share your insights from the exercise on page 17 & 18 – observations about God or adversity that are found in each passage?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ To what extent has your traumatic experience separated you from God? Do you feel that God moved away, or did you?

- ◇ Would some of you like to share where you put your “x” on the line diagram in the middle of page 12? Would you like to expand on that, and tell us why you feel that way?
- ◇ Do you agree or disagree with the statement in this section: “Your condition is due to the sinful actions of evil men – not God.” [bottom of page 13]?
- ◇ Would any of you care to share your answer to the question in the middle of page 13, an incident that occurred while you were downrange that demonstrates man’s inhumanity to man?
- ◇ What do you think the verse shared in the middle of page 14 [Ephesians 6:12] is referring to? What are the “rulers, powers, world forces of darkness,” etc.?
- ◇ Why is Satan so anti-human? How does he show this anti-human sentiment? [See top of page 15.]
- ◇ As you read some of King David’s writings on pages 15 & 16, what do you learn about his opinion of God during the times when he was facing life-and-death situations?
- ◇ Can you think of any ways in which you have suffered that Jesus didn’t?
- ◇ Can you think of any ways that your suffering will eventually lead to some good [bottom of page 17 and last question on page 18.]
- **Application Questions**
  - ◇ In which direction are you running right now – toward God or away from Him? If away, do you think that is a good idea? What will it take to get you to change your direction?
  - ◇ “Just as heat overcomes cold and light dispels darkness, the presence of God drives out evil.” [paragraph 4, page 19.] Do you think this is a true statement? If so, what can you do to accommodate God’s intention to drive evil out of your life?



## **STEP 2: WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?** (PAGES 21-32)

### **UNDERSTANDING THE PHYSICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF YOUR TRAUMA**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help them understand the physical and psychological aspects of their trauma.
- To help them understand that their condition is a common response to trauma, created by God to keep them safe in a life-or-death situation.
- To introduce them to the concept of Secondary Trauma, which their spouse or children could be experiencing.
- To go through an exercise that will help them identify their symptoms.
- To give them some general insight about the stages through which their healing will progress.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Again, don’t use *all* of these questions, just choose the ones that you think will be best for your group.

#### *Your Trauma’s Root of Honor* (Page 21)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ What was *your* trauma’s honorable root. Why did you join the military?
  - ◇ When you joined, did you have any idea of the sacrifices you were going to be making?
- **Content Question**
  - ◇ What did you think of the quote by the anonymous disabled Marine on page 21, about PTSD being a disorder of a good warrior? Is that a new thought for you?

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote on the bottom of page 21, listing some of the sacrifices you've had to make because of your service and your time in combat? *[As mentioned earlier, if they haven't considered this question and written something down ahead of time, stop for three or four minutes and let them think about the question and write down their thoughts.]*
- ◇ How has your war experience changed you?

### Combat Trauma and PTSD (Page 22)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Before reading this section, what did you already know about Combat Trauma and PTSD?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Paragraph 2 mentions that a person doesn't have to be a "trigger puller" to end up experiencing Combat Trauma. Are there any of you here that fit that description?
- ◇ Let's look at the spectrum of Combat Trauma in your manual. I'm going to read a description of each of the "mileposts" on that spectrum from "Mild" to "Severe," and when I'm finished, put an X on the line where you think you are right now.
  - **Pre-Deployment, Deployment and Reintegration Issues:** Tension, frustration with spouse, children, military; normal adjustments to new circumstances.
  - **Combat/Operational Stress Reactions:** Keyed up, irritable, jumpy, poor focus, anxiety due to combat.
  - **Adjustment Disorders:** Depression, tearfulness, hopelessness, anger, fighting.
  - **Acute Stress Disorder:** Distress, flashbacks, nightmares, self-isolating, insomnia.
  - **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder:** Fear, helplessness, horror, hallucinations, amnesia, violent, suicidal, hypervigilant, drug/alcohol abuse; symptoms last four weeks to years.
- ◇ Would some of you like to share where on the spectrum you put your X, and why you feel that describes where you are right now?

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Comparing your present experiences to your condition right after you returned from war, or soon after your traumatizing experience, would you say that you are experiencing more of less of those distressing feelings and symptoms? *[This will tell you whether or not the person's Combat Trauma/PTSD is getting worse or better, or perhaps if they have delayed-onset PTSD, which can show up months or years after the traumatic event.]*

### Secondary Trauma (Page 22)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ What changes have you seen in your wife, children and close friends since you returned from combat?
- ◇ Do you think your struggle with Combat Trauma could have caused these changes?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What causes Secondary Trauma?
- ◇ How will Secondary Trauma manifest itself? *[The same ways that PTSD does.]*

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ What do you think a returning combat veteran can do to keep his or her family from getting Secondary Trauma? *[You might want to share with them about the companion manual: When War Comes Home. Let them know it's available, and if they are interested, there are certain chapters in that manual that the group might want to go through later, so they'll get a better*

*idea of how they affect their spouses and children, and how they can minimize those negative impacts.]*

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Do you think it might be a good idea to discuss the concept of Secondary Trauma with your spouse? If so, how do you think you could go about it?

PTSD Isn't New (Pages 23, 24)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Were you surprised to read any of the facts in this section? Which ones? Why did it surprise you?
- ◇ Could any of you identify with the quote in the box on page 23 from Dr. Edward Tick, about the veteran being stuck in a "frozen war consciousness"? How would you describe that state?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ From this section, what is your impression about how rare Combat Trauma/PTSD is? *[See 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph in this section. The point is, it's not rare, it's common.]*
- ◇ In what ways is PTSD similar to a physical wound? *[See top of page 24.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ PTSD has been called a wound of the soul and a wound of the identity. What do you think these expressions mean?
- ◇ Does this section give you the idea that Combat Trauma/PTSD is a disorder that can be cured quickly and easily? Does it indicate that a person just needs to have more courage or strength or faith, and they'll soon turn out just fine?
- ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote down in the blank on page 24, where you described your "soul wounds"?
- ◇ Can you think of friends who may be experiencing Combat Trauma?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What do you think you should do about your friends that you think might be experiencing Combat Trauma or PTSD?

What causes PTSD? (Page 24, 25)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ When you experience injustice, or when you are attacked and harmed by someone unexpectedly, how do you normally respond? How about when you encounter some kind of a natural disaster or have an accident, and it's really no one's fault?

- **Content Question**

- ◇ As you read through the various things listed in this section that can cause PTSD, did any of these events or factors contribute to your current experience of Combat Trauma/PTSD? Does anyone feel comfortable sharing about one or two that you experienced? *[You might mention that the more of these traumatic events a person experiences prior to going into combat, it increases the likelihood that a person will experience PTSD after their time at war.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think that PTSD can become especially severe or long-lasting when the trauma comes from an intentional human act?
- ◇ Do you think everyone will react the same way to a traumatic event? Why or why not?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Knowing that multiple traumatic events can lead to PTSD, and taking into consideration what you've experienced in the past, what can you do to prepare yourself for future traumatic events?



## The Physiology, Psychology and Theology of PTSD / PTSD Persistence (Pages 25 – 27)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◊ Why do you think God would create us with a special response pathway that kicks in only when we are in great danger?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ This section of the manual might have been too complex for some people. What would you say is the main way this defense mechanism works? Can anyone summarize it in just a couple of sentences?
  - ◊ How does this defense mechanism keep us safe?
  - *[Note to leader – you may want to spend some time clarifying some of the terms or concepts in this section.]*
  - ◊ Would any of you like to share where you put your X on the two lines in this section (middle of page 26)?
  - ◊ Have some of you asked the question that is asked here: “Why can’t I move on?” Tell us about that – why do you think you haven’t been able to move on?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Would any of you feel like sharing some of the defensive processes and reactions that you experienced during one of your past traumatic events?
  - ◊ Do you have any ideas about what may help you get “un-stuck” from the “crisis-alert mode” and move on?
  - ◊ Have you ever thought that your current Combat Trauma condition proves that you are weak, defective or a coward? Since you have now learned the physiological and spiritual basis of your condition, how has that changed your opinion of yourself?

## PTSD Symptoms (Pages 27 – 29)

- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ If you haven’t done it already, read over the list of symptoms and check the ones that you are currently experiencing. Are there any words or concepts that you would like to ask about?
  - ◊ How would you summarize each of the three categories of symptoms?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ As you look at all of the boxes you checked, if you could pick three symptoms that are the hardest for you to endure, which would they be?
  - ◊ Does the number of boxes you checked make you feel hopeless, or hopeful?
  - ◊ Is it helpful to be able to see the symptoms you are dealing with displayed on the paper there in front of you – and to notice that many others are dealing with similar symptoms?
  - ◊ Would any of you like to share what you wrote in the blank at the top of page 29, about things you miss most about how your life was before Combat Trauma?
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ What could you begin to do right away to help lessen the influence of these symptoms on you? *[Note: They may not yet have any ideas – except to pray and keep coming to these group meetings. But that’s okay. Just let them know that the main purpose of the manual and of the group meetings is to give them specific, practical things they can do to bring about their healing. So be sure to keep coming back each week!]*

## Traumatic Brain Injury (Pages 29, 30)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◊ Did any of you experience a blast or sudden blow to the head while you were in combat that could have resulted in TBI? Have any of you been formally diagnosed with TBI?

- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ Why are so many people who have TBI wrongly categorized as having had PTSD?
  - ◊ Do you have some of the symptoms on the list on page 29 which are unique to TBI (the non-bold ones in the list)?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◊ How many of you think you could have *both* TBI and PTSD?
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ TBI can be definitively identified by medical professionals who are trained in its detection. If you have experienced a blast or sudden blow to the head, how soon are you planning to get checked out (if you haven't already)?

### The Way Out (Pages 30, 31)

- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ Can someone explain (or three people explain) what each of the three basic types of memory are?
  - ◊ Who can share one very pleasant episodic memory that they have (doesn't have to be related to the war)?
  - ◊ Who would like to share one *unpleasant* episodic memory that is *not* related to combat?
  - ◊ How does the manual say we can counteract and release the unprocessed emotions of negative episodic memories?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Can any of you think how it will be possible to come up with a *more powerful* episodic memory that will counter the negative episodic memories you have of your combat experiences? *[This will be talked about in greater detail in Step 4, pages 62,63. But if you want to give them a "taste" of what to expect, you could summarize those pages for them.]*
  - ◊ Would any of you like to share what they wrote in the blank at the bottom of page 30, about what you would include in your personal definition of how life will be when you are "healed"? Why do you think it's important to think about this?
  - ◊ Looking at the three stages of healing from severe trauma on page 31, how many of you would say you are in the "Cognitive Stage" of healing right now? How many feel they have made it to the "Emotional Stage"? How many to the "Empowerment Stage"? *[Some may feel that they are experiencing several elements of two or even three stages. That's okay! Spiritual and emotional healing is seldom cut-and-dried. It can be a little disorganized at times.]*
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ Healing from Combat Trauma and TBI can often be a "three steps forward, two steps back" process. The key is to focus on the "forward" steps, and not get too discouraged about the "backward" ones. The next time you are disappointed with your progress, what can you do to counter that emotion?



## **STEP 3A: WHERE'S THE HOSPITAL?** (PAGES 33-42)

### **CONSTRUCTING YOUR HEALING ENVIRONMENT – PART 1**

#### **Objectives:**

- To provide practical input on how to build an environment that will give God optimal access to the Combat Trauma sufferer's body, mind and spirit for the purpose of healing.
- To help them understand the foundational truths about two of the five key elements of their healing environment: the Holy Spirit and the Bible (the other three will be covered in Step 3B).

## Discussion Questions:

### The Essence of Healing (and just before it) (Page 33)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ After reading the quote of the neurosurgeon from Robert Hicks, would you agree or disagree with the statement, “Doctors don’t heal anybody. Medicine doesn’t heal anybody. Surgery doesn’t heal anybody.”? If so, how *does* someone experience healing?
- ◇ What are some of the elements that you think ought to be present in a good healing environment? *[This would be a good one for them to think about before they have a chance to read what Steps 3A and 3B suggest.]*

- **Content Question**

- ◇ What *do* doctors, medicine and surgeries accomplish? *[Bottom of page 33.]*

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Do you feel that – up to this point – you have been doing a good job of constructing a healing environment for yourself, relative to your Combat Trauma? How do you think that might change in the coming weeks and months?

### Element #1: The Holy Spirit – Your Divine Power Source

#### Who is the Holy Spirit? / The Indwelling / The Filling of the Holy Spirit (Pages 34, 35)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Short answer brain storming time. In just a sentence or two, what are some of the things you already knew about the Holy Spirit before coming to this study?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ This section uses only a few sentences to present God as a “Trinity.” This is an extremely deep and vast subject, but what is your understanding about what is meant by the “Trinity”?
- ◇ Let’s look at what you wrote down in each of the blanks on pages 34 and 35 about what the Holy Spirit does. *[If you’d like to do additional study on what the Bible says the Holy Spirit does for us, study the following passages: John 14:26; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Ephesians 1:13,14; John 7:37-40; Galatians 5:22,23.]*
- ◇ As you read the list of things that the Holy Spirit desires to do for us, which are the most important to you, and why?
- ◇ What are the two commands that God gives us in Ephesians 5:18 (the verse in the box at the bottom of page 35)?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ As you read the list of things that the Holy Spirit desires to do for us, which are the most important to you, and why?
- ◇ Do you understand the difference between being “indwelt” and being “filled” by the Holy Spirit? *[If not, go over the concepts again. To be “indwelt” is a “positional truth.” That means it is our unchanging position before God since the time we asked Christ into our life. He will always live inside us and never leave (Hebrews 13:5b). But to be “filled” is a “conditional truth.” That means that we are filled (controlled, guided, empowered) by God’s Spirit as long as certain conditions are met. It has to do with desire, obedience, yielding control to Him, etc.]*
- ◇ How is the controlling influence of alcohol similar to the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit in a person? How are the two different?

### Three kinds of people (Page 36)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ What do you think of the philosophy represented by the first circle: “I am the Captain of my own soul!” Is that a good principle to live by, or not? Is it even true? Can anybody really control their own life?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What do you see as the main problem in the life represented by the first circle?
  - ◇ What do you see as the main problem in the life represented by the third circle?
  - ◇ What do you think are the main advantages for someone who has Christ on the throne of his or her life?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◇ Which of these three circles represents a person who will most likely be able to experience healing from his or her Combat Trauma? Why do you think that?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◇ As the questions in your manual ask, which circle would you say currently represents your life?
  - ◇ Which circle would you *like* to have represent your life?
  - ◇ What do you think you should do about this?

#### *Five Steps to Filling* (Page 37, 38)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ If you knew that you could do something that would bring the power and insight of the God of the universe right into you mind and body, what would you be willing to do? *[The good news is, God doesn't place difficult and hard-to-accomplish tasks on us in order for this to happen. He makes it very easy for us!]*
- **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ **[1. Desire]** What does the verse in your manual, Matthew 5:6, say is required in order for us to be filled? *[First blank.]*
  - ◇ How did some of you answer that second question: What would that “desire” look or feel like in your life? Do you think a person could experience the filling of the Holy Spirit if he didn't really want God leading him in his life?
  - ◇ **[2. Confess]** What are some ways that people might “quench” the Holy Spirit in their lives? If a person refuses to admit and confess his sins before God, why would this keep the Holy Spirit from controlling, guiding and empowering him?
  - ◇ **[3. Present – or Yield in earlier edition]** How did you answer the question? Is “presenting” (or yielding or offering) yourself to God a passive or purposeful action? Does it just happen whether you want it to or not, or do you have to make a decision about it and actually *do* it? What do you think about the idea of being a “slave to righteousness,” as talked about in the passage (Romans 6:16-18)? What do you think that means? Can you think of something you've done in the past that you thought was going to be fun and freeing and would make your life better, but you found out later that it put you into bondage?
  - ◇ **[4. Ask]** Based on the verse talked about in this passage (Luke 11:9-13), how willing do you think God is to say “Yes!” to those who ask Him for the filling of the Holy Spirit? Why?
  - ◇ **[5. Thank Him in faith]** In the verse used in this section (Mark 11:24), why is it important to understand that after we have prayed for something we should believe God has already answered that prayer? *[It is a demonstration of our faith in God. We probably wouldn't thank Him if we thought He was saying “No” to our request.]*
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ After reading the prayer in the “**Asking to be filled**” section, do you feel it expresses the desire of your heart? If so, would you like to pray that prayer (or something similar) right

now? [If there are one or two who would like to – or if the whole group would – it seems to work well if you would lead them through the prayer sentence-by-sentence, with them repeating after you out loud. If anyone feels reluctant to do this in front of the rest of the group, don't force them – just encourage them to do it that night when they get home.]

### So, Am I Done With This Now? / Spiritual Breathing (Page 39)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ If you've asked the Holy Spirit to forgive and fill you, and He does, why don't we remain in that condition forever? [It has to do with our free will. We can choose to re-take the throne of our lives. Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee was once asked why we didn't stay filled, and he answered, "Because we leak!"]

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ How is exhaling like confessing your sins?
- ◇ How is inhaling like asking the Holy Spirit to once again take the throne of your life?
- ◇ If you sin, and re-take the throne of your life, does this mean that you are no longer saved? If not, what *does* it mean?
- ◇ How often do you think you might have to "take a spiritual breath"?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How do you think you will know when you have taken Christ off the throne of your life, and seated yourself there?
- ◇ Would someone like to share with the group how your life would look when you are *not* filled by the Holy Spirit, and how it would look when you *are*?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What are some things you can do to make sure that you are walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit *most* of the time? [Brainstorm. Some of the suggestions might be: spend some time reading God's Word each day; ask the Holy Spirit to fill me first thing when I wake up every morning; ask a close, trusted friend to hold me accountable on this issue and let me know when he or she sees from my actions or attitudes that I may have re-taken the throne of my life, etc.]

### Element #2: The Word of God – Your Divine Food and Weapon (Pages 39-42)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Can anyone describe what happens to a body when it doesn't get proper nourishment?
- ◇ Have any of you ever had to go a long time without food? What was it like? How did it affect your energy, motivation, ambition, ability to do what you needed to do, etc.?

- **Content Question**

- ◇ How did you complete that question above the blank at the top of page 40: "The Bible is . . ."

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How is God's word like bread and milk? [Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2 – bottom of page 39]
- ◇ How would going without spiritual food for a long time be similar to going without physical food?

### Benefits of Reading the Bible (Page 40)

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Let's look at how you answered each of the questions on this page. In each case, you are to find at least one benefit of reading (studying) the Bible.
- ◇ In Psalm 119:9, 11 when David said, "I have hidden Your word in my heart," what do you think he meant by that? [Memorizing and meditating on it. **Note:** a person will only

*effectively remember 5% of what he hears, 15% of what he reads, 35% of what he studies, but 100% of what he memorizes. What does that tell you about the importance of using a variety of methods to take in the Word of God?]*

### Your Personal Plan (Page 41)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◊ Think about how you take in the Word of God. If you had to put percentage values on how you use each of the five ways talked about in this section, what would they be? What changes do you think you might want to make?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◊ Did you feel motivated to fill in the blanks in the “Personal Commitment” area in this section? If so, would you care to share what you wrote?
  - ◊ Do any of you have any thoughts about how you might increase the probability that you’ll stick to the “Personal Commitment” you wrote down?
  - ◊ Are there any of you that feel you would like to try the “SPACE-Q” format for studying through the Bible on your own? If so, I’ll help you set up a Journal for it.

### Taking the Sword (Page 42)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ How important was your weapon when you were in combat? How familiar were you with it? How many times did it save your life?
  - ◊ How is God’s Word like a sword? [*Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12*] How can you use the Word of God like a weapon – and who would you use it against?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◊ [*Read the passage in Matthew 4:1-11 about the time Jesus used the Word to fight Satan. Have them identify each time Jesus used His weapon, and note that each time He used it, Satan had to stop that attack, and try from another direction. Finally, Jesus commanded Satan to leave – something we’ll be learning how to do in Step 8: How Do I Fight?*]
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ Do you know your “spiritual weapon” as well as you knew your rifle when you were in combat? If not, what do you intend to do about that? How can you get to know it better?



## **STEP 3B: WHERE’S THE HOSPITAL?** (PAGES 43-52)

### **CONSTRUCTING YOUR HEALING ENVIRONMENT – PART 2**

#### **Objectives:**

- To provide practical input on how to build an environment that will give God optimal access to the Combat Trauma sufferer’s body, mind and spirit for the purpose of healing.
- To help them understand the foundational truths about the other three key elements of their healing environment: prayer, the Christian community and mindset.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Element #3: Prayer – Vital Communication With Your Divine Commander*

*AMBUSH!* (Page 43, 44)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ When you were in combat conditions, how important was communication with the others in your squad and unit, as well as with “Higher”?

- ◇ Were you ever in a situation where communication was cut off? What was it like?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ When the squad leader saw that he and his men were pinned down, what was the first thing that came to his mind?
  - ◇ What were some of the “irrational” thoughts he had which convinced him that it would be a waste of time for him to contact HQ for backup?
  - ◇ What would be the rational and realistic thoughts that a *real* squad leader in a *real* firefight would have in that situation, and what expectations could he have regarding the backup he needed?
  - ◇ Why should we pray? What is its purpose? *[First 3 paragraphs on page 44. He wants us to communicate with Him to develop our relationship with Him – not just to be our cosmic Santa Claus and give us everything we ask for.]*
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How were some of the squad leader’s irrational thoughts parallel to those people might have about communicating with God?
  - ◇ In what ways is prayer like “spiritual fire support”?
  - ◇ How did some of you answer the question at the top of page 44 about why so many people are reluctant to spend much time in prayer?
  - ◇ How is prayer like the interaction between a husband and his wife?
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share where you placed your X on the two lines in the middle of page 44?
    - ◇ *[If they scored the first line high:]* Why do you think God wants to hear from you so much?
    - ◇ *[If they scored the first line low:]* Why **don’t** you think God wants to hear from you?
    - ◇ *[If they scored the second line high or low:]* Why **do** or **don’t** you want to talk to God?  
*[Note: Some very real issues could surface here regarding bitterness toward God and a subsequent lack of interest in praying to Him. Or, it could come out that a group member just feels that God is too big and distant to be interested in him or her, or doesn’t feel God listens to their prayers, so what’s the use? Or they’ve asked God for things in the past, but God didn’t answer those prayers – so why keep trying? Don’t try to convince them otherwise right now – it won’t happen quickly or easily. Just ask them to keep an open mind to the idea that God might want to change their mind about this issue. This also gives you something specific to begin praying for them, doesn’t it?]*

What Does God Want You To Pray About? (Pages 44, 45)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Before we go into this section, what are some of the things that you think God wants included in your prayers to Him?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share what you saw in the passages on pages 44 and 45 about what God wants us to pray about?  
*[Note: Go through them one at a time and give them the opportunity to share what they observed. Be sure you steer them towards the following observations (among others you might care to add):*
    - Matthew 6:11** – We can pray about our daily needs, whatever they are: food, clothing, shelter, finances, etc. “Bread” here refers to more than just whole wheat or white.*
    - Psalms 18:1-3** – We can praise Him for the great resource, refuge and deliverer He is.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** – We can thank Him in every circumstance (not necessarily for every circumstance). But no matter what our situation, we can thank Him because of Romans 8:28.

**Psalm 22:1,2** – We can call to Him when we're in trouble – we can even yell at Him and express our disappointment and confusion!

**1 John 1:9** – We can confess our sins to Him for the purpose of gaining forgiveness.

**Matthew 6:13** – We can ask Him to help us with the temptations we face, and to keep us from being overcome by our spiritual adversary, the devil.

**Philippians 4:6** – We can pray about anything and everything – no holds barred!

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Do you feel that currently you are praying too much, too little or just the right amount? If too little, what could you do to change that? If too much . . . can I have your autograph?? (You are a rare and undoubtedly famous person indeed!)
- ◇ How do you think spending more time talking with God in prayer will help you with your Combat Trauma?
- ◇ What are two things that you have prayed about today? Look at the list of examples of prayers from the Bible (pages 44, 45). Were your two prayers similar to any of those there?
- ◇ Do you feel comfortable with the idea that you can pray to God about *anything* – that you can even express your doubts, anger, confusion and fears to Him?
- ◇ Why do you think it's always important to mix our requests with thanksgiving, as it says in Philippians 4:6?

I Want Answers! (Pages 45, 46)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Was it news to you that God answers *every* prayer that you pray in faith? After reading this section, can you understand why we can say that?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What are the three different ways that God may choose to answer our prayers?
- [Note: if you have time, look up a few of the passages listed under each of the three ways God answers prayer and discuss them.] Can you think of a time when God answered one of your prayers in one of these three ways?
- ◇ How can we increase the number of “Yes” answers to our prayers? [See Psalm 37:4 on page 46 – if the Lord is our delight, then our desires will automatically line up with His, and before we even make our request, our prayers will reflect His will.]

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Can we tell ahead of time in which of the three ways God will answer our prayers? How should this affect our praying? [It shouldn't – since we don't know how He'll answer, we should pray and then leave the decision to Him.]

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ Did you feel motivated to fill in the blanks in the “Personal Commitment” area of this section? If so, would you care to share what you wrote?
- ◇ Do you have any ideas how you will be able to hold yourself to this commitment? [How about designating a “battle buddy” who will help hold you accountable?]
- ◇ As it says in the “Prayer Assignment” section on page 46, let's go back to Step 2, page 29, read what we wrote there, and spend a little time right now praying for what we wrote.

Element #4: The Christian Community – Your Divine Green Zone (Pages 46-50)

- **Opening Questions**



- ◇ Have any of you actually been in the Green Zone in Baghdad? Describe it for us. What kinds of things happened there? What was *good* about it? How are each of these things similar to how a church is supposed to function? [*If no one has been to the Green Zone, change the question to Base Camp or their FOB – Forward Operating Base.*]
- ◇ What are some reasons why people don't want to go to church (speaking about *anyone* here, not just combat veterans)? What can we do to help eliminate some of those reasons?
- ◇ Do you personally find it difficult to go to church because of your Combat Trauma? What are some of the thoughts you have as you consider going to church?
- ◇ Those who struggle with Combat Trauma may tend to stay away from crowds – and church. But what are some of the reasons why it would be worth the effort to go? [*Note: the study lists a number of negative things staying away from Christian fellowship will do at the bottom of page 47. Have them turn each statement into a positive statement about the good things that happen when one spends time with other Christians.*]
- ◇ What do you think is meant by the term “The Church”? How important is it to you to be involved with a local church? [*See second paragraph after Ecclesiastes 4 passage on page 48.*]

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ How is the church like a physical body?
- ◇ Would some of you like to share where you put your X on the line in the middle of page 47? [**Follow-up:**] What do you think it would take to move your X farther toward the left end?
- ◇ As the next question asks [*middle of page 47*], “What has discouraged you most about trying to reconnect with your old friends?” Would some of you like to share how you answered that?
- ◇ Why is social isolation *not* a good move for you? [*See list at bottom of page 47.*]
- ◇ [**Application:**] If you are currently isolating yourself to some degree, what are some things you could do to gradually reverse that trend?
- ◇ What are some of the benefits Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 [*top of page 48*] mentions that those who spend time with other Christians will enjoy?
- ◇ The verses on pages 48-50 talk about the things that are *supposed* to happen in a church. Unfortunately, they don't always happen, but God designed the church to include these things. Let's look at each passage and try to figure out what it is saying should be included in a “normal” church. [*If they have done this exercise ahead of time, ask them to share what they came up with. If not, do it together as a group now. When done . . .*] If each of these things were happening at a church, would you be motivated to go there? What can you contribute to make sure that they *do* happen at your church?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Are there some of you who go to church, even though your anxiety level goes up each time you do? How are you able to continue going there if it makes you anxious? [*This discussion could give some helpful insights to those who aren't currently going to church.*]
- ◇ Have any of you ever gone through a period when you had a difficult time going to church, or being in groups of people of any kind? Are any of you still struggling with that? Have you found some things that help you deal with the anxiety associated with this?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Do you have the level of Christian fellowship that you need? If not, what do you plan to do about it? How can we help you?

What Happens Underground? (Page 50).

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ Have any of you ever seen those Redwood trees in northern California? What was your impression of them?
- ◊ Did you find that the Redwoods always grew in stands, as it says in the manual?
- **Content Question**
  - ◊ Why won't a Redwood tree grow all by itself in the middle of a field? [**Follow-up**] How is this like you?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◊ How can Christians "interlace their roots below the surface"? What issues would this involve?
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ How can we, as a bunch of combat veterans struggling with Combat Trauma, interlace our roots beneath the surface? What would that look like? How would we start?

### Element #5: Your Mindset – Spiritual Battlemind for Divine Healing (Pages 50-52) Courage

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ Did any of you undergo the "Battlemind Training" (or something similar) that the Army offers to its soldiers? If so, tell us what you remember about it. [*It's a plan to help their soldiers have self-confidence and mental toughness so that they can face fear and adversity in combat with courage, and includes things like accountability, targeted aggression, tactical awareness, emotional control, etc.*]
  - ◊ How important do you think these three elements of Courage, Intentionality and Optimism are to a positive, healing mindset?
- **Content Question**
  - ◊ What reason do you have to feel courageous? [*If you're a Christian, you are connected to the Supreme Problem-Solver of the Universe – second paragraph after Peck's quote, page 51.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ What impresses you the most about Ayn Rand's quote in the middle of page 51? Does anything about it inspire you?
  - ◊ How does one *get* courage? Are you born with it? Is it developed? Can it come and go? If you need some right now as you are struggling with Combat Trauma, how can you get some? [**Note:** *In Joshua 1:9 God **commanded** Joshua to do two things: be strong, and be courageous. As was mentioned a few weeks ago, we know that we can **do** certain things to become strong – or we can elect to **not** become strong. Doesn't this passage indicate the same thing about courage – that we can **do** things to increase our courage or decide to **not** be courageous?*]
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ What is your plan to increase the amount of courage in your life?

### Intentionality

- **Opening Question**
  - ◊ What percent of veterans who suffer from PTSD and Combat Trauma do you think are doing their best to *ignore* their disorder, pretend that nothing's wrong, and that they don't need to do anything to get fixed, because they are not broken?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ What points does the manual make regarding what ignoring a wound does for it?
  - ◊ When you were in combat, how helpful was it to be passive?

- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Do any of you struggle with feelings of passivity, a desire to just pull the covers up over your head and stay in bed all day? Does the idea of setting goals make you cringe?
  - ◊ If not, what are some of the goals you have for the coming day or week?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◊ In what other areas do you need to make a goal?
  - ◊ Think of one goal you should set for tomorrow and write it down. Afterwards, we'll share them with the other members of the group and hold each other accountable for it.

## Optimism

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ Before you went into combat, would you say you were primarily an optimist or a pessimist?
  - ◊ How would you characterize yourself nowadays – optimist or pessimist?
  - ◊ If you struggle with pessimism from time to time (and who doesn't?), what are some things that send you there?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ The manual makes the point that your story is still being written – “it ain't over till it's over.” How can focusing on this fact give you a more optimistic mindset?
  - ◊ What does the Scripture shared on page 52 have to do with optimism?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ How can we become *intentional* about minimizing our pessimism and increasing our optimism?
  - ◊ How does Thomas Edison's quote demonstrate optimism? How can you apply his mindset to your situation?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◊ Can you think of anything that you can begin doing *today* to increase your optimism?
  - ◊ Think of one particular event or occurrence that would increase your optimism – what would you *really* like to see happen, sooner rather than later? Begin praying for it with courage and intentionality.



## **STEP 4: HOW DID I CHANGE?** (PAGES 53-64)

### **REMEMBERING WHAT HAPPENED**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members remember, journal and process the painful memories of their trauma.
- To help them understand that keeping these memories suppressed will do them more harm than good, so – as difficult as it might be – it's better to get them out and talk about them.
- **Note to the Facilitator.** *Let the group know that this will probably be one of the most difficult Steps – but it may be the most helpful of them all. You may want to consider breaking this chapter up into three sessions (or even more): the first to cover the opening story, the “Rules”, and writing the “Warm Up” and “Part 1: My Life Before Combat.” The second session would have them write “Part 2: What Happened To Me ‘Over There’”. The third would have them write “Part 3: My Life Since Combat.” It's up to you, but it might be more productive to have them do their writing while they are there with you in the group session. If they are unwilling to write, you could have them pair up with another group member and share their stories verbally – even*

*including discussion between the two of them. If you'd rather they do their writing at home, and bring it in to share with the others, that's fine – whatever you and the Lord decide!*

**Discussion Questions:**

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Have you ever had an experience where you neglected a small problem and it eventually became a very big problem (like in the splinter analogy towards the bottom of page 53)? Would you care to share it with the rest of the group?
  - ◇ What do you think this statement means: “You are only as sick as your secrets.” [Quoted from David Grossman, bottom of page 53.]
  - ◇ You don't have to answer this out loud, but just think about it for a moment. Do you have some secrets related to your time of trauma that you've kept inside which are making you sicker and sicker?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Why would most of us rather not think about our painful past than to bring it up and talk about it?
  - ◇ What are some of the emotional things that might happen to you as you process these memories? What good do you think will come out of it?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◇ How could this desire to suppress memories be related to alcohol and drug abuse? What other behaviors do people engage in to try to distract themselves so they won't think about their painful memories?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What are some things you do – positive or negative – to avoid thinking about your traumatic memories? Which behaviors will you need to have help in overcoming?

*Getting the secrets out (Pages 54, 55)*

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ What do you think of the idea that your life is like a poem that God has written? Do you feel He has been a good writer or a bad writer so far?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ God is not the author of evil, yet many evil things have happened to you in your life. How do those occurrences fit into God's poem?
  - *Go over the “Rules”(pages 54, 55) one at a time as a group. Let the group know that if you come to a rule that they don't understand or have questions about, you'll take some time and explain it.*
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Do you think you will be able to write your story? If not, would you be able to record it, or to simply tell it to one of your friends, a fellow group member or the group facilitator?

*Warm up / A Long-Delayed Debriefing / Writing Your story – Part 1 (Pages 55-57)*

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Would you consider yourself a good story-teller?
  - ◇ What do you think makes a good story? A good story-teller?
- **Content Questions**
  - *Have them complete the Warm Up exercise on page 55. No need to take any more than 8 to 10 minutes on this, but it's important. It will “prime the pump” in terms of getting them to remember difficult experiences and process them objectively. When done, ask two or three to share what they wrote – this will help others in the group who may have had difficulty with*

*this exercise. Then, move into the “Long-Delayed Debriefing” section and writing Part 1 of their story. Be sure to read Patience Mason’s paragraph on page 56 out loud.*

- ◇ Why do you think it’s a good idea to write about how your life was *before* you experienced your trauma, rather than to go right into processing your traumatic experiences?
- ◇ Read over the suggestions regarding what you might include in this part of the story. Which ones do you think you’ll use?
- **Special Exercise**
  - *Let them start writing Part 1. Give them some idea of how much time they should plan on.*
  - *When they are done, you could have a couple of them share what they wrote, or wait until the next session and have several share during the first part of the meeting. After they read, let the group members comment, ask questions, but most importantly, affirm the one who just shared. Part of the good therapy of this exercise is the writing, but reading what they wrote out loud adds to the experience’s therapeutic nature.*

Writing Your story – Part 2: What Happened To Me “Over There” (Pages 58, 59)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Did you experience any difficulties writing Part 1? What do you think you gained from that exercise?
  - ◇ How difficult do you think it will be for you to write Part 2? Are you willing to do it anyway?
- **Content Question**
  - ◇ Why do you think it is important for you to get in touch with your feelings and emotions as you work through this second part of your story? [*Refer to what Dr. Matsakis wrote in this section.*]
- **Special Exercise**
  - ◇ Let’s go over the “Rules” again before you start writing. If your anxiety level starts ramping up too steeply as you do this exercise, it’s okay to take a break, go outside for a little while, etc. – but be sure to come back! Honestly, you may not want to, but you must remember that this is hard yet *important work*.
  - *Read the section to them about feelings and emotions, so they will be prepared and not startled by the feelings that may come out. Then let them begin writing.*
  - *Again, when they are done, you could have a couple share what they wrote, or wait until next session.*

Writing Your story – Part 3: My Life Since Combat (Pages 60, 61)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ How did you do with Part 2? Was it as hard as you thought it was going to be, or harder?
  - ◇ What do you think you gained from writing out that part of the story?
- **Content Question**
  - ◇ Read through the list of suggestions about the content of this part. Which ones do you think you would like to write about?
- **Special Exercise**
  - *Go over the “Rules” one more time if you think you need to – or just quickly highlight a few of the important ones. Be sure they understand that they should write both the good and the bad things that have happened since their trauma and how they feel about it. Then let them start writing.*
  - *When they are done, have a couple share what they wrote immediately, or wait until next session.*

Why? / Inviting Jesus into your pain (Pages 62-63)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ What have you noticed about yourself and your anxiety level since you wrote those three parts of your story? Has it been a positive or negative experience for you?
- **Content Questions**
  - Refer back to Step 2, page 30, where the group members were introduced to the concept of “episodic memories.”
  - ◇ Read through Philippians 3:10 on page 63. Notice that most of the things that Paul wants to experience sound pretty positive and exciting – who *wouldn't* want those things? But notice what he asks for toward the end of the verse: “. . . that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness, even to His death.” Not such a fun trip any more, huh? Why do you think Paul desires to share in Jesus' sufferings and death? *[To really know Christ is to know Him in both his power and glory as well as in His agony. Those of you who have experienced Combat Trauma know far more about agony than almost everybody else in this country, and therefore you know things about Christ that most don't.]*
  - ◇ You have some very difficult and dark places hidden in your mind. What does Jesus want to do about those dark places? Do you think He'll have any trouble going into those dark places? Why or why not?
  - ◇ Have you got a battle buddy who is supporting you in your struggles? If not, think about who your battle buddy could be and ask God to bring just the right one along.
  - ◇ How can your battle buddy help provide a stronger, positive episodic memory?
- **Special Exercise**
  - Read through the section as a group, making sure that they understand how they are to go through this visualization exercise. Help them understand that this is not a once-in-a-lifetime exercise. It's something they should engage in periodically to allow the Lord to have greater access to every part of their life.
  - Be sure that you pray together as a group before doing this exercise.
  - You may want to have people go to different parts of the room or building you're in, or even go to different places outside, so they can be alone and concentrate.
  - This exercise is very good to use while on a retreat or somewhere away from home as a group.
  - After you've given the group members a sufficient period of time alone (30 to 60 minutes), bring them back together and have them share their experiences.,



## **STEP 5: HOW CAN I STAND IT?** (PAGES 65-77)

### **PROCESSING YOUR LOSS AND GRIEF**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand that grieving over what they lost in their traumatic combat experience is not only okay – it's *important*.
- To help them understand what the normal grief process looks like.
- To give them practical insights regarding how to grieve and how *not* to grieve.
- To give them practical insights regarding how to mourn.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Understanding Grief / The Purpose of Grief* (Pages 65, 66)

- **Opening Questions**

- ❖ Outside of your war-related experiences, what is something that you have grieved about in the past? Do you think you are still grieving over this?
- ❖ What are your thoughts about grieving? Is it important not to show emotion when suffering a loss? Does grieving show a lack of faith? Is openly mourning a loss considered un-manly or weak? Do you feel embarrassed if someone sees you crying because of a loss?
- ❖ Why are most American men (and some women, too) reluctant to – or even afraid to – grieve? What are we afraid will happen if we allow ourselves to really grieve over a loss?
- ❖ What do most of us do in order to avoid grieving?
- **Content Questions**
  - ❖ What always has to happen prior to a resurrection? [*Death, followed by a season in the grave – page 65, first paragraph.*] You have already experienced the first two – do you still hang onto the hope that you'll also experience the third and final phase?
  - ❖ What always triggers grief? [*A loss of some sort – 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph on page 65.*]
  - ❖ When something very bad has happened to you or to a loved one, and you feel grieved over it, what does it feel like to you? Can you describe your feelings? [*Looking for the idea of bearing a great burden, “grief’s” Latin derivative.*]
  - ❖ Would any of you like to share what you wrote in the blank at the bottom of page 65 – a specific loss you suffered as a result of your time in combat?
  - ❖ Why did God build the grief response into us? [*Top of page 66.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ❖ Why do you think it's important to “name” your losses?
  - ❖ How have you been able to handle those losses? How did they affect you?
  - ❖ Think back. Can you think of any ways in which God helped you through that difficult time?
  - ❖ Do you think you'll ever receive back what you lost or be able to replace it? How does that make you feel? What do you think you should do about those feelings?
  - *Special exercise: Take each of the points under “When we grieve:” (page 66) and turn them into a negative. In doing this, answer the question: “When we **don't** grieve . . .” Example using the first one: “When we don't grieve we are not engaging the emotions that come with our loss. We stuff and deny them. We can't feel, so we don't heal.”*
  - ❖ Look at the list of consequences under “When we refuse to grieve:” (page 66). Circle any of them that you are currently experiencing. Could this be due to not allowing yourself to grieve the losses you have suffered?
- **Application Question**
  - ❖ If you haven't already done this, can you decide on someone you can talk with about your traumatic losses? Make a list and begin praying and asking God to make it clear who you could talk with.

### What You Can Expect To Experience – “Normal” Grief (Pages 66, 67)

- **Opening Question**
  - ❖ Can any of you identify with what C. S. Lewis wrote about how he felt after his wife died of cancer? Does this sound like the actions of a man of little faith, a man who didn't walk very close to Christ? Do you know who C. S. Lewis is? [*Former agnostic who became one of the greatest theologians and Christian philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; also wrote Chronicles of Narnia, Mere Christianity, God In the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics; The Screwtape Letters, The Problem of Pain, A Grief Observed and many other classic Christian books.*] What does this tell you about how unbalanced, faithless and discouraged grief can make you feel? Is it an indication that you are not a very good Christian?
- **Content Questions**

- *Special exercise: Allow the group to silently look over the list of symptoms on page 67 and check any of them that they are currently experiencing. When done, ask those who are willing to share the one or two symptoms they are struggling with the most right now.*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think it says at the bottom of page 67, “The more boxes you checked, the better!”?

What about “loss of faith”? (Pages 68-69)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ As you struggle with your traumatic memories and the symptoms of Combat Trauma, how often have you questioned your faith, felt abandoned by God or even questioned the very existence of God?
- ◇ How common do you think these feelings are? *[They are very common, shared by some of the most godly men in history.]*

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ How do we humans tend to measure whether or not God is with us? *[See Crabb's quote, second paragraph on page 68 – we measure it by the emotions we feel.]*
- ◇ How did C.S. Lewis feel after his wife – the love of his life – died? Did he feel this way for the rest of his life? What do you think helped him get past his great sense of loss and disappointment?
- ◇ When God *seems* absent from us, what is actually going on? *[See the “God's secret work” section at the bottom of page 68.]*
- *[Read Ron Mehl's description of what God's doing when He seems absent out loud to the group – bottom of page 68 and top of page 69.]* How do those thoughts make you feel? Do you believe them? If not, do you think you ever could?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think it is that when we are happy, we automatically think God is with us, and when we are sad, or things are going sideways, we automatically think God has left the building – or the galaxy?

What You Can Expect From Others (Pages 69-70)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ What's the most insensitive or less-than-helpful thing someone has done to/for you in response to your loss and grief?

- **Content Questions**

- *[Read the list of comments in the middle of page 69 out loud. Have them check the ones they've heard. Ask if they know of any others that aren't listed here.]*
- ◇ Why do you think people say such insensitive things? How should we respond? *[Usually they say them with a good heart, but don't know they're not being helpful. Say thanks and move on.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ After reading the list of “helpful things” at the bottom of page 69, can you think of any additional things that a truly caring and knowledgeable people say and do for those who are hurting?
- ◇ Do any of you have anybody like that in your circle of friends? If so, tell us a little about him or her.

- **Application Exercise**

- *Prayer Assignment (page 70). Take a few moments right now and ask a few group members pray for God to put a few of those caring and knowledgeable people in their lives.*



### How NOT TO Grieve/How TO Grieve (Pages 70-72)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ What are some of the inappropriate ways in which you have seen people grieve in the past?
- **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ If you haven't done so already, take a few minutes to go through the list of how we should *not* grieve, and check any that you might do. [*Afterwards . . .*] Would anyone care to share their list with the group? Could you choose one or two that you checked and share an example of how you personally used that technique of inappropriate grieving?
  - ◇ Look at the seven stages of grief that Elizabeth Kübler-Ross identified. [*Read them out loud.*] As you think back to your traumatic combat experiences, which stage of grief would you say you are currently in? [*They may identify with a couple of stages simultaneously – that's okay. Also, make sure they understand that people don't necessarily go through these stages in a nice, neat progression. Read the paragraph, "A few words about the process," middle of page 72.*]
  - ◇ What do you think might help you to progress on to the next stage?
  - ◇ Would a few of you like to share what you wrote in the blank on page 72, regarding how you feel about where you are in the process and what you think it's going to take to move on?
  - ◇ Read the first verse in the manual on page 72 (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). From this verse, can you see something beneficial that will come out of your time of affliction and grief? Can you think of anyone who has gone through a trauma similar to yours who is helping you now? Can you think of someone *you* could now help?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◇ If you have an idea about what you might do to help yourself progress to the next stage of grief, how will you go about doing it? Who might be able to help you? When will you start?
  - ◇ If you can think of anyone whom you might be able to help in the way you were helped (as in 2 Corinthians 1:3,4), can you make a plan to begin doing that soon?

### How to have a good mourning (Pages 72-76)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ What are some of the ways that you or your family would typically mourn over a loved-one who has died?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What's the difference between *grief* and *mourning*?
  - ◇ Read Matthew 5:4 (the verse close to the bottom of page 72). What does this verse say is necessary to receive comfort?
  - ◇ According to Psalm 34:18 (bottom of page 72), what can you expect from God because of the pain and trauma you experienced?
  - ◇ What is it that we should have faith in? [*God.*] What can happen if we put our faith in our circumstances or in a particular desired outcome? How can we avoid doing that?
  - ◇ Is it sinful to get angry? [*This question is examined in the "Do something with your anger" section, page 74.*] Then, is it okay to be angry all the time? [*Though it's not a sin, it's not okay, because of what it will probably lead to. It needs to be dealt with in constructive ways.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ [*Read the quote from Larry Crabb at the bottom of page 73.*] What do some of you think about that? If we have faith, isn't God supposed to make everything work out right? How can faith in God give rise to "dreams going down in flames"? [*Make the point that the object of our faith should be the all-powerful God who loves us, and that He doesn't guarantee He'll*

*keep us from all adversity (see John 16:33), but that He'll help us get through it. Perhaps share the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and how God didn't rescue them from the furnace, but met them in the middle of it and brought them out.]*

- ◇ Can you think of anyone who can help you walk through your valley of grief, as mentioned in the "Don't try to be the Lone Ranger" section (top of page 74)?
- ◇ Some practical ways of dealing with the anger that often accompanies grief are listed in the "Do something with your anger" section (page 74). Can you think of any additional ways?
- ◇ In the "Go with the flow" section (bottom of page 74), can any of you identify with King David and how grieved he was? What were some of the elements of how he mourned? Do you think that David was anything less than "all man"? If you mourned like the great warrior King David did, would you still feel embarrassed, weak and less manly?
- ◇ Have any of you ever kept a journal or diary? Why do you think it might be helpful to write down your thoughts as you progress through your period of grief? What do you think about the idea of keeping a "Grief Journal" as it suggests on page 75? *[If there seems to be some interest, suggest doing it for one week, and see how it goes.]*

- **Application Questions**

- **Application Exercise.** *Encourage the group to try their hand at writing a Lament, as talked about at the bottom of page 75. Read the section aloud, including the examples, and then give the group 5 or 10 minutes to pour out their heart on paper. Then ask if there's anyone who would be willing to read what they wrote. If not, that's okay, but encourage them to keep it and to read it to God in prayer later that evening, as the manual suggests.*

*Signs that your mourning is working / Grief Memorials (Page 76, 77)*

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What were some of the "Why?" questions that you wrote down in this section?
- ◇ How were you able to change some of those questions into "How?" questions?
- ◇ What are some of the additional "How?" questions you came up with? *[This could be a good exercise for the group to do together – a brainstorming session.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think the "How?" questions are healthier ones to ask than the "Why?" questions?
- ◇ Have you ever received many answers to your "Why?" questions?
- ◇ Why do you think making a Grief Memorial could be helpful for a person in the mourning process?

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ What kind of a "Grief Memorial" could you make that would connect with the loss you suffered? When do you plan to make it?



## **STEP 6A: HOW DO I MOVE ON?** (PAGES 79-87)

### **FORGIVENESS RECEIVED AND GIVEN – PART 1**

#### **Objectives:**

- To emphasize that to do nothing about their anger will allow a "root of bitterness" to grow and negatively affect their lives.
- To help them understand the importance of seeking God's forgiveness for their sins and how to go about it.
- To help them know for sure that God can forgive *any and all* sins.

- To show the distinction between “false guilt” and “real guilt” and help them assess the kind of guilt they may be feeling.
- To help them understand the importance of seeking forgiveness from others and how to go about it.
- To help them understand the importance of forgiving those who have wounded them (physically, emotionally, spiritually) and how to go about it.

At some point – perhaps not for the first session dealing with this Step, but eventually – make sure everyone has the materials that they’ll use in the exercise described later in this Step: Glass jar, match or lighter, masking tape, pen. Of course, you *could* do it during the first session, if you felt led to.

### Discussion Questions:

*Why is this crucial to moving on?* (Pages 79, 80)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ As you think about the various injustices you have experienced in your life, how strongly do you feel the need for some kind of revenge or retribution? Do you feel this urge is a positive or negative factor in our life?

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ What are the main negative consequences that occur every time we decide to go against God’s laws? How does this hurt you? [*Separates us from God, others, ourselves.*]
- ◊ How does sin separate you from God? Is it a permanent separation? Does it cancel your salvation? What are the consequences – what actually happens? [*Call attention to the analogy about the husband and wife who are having a disagreement.*]
- ◊ How does sin separate you from another person?
- ◊ How does sin set up a separation in you?
- ◊ How do these separations affect your healing from Combat Trauma?
- ◊ What will reverse those separations? [*Reconciliation, accomplished through forgiveness – second paragraph, page 80.*]

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ What if you really *have* been wronged? What if an enemy was trying to kill you while you were downrange (which, as you know, happens quite a bit in war)? What if you were wounded by negligent friendly fire? What if your CO sent you on an ill-advised mission, and you and your buddy were wounded? Isn’t it normal and acceptable to feel anger toward that person and to seek retribution and revenge? [*Tread carefully here. You don’t want to minimize the depth of emotion and outrage a person feels when someone has tried to kill them. You want to affirm it as a legitimate and normal response, but you want to try to get your group member to assess whether it’s hurting or helping him or her to hang on to those feelings. Help them come to the conclusion themselves, rather than dictating it yourself.*]
- ◊ When a person is driven by a thirst for revenge, how much revenge do they normally need before they can finally say, “That’s good enough,” and get back to a “normal” life?
- ◊ What do you think the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius meant when he wrote: “Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves”? Do you think it’s good advice or irrelevant?
- ◊ Can you think of a course of action that would be better than revenge? [*How about: “forgiving”?*]

*Accepting God’s Forgiveness* (Pages 80-84)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ How important do you feel it is that a person be “right with God” in terms of agreeing with Him as He convicts of sin, confessing that sin and keeping Christ on the throne of his life? How will this affect his or her ability to connect with God’s power for healing?
- ◇ Why is God such a stickler about right and wrong, black and white? Why can’t He just let chill out and let people do what they want to?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What provision does God have for us when we do wrong? [*Confession and forgiveness – bringing us back into a right relationship with Him.*] **Follow-up:** But isn’t this hypocritical? How can He set up a law and then let us escape the consequences? [*See the discussion on absolutes and superseding laws – gravity/parachute – page 80.*]
  - ◇ Can anyone explain the difference between “false guilt” and “real guilt”?
  - ◇ [*Read over the different examples of False Guilt on page 80. Have them to consider if they’ve experienced any of them. If so, have them put a checkmark next to it/them.*] Did anybody check any of the boxes under the False Guilt section? Would you care to tell us a little about your experience that has led you to feel this way?
  - *If anyone has checked a particular entry under “False Guilt,” ask that person to read the corresponding counter-argument listed in the middle of page 81. Then ask them (and the rest of the group) if they think that counter-argument is legitimate or not.*
  - ◇ How does this section say you should deal with feelings of false guilt? [*See paragraph towards the bottom of page 81 that starts with, “In all of these cases . . .” and at the very bottom of the page.*]
  - ◇ If you are feeling bad about the “real guilt” you are experiencing, why is this good news?
  - ◇ What are the two steps a person needs to take in order to have Jesus’ sacrificial death apply to his or her sins?
  - ◇ If we confess our sins to God (which means to agree with Him that they were wrong), what does He promise to do? What will he do *besides* forgive us? [*Cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness.*]
  - ◇ What answers did you come up with on the “Math Test” on page 82?
  - ◇ What does it mean to “repent”?
  - ◇ Is it enough to only do one of these steps – can I confess and not repent, and expect the same outcome?
  - ◇ When would it also be necessary for us to make restitution (pay back) those we have sinned against?
  - ◇ What does it take for us to say to God, “Oh no you can’t” concerning His ability to forgive some of some of our “real bad” sins? [*Industrial Strength Courage or Foolishness – top of page 84.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Why do you think people continue to hold on to feelings of false guilt?
  - ◇ Is it possible that you may have done something so bad that you are beyond God’s ability to forgive you? [*The answer is no. Psalm 103:2,3 – Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Who pardons **all** your iniquities, Who heals **all** your diseases; Isaiah 1:18 – Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.*]
  - ◇ Who wants you to continue to feel oppressed by a load of unforgiven sin? [*Satan*] Are you going to let him get what he wants in this area? It’s not doing you any good, it’s not required by God – only Satan is enjoying it! [*okay, a little preaching there – but it’s a good point to make!*]
- **Application Questions**

- ◇ What do you think of the “Memorial Project #1”? Have you done it yet? If not, do you think it would be meaningful for you to follow the instructions regarding this? *[This would be a very good exercise for you to do with your group. If they do it alone, it will be meaningful to each one, but doing it as a group seems to add to their sense of responsibility, accountability, understanding and comradeship with each other.]*
- ◇ Would you like to do this together as a group next week (or even right now)?

### Seeking forgiveness from others (Pages 84-86)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ If you have wronged someone in the past, how important do you think it is that you seek that person's forgiveness?
- ◇ Do you think it would be enough to simply confess it to God, promise not to do it again, and have no further contact with the person you hurt? Why or why not?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ In the verses in this section (Matthew 5:23, 24 – bottom of page 84), how important did Jesus feel it was that you seek reconciliation and forgiveness with those you have hurt in the past?
- ◇ How can you decide who you should seek forgiveness from? *[As the manual suggests, “Ask God to show you who you have hurt,” Point #1, page 84]*
- ◇ Why is hurting another person like a “double sin”? *[See the next section: “Ask God to forgive you for the pain you caused,” Point #2, page 85]*
- ◇ Why is it a good idea to pray for those you have hurt before you go see them?
- ◇ What's wrong with saying this to the person you sinned against: “If you feel that I have hurt you in some way, then I apologize.”? Or what's wrong with saying, “I'm sorry I did what I did, but if you hadn't *first* done what *you* did, I wouldn't have responded as I did.”?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Would you find it difficult to go to someone you have hurt to ask them for their forgiveness? What do you think makes this hard for most people?
- ◇ How do you think you would feel after having done it? How will it affect the person you have hurt?
- ◇ If you feel very anxious about going to someone to seek their forgiveness, what are some things you can do to give yourself courage to go through with it?
- ◇ What should you do if the person you have gone to becomes angry and refuses to forgive you? *[Be kind and gracious – and leave. You've done all that you can do. As in every relationship, you can only control what happens on your side of it. You have no control over the other person's response. You can ask for their forgiveness and set the stage for reconciliation, but you can't make them be reconciled to you. Pray for that person – see how God might soften their heart by His love shown through you and others.]*
- ◇ What should you do if the person you have hurt lives far away, or you don't know where they live, or they have died?
- ◇ When you've gone to somebody and sought their forgiveness and they seem very slow to extend that forgiveness, why should you avoid the attitude of, “Why can't they get over this? I said I was sorry!” What *should* your attitude be? *[See discussion under “Realistic and Unrealistic Expectations About Forgiveness” – page 86.]*

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ You don't have to share the specific name, but did any of you write someone's name in the blank at the top of page 85? What difficulties do you anticipate in trying to go see this person?
- ◇ What are some practical things you can do to rebuild the trust of someone you have hurt? *[In the blank near the top of page 86.]*

## **STEP 6B: HOW DO I MOVE ON?** (PAGES 89-96)

### **FORGIVENESS RECEIVED AND GIVEN – PART 2**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help them understand the importance of forgiving those who have wounded them (physically, emotionally, spiritually) and how to go about it.
- To give them sufficient reasons “Why” they should be motivated to extend forgiveness to those who have hurt them.
- To give them a practical plan which will empower them to forgive those who have hurt them.

Again, make sure that each group member has the materials necessary to do Memorial Project #2 on page 95.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Forgiving those who have wounded you* (Pages 89, 90)

##### • **Opening Questions**

- ◇ If you forgive someone who has wronged you and don't seek vengeance, aren't you agreeing with them that what they did is okay? Won't they just keep doing that hurtful thing to others? *[By forgiving, we are not condoning the sin. We want God to deal with them directly, so we step out of the way to let Him work. When Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who were killing Him, He was in no way condoning murder and false conviction. He was showing the Father's love to them, which could eventually bring them to a place of righteousness and reconciliation to God. On the eternal scale, that is much more desirable than seeing them punished. We can forgive someone from our heart so that we no longer hold a grudge against them, but still allow for legal processes to bring about civil justice. Thieves, rapists, abusers and murderers should still pay for their crimes.]*

##### • **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Have you ever heard of that saying, “Fight fire with fire”? Can you understand why people might agree with that philosophy? Why is it not a helpful path to take? What did you write down in the blank on page 89?
- ◇ If water does a good job of getting rid of fire, what did God say will do a good job of getting rid of evil? *[Doing good – top of page 90. “Love drives out hate.” – Dr. King.]*
- ◇ How does forgiving those who have wronged you benefit you? How does *not* forgiving them hurt you?
- ◇ *[Read the first paragraph in the section titled “Against A Simplistic Approach” on page 90.]* What are your thoughts on what was written there? Is that Marine exempt from having to forgive his attackers? *[Bring out the point that “having to forgive his attackers” isn't really a theological issue as much as it is a self-preservation issue. As hard as it will be for that Marine to forgive those who harmed him and killed his buddies, it will benefit him to do so.]*

*Why forgive those who have wounded me?* (Pages 90-93)

##### • **Opening Questions**

- ◇ If you haven't read this section yet, close your books. Let's see how many answers to that question we can come up with on our own . . . *[Write down their answers – on a white board, big piece of paper or chalk board if possible.]*

##### • **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How is *not* forgiving like the poison oak in the analogy near the bottom of page 90?

- ❖ As you think of actions you could take with someone who has harmed you, what would be like mowing the poison oak, rather than pulling it up by the roots?
- ❖ What is so ironic about the anger and poison filling up an unforgiving person? [See last two lines at bottom of page 90.] What does that tell you about the wisdom (or lack of) associated with being unwilling to forgive?
- Give the group some time to do the exercise in the middle of page 91. Afterwards, ask if there is anyone who would like to share what they wrote.
- ❖ How is forgiving those who have hurt you similar to how God likes to act toward those who have sinned against Him? Do you really want to be like God? Will this aspect of God's nature give you problems?
- ❖ Would anyone care to share where you put your X on the line indicating how hard you think it will be to forgive a person who hurt you (bottom of page 91), and on the line indicating how confident you are that God can give you a forgiving heart toward your attackers (top of page 92)? Would you mind if we took a couple of minutes right now and prayed for you about that issue?
- ❖ When we make the decision to act like Christ – and forgive like Christ – what effect does that have on the world around us? [See discussion of this issue under point #3, middle of page 92.] What effect does it have on us?
- ❖ [Read the last two paragraphs at the bottom of page 92.] What do you think of these thoughts regarding grace and judgment? Do you think it's true of you? As we hold the hypocritical attitude of "forgive me but judge them," how does this affect us?
- ❖ Would some of you like to share what you wrote in the blanks at the top of page 93, about being blocked from some of God's blessings, and whether it could be due to unforgiveness in your heart?
- ❖ Who do you think will do a better job of seeking vengeance against those who have unjustly harmed you or your loved ones – you or God (Romans 12:19)? Have you come to a place yet where you are willing to let God take care of this matter with no help from you?
- ❖ Would someone like to read what they wrote in the blank at the bottom of page 93, about how Stephen greeted Paul at the Pearly Gates?

How do I forgive those who have wounded me? (Pages 94, 95)

- **Opening Questions**

- ❖ How many of you have ever made an intentional effort to forgive someone who harmed you? If there are any, how did it go? How did you do it? How long did it take?

- **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ Do you think you already own the mindset that will make you capable of forgiving those who have hurt you?
- ❖ If not, do you really want that mindset? If you do, how will you get it? [Prayer – supernatural creation is the only way we fallen humans can ever possess that divine mindset.]

- **Application Questions**

- Decide how you want to handle this. Do you think it would be better to encourage the group members to go through the exercise presented in points 2, 3 and 4 together as a group, or individually at their homes? If you decide to do it as a group:
  - ◆ Have them spend some quiet time alone thinking about and writing the list of their points of pain and who caused them.
  - ◆ Ask each person to read the prayer in Step #3 out loud, placing one of their abusers names in the blanks. Some people may have a long list of names – have them choose three. The rest of the group members can silently support him or her in prayer as they pray for their abusers out loud.

- ◆ *If they come to a difficult place and just can't go on, someone else in the group should pray for them, asking God to strengthen them and show them what to do.*
- ◇ *[After everyone has done it as a group, or in the next meeting after they went through the exercise on their own, ask:] What did you experience as you went through that forgiveness exercise? Was it difficult? How did you feel afterwards? Do you feel it's a "done deal," or is it something you will have to do several times – until your emotions can finally catch up with your will?*
- *[Either as a complement to the above exercise or instead of it, ask the group members if they'd like to do Memorial Project #2 at the bottom of page 95. Just as in Memorial Project #1 on page 82, this would be a very good exercise for them to do together. It will add to their sense of responsibility, accountability, understanding and comradeship with each other.]*



## **STEP 7: WHO AM I NOW? (PAGES 97-108)**

### **REBUILDING YOUR IDENTITY**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help them understand how important their self-perception is and how profoundly a negative self-image can affect many areas of their life.
- To help them rebuild their shattered identity based on what God says about them, not based on what the world, the devil or their own negative self-perceptions say.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

#### *Combat Trauma and Identity*

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ How has your war-related trauma experiences changed your opinion of yourself? Has your self-perception become more positive or more negative?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What small bit of erroneous information did the Navy Commander count on? How confident was he of his assessment of the situation? How wrong was he? What disastrous consequences almost occurred because of his thinking error?
  - ◇ **Follow-up.** How is the deceived Commander like a combat veteran who has made an erroneous assumption about who he is?
  - ◇ Spend a few minutes (if you haven't already) studying the "Self-perception Assessment" on page 98. *[Note: make sure each group member understands all of the terms.]* As the manual directs, place an X on each line indicating your current opinion of yourself. When you're done, share your results with the group and give them your general perception of how you have "scored" yourself. Do you feel good or bad about it? Do you think it needs to change? Do you think it can?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Why is what we think about ourselves so important? *[Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." What we think about ourselves will strongly shape how we act, how we see ourselves, and how others see us. That's why it's so important that we tell ourselves the truth.]*
  - ◇ How does what we think about ourselves affect our behavior?
  - ◇ What forces are at work that will fuel a combat veteran's fire of negative self-image and self-hatred?
  - ◇ How do you think our experiences in combat can give us a negative assessment of ourselves?



- ◇ Why do so many men go to war “ten feet tall and bullet-proof” and yet come back fearful, haunted and passive?
- ◇ The foundations of your negative self-perception are the lies of Satan. How does he tell you these lies? What means does he use? [See discussion of this at the bottom of page 98.]
- ◇ How are the words of God from the Bible different from the words of other people written in other books? [See discussion of this in the last paragraph under “Spiritual IEDs” on page 99.]

### Deception/True Identity #1: Disregarded/Regarded (Page 99)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Have you ever heard yourself – or heard your enemy – tell you any of the “Lies of the enemy” listed here? Which one(s)?
- ◇ The manual talks about “Spiritual IEDs” – the element of truth in the lies of Satan. Can you identify the element of truth in the lies that Satan has told you and twisted all out of proportion?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What did you get for the first blank, about what Jesus Christ calls you?
- *With each of the eight Identity issues, just progress through the various questions with blanks to fill in and ask them what they came up with. Or if they haven't completed them ahead of time, have someone read the Scripture and then ask the group how they would answer the question associated with it. Then ask one or more of the Follow-up Questions, if appropriate.*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How do the four verses in this section make you think that you are highly regarded by God Himself?
- ◇ What if God felt this way about you, but no one else did? Would it be enough for you to know that God held you in very high regard? If not, why should it matter what God thinks about you?

### Deception/True Identity #2: Unimportant/Important (Page 100)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Which of these lies have you heard before? How deeply did they affect you?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How do each of these verses add to the truth of how **important** you are to the kingdom of God, and the earth in general?
- ◇ Of what importance is it to be known as “salt” from God on the earth?
- ◇ [Read the last paragraph in this section.] How possible does it seem to you that you could be somebody that God is grooming to take on a leadership position in His kingdom during the difficult times that are to come?

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ Since you ARE so important to God, what are you currently doing to hone your kingdom leadership skills, so that when you are called upon, you'll be ready to do your job?

### Deception/True Identity #3: Accused & Guilty/Forgiven (Page 101)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Which of these lies have you heard before? Was there ever any truth to them? How have you allowed your enemy to puff up that kernel of truth to make it all a lie?

- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Since we have been forgiven of all the things that Satan says make us despicable, what should be our response when he whispers in our ear how sinful, useless and guilty we are?
  - ◊ Have you ever told Satan your testimony when he tries to come by and pull you down through accusations and discouragement? Try it sometime! As he tells you what a piece of garbage you are, you can start out, "Satan – let me tell you what happened about 2000 years ago, when the Son of God died on the cross for me, and the Father rose Him up three days later . . . and how I bought into that sacrifice x years ago when I invited Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior – and He took *out* the garbage . . ." Read Revelation 12:11 for extra insight.

#### Deception/True Identity #4: Devalued/Valued (Page 102)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◊ Have you heard any of these devaluing statements before? What did you feel like when you heard them? Do you still hear them?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Why do you personally "value" something? What gives it "value"?
  - ◊ Based on those responses, what parallels can you draw regarding why God values you?
  - ◊ The Temple of God is no longer a building in Jerusalem – *we* are God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16). How does this make us valuable? [*The ancient Temple of the Jews was the one place on earth that God said He would meet directly with man. This building represented God and His kingdom, and as such He wanted it to be "exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands" (1 Chronicles 22:5). Now, we Christians are meant to be glorious representatives of God's kingdom, and – because His Holy Spirit indwells us – we provide a locale where men can see and interact with God through us! That's profoundly valuable!*]

#### Deception/True Identity #5: Rejected/Accepted (Page 103)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◊ Did you ever desperately want to be picked to do something – perhaps to be on an all-league sports team, be accepted into a club, university or service academy, be chosen for a particular job or position, win the heart of a certain young woman or man – and find yourself *not* chosen? How did it make you feel? Did it affect other areas of your life as well?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Can you think of any other very-deserving and accomplished person who was rejected when he should have been picked? [*They may think of some famous people or friends, but how about Jesus Christ?*]
  - ◊ If Satan is trying to say that you are "rejected," what are you supposedly rejected *from*?
  - ◊ All of us from time to time may fail to reach the goals we have set for ourselves. It's part of life. Obviously, this makes anyone feel disappointed, but at what point does our disappointment become harmful to us?

#### Deception/True Identity #6: Powerless/Powerful (Page 104)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ What makes you feel powerless? Because you are not able to accomplish something that you set out to accomplish, how does that become a Name Tag for you? How does it become anything more than just a temporary condition?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ You have been told (by God) that you are powerful. What should you do when you don't feel particularly powerful? How can you get past those "feelings"?
  - ◇ In what ways has God made us powerful?

Deception/True Identity #7: Unlovable/Lovable (Page 104 - bottom)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Have you ever been jilted by a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or received a "Dear John" letter? How did it make you feel? Were you able to shrug it off as "no big deal," or did it shake you to the very core of your self-worth? How did you get over it (or did you ever)? How did Satan help you *not* to get over it?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ [Read the last paragraph in this section aloud.] Does this give you some idea of how much God loves you? Do you think you could ever love someone to the depth that He loves you?

Deception/True Identity #8: Separated/Connected (Page 105 - bottom)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Have you ever heard these lies before? How can they be especially devastating to a combat veteran who is struggling with the urge to self-isolate?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
  - ◇ How can you tell when Satan is lying? [Whenever his mouth moves – bottom of page 106.]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How strong and durable is our connection to God? How far can we expect it to stretch before it will finally be broken and we'll once again be disconnected? [Our connection with God will *never* reach that breaking point. That's the nature of having been given eternal life by Him.]
  - ◇ From time to time, you will *not* feel connected to the Body of Christ. Christians won't seem to understand you or be interested in your struggles. Churches won't appreciate or honor the sacrifices you've made. You may feel peculiar and separated. But you must realize that (1) this probably a very temporary situation, (2) Satan will try to amplify those feelings in order to get you even more depressed, and (3) remember that the Christians that Jesus said you are connected to are sinful, fallible humans just like you. They have weaknesses, blind spots, and identity issues just like you. So, with this in mind, what attitude should you adopt toward your fellow believers when you are feeling *not* connected? In reality, are you or are you not connected? [What did Jesus say? **His** words are true!]

This Is Who I Am (Page 107)

*Note: If you are able to, make copies of this proclamation listing the eight self-perception truths from this study, and give one to each group member. Encourage them to post it somewhere in their room or their home, keep it in their Bible or any place where they will see it frequently and remind themselves of the truth about who they are.*

- **Group Exercise**
  - Have the group stand up and read the proclamation aloud. It might be even more meaningful if the group stood in a circle, with one hand holding the paper with the proclamation on it, the other hand on the shoulder of the person next to him or her.
- **Content Question**
  - ◇ Would each of you be willing to take the Self-Perception Assessment again in about a month and see what differences God has brought about?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◇ After all we've learned in this chapter, is there still one or more of these eight areas that you are struggling with?



## **STEP 8: HOW DO I FIGHT?** (PAGES 109-120)

### **REBUILDING YOUR DEFENSES**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand who their TRUE enemy is and how to fight him in the spiritual realm.
- To help them understand the concept of “doorways and footholds” as areas of vulnerability that Satan will use to try to defeat them and to identify any doorways and footholds in their lives that they need to take care of.
- To help them understand and use the spiritual weapons that are available to them in their battle against Satan.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

#### *Preparing To Meet Your Enemy* (Pages 109-112)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ What are some basic strategies of war that you are aware of? Can you relate them to our spiritual war with our ancient enemy, Satan?
  - ◇ It was easy enough to tell you were in a war when you were downrange, but now that you're back home, what are the things that indicate to you that you are *still* fighting in a war?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What are some of the facts you came up with about your enemy Satan? [*In the blank on page 109. Be sure to write down their contributions on a white board, chalk board or big piece of paper. When they have exhausted their ideas, if you can think of any others, add them to the list.*]
  - ◇ What was Satan's primary problem? [*Pride and self-centeredness. He wanted to take God's place. The five "I wills" at the top of page 110 make it clear that he wanted to possess all that God had.*]
  - ◇ What are Satan's primary objectives? [*Four of them are listed in the middle of page 110.*]
  - ◇ Let's take a look at some of your observations regarding Satan's tactics. [*Go through the fill-in-the-blank questions on pages 110 and 111 and have them share what they wrote down.*]
  - ◇ In the “Breaking The Code” section at the bottom of page 111, how did you draw your lines between the Genesis 3 passage and Satan's “decoded” words?
  - ◇ How did you fill in the blanks on page 112, about some restrictions that are good and some freedoms that are bad? What does that tell you about how we should examine the blanket statements Satan makes as he tempts us?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Objective #4 on page 110 says that Satan is going to use humans to stage a second coup attempt against God. What do you see in the world today that would indicate that he is ready to launch this next and final attempt?
- ◇ How does knowing what some of Satan's tactics are give you more confidence about beating him in a fight? What do you know now that you didn't know before you started this study? How is this going to help you with your Combat Trauma?
- ◇ Did you notice the difference between what God *actually* commanded and what Eve *said* He commanded? God said they couldn't eat from the tree, Eve said that He said they couldn't even touch it. How did Satan springboard off this tidbit of wrong information to tempt Eve to do exactly what she just said she shouldn't do? What does that tell you about how important it is to know exactly what God has said?
- ◇ *[Read through the "Anatomy of a Temptation" at the top of page 112.]* Let's see if we can find each of these five elements in Satan's temptation of Eve on the previous page.

*Satan's Primary Tactic – Doorways and Footholds (Pages 112-114)*

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ This section talks about how Satan will often offer us "freedom" of some sort, but then it always turns out to be *bondage* instead. Can you think of some examples of this?

- **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Read Genesis 4:1-12 in your Bible to get the context of the truth found in verse 7. What does it say sin (Satan) is doing? What is the door that this verse is referring to? *[It refers to a person's will – 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph in this section.]*
- ◇ Who else wants to come through the door of your will? *[Jesus – Revelation 3:20.]* Once Jesus has gone through that door, is it then shut and locked? *[Obviously not – we are continually peeking outside to see what the devil has to offer and sometimes we let him in too. This is why the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirit are in a constant battle to be the one we listen to and obey.]*
- ◇ What other analogy is used to describe Satan's tactics? *[Footholds.]* How are footholds used in order to "conquer" a mountain or a cliff? How is this like Satan's method of trying to conquer us? *[He'll do it one small, inconspicuous step at a time, so as not to alert us to his activities.]*

- **Application Questions and Exercises**

- ◇ Spend a few moments (if you haven't already) and write down some of the doorways and footholds that Satan tends to use in order to tempt you to sin *[In the blank toward the bottom of page 113 under "Exploiting Vulnerabilities"]*. If anyone feels bold enough, perhaps they would be willing to share some of their areas of vulnerability?
- ◇ Now go through the list of "Possible Doorways and Footholds" in Appendix B, pages 159-160. Circle the number of any items that you have engaged in or had contact with. *[Remind them that, just because they have experienced one of the occurrences listed, it doesn't necessarily mean they have opened a door – but they may have. It's something they need to ask God about.]*
- *Note: you may want to go over the list of Possible Doorways and Footholds as a group first to find out if anyone has questions about them.*
- ◇ Let's spend some time now privately going through the three steps listed under "Closing Doorways" on page 114. *[Note: you may want to let them go outside or to some other area of the building to give each person some privacy. If they have any actions to take listed in the second step (such as destroying offending objects) they will have to do that later and report back to the group about it. Another alternative would be to have them do this on their own at home and then report back to the group next meeting. Depending on how close your group*

*has become in the previous weeks, you might even consider doing it in a group. One individual would go to the center of the group, everyone else would lay hands on him and pray for him as he goes through the suggested prayer, specifically naming the doorways he has opened. Then it would be someone else's turn. This will greatly add to the group's unity and accountability. Also, remind everyone about the "Rule" of privacy and confidentiality.]*

### Our Weapons - #1: Authority (Pages 114-116)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ What do you know about the importance of "superior weaponry" when it comes to warfare?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ What's the difference between "power" and "exousia"? [*By the way, it's pronounced "Eck-zoo-SEE-uh."*]
  - ◊ Who has been given Christ's *exousia*? How and why were we given Christ's *exousia*?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ How does our having Christ's *exousia* help us in our battle with Satan? How do we use Christ's *exousia*? [*Through the spoken word, just as Jesus did in Matthew 4 when He commanded Satan to leave. Satan had to obey, stop his actions, and leave – our *exousia* is greater than Satan's because it comes from Christ.*]
  - ◊ If we are living in sin, occupying the throne of our life, and not willing to repent, do you think we can still count on our *exousia* being stronger than Satan's? [*No – our place of warring is "with Christ in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 2:6). If we willingly disobey God, we quench His Spirit and voluntarily leave His "military war room." We are, of course, still saved, but we are trying to fight our war alone – and we're going to get hit hard. It's much better to keep our eternal, all-wise Commander-in-Chief on the war-throne of our life!*]

### Our Weapons - #2: Our Spiritual Kevlar (Pages 116-117)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ In sports, why is a good defense as important as a good offense? Why is it also important in military battles? Why is it also important in spiritual battles?
- **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Look at the list of six elements of our spiritual armor. What do you think it would be like if God didn't supply each of those six elements? (For instance, why would not having the Belt of Truth make us more vulnerable to the attacks of Satan?)
  - ◊ Why is the "Sword of the Spirit" a unique element? How do we use it offensively? How do we use it defensively?
- **Application Assignment**
  - Starting tomorrow morning during your prayer time or devotional time, prayerfully accept each of the six elements of your spiritual armor and put it on. Imagine yourself standing before God's throne as He hands them to you one at a time. Receive them from Him, and then put them on. You might pray along these lines, "Heavenly Father, I receive from your hands and wrap around my waist the Belt of Truth. Thank You, Jesus, that You *are* the Truth. May I today believe only the truth, speak only the truth and receive only the truth." And so on through each piece of your armor.

### Our Weapons - #3: The Word of God (Pages 117-119)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ How do we humans normally get things done when something needs to be accomplished? For instance, if we build a house, what "tools" do we use? [*Examples: our muscles, shovels, hammers, saws, axes, etc.*]
- **Content Questions**

- ❖ How are things accomplished in the spiritual realm? *[Through the spoken word. Have each member of the group read one of the passages under “How Things Get Done In the Kingdom of God” (bottom of page 117, 118) and answer the question “How did this person use the spoken word to accomplish spiritual work?”]*
- ❖ How did you answer the question in the middle of page 118? *[Common denominator: In each case the person featured in the verse **spoke a command**. For an additional interesting exercise, look at who was spoken to in each case – a lot of variety there!]*
- ❖ What are the three stages of a spiritual counterattack we should employ when we realize we are being tempted? *[See the middle of page 119, discussion of James 4:7,8.]*
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ❖ If Satan was trying to trick you into telling a lie, how would you defend yourself and defeat Him? *[Be sure the answer includes speaking directly to Satan and quoting a verse of Scripture that is about not telling lies, such as Leviticus 19:11]*
  - ❖ When it comes to military tactics, what’s the difference between advancing and retreating? Aren’t they pretty much the same? Obviously not. But when it comes to spiritual warfare tactics, many Christians seem to think they’re the same. What is the Christian to flee and retreat from? And when is he supposed to attack with guns blazing? *[See “Advance or Retreat?” on page 119.]*
- **Application Exercise**
  - Flip back in your manual to Appendix C, your “Spiritual Warfare Ammo Bunker” (pages 161-164). Browse through the various listings of temptations and find the ones that your enemy tends to hit you with the most frequently. If you can’t find it, let’s talk later about coming up with some additional ammo for you. But for the ones you do find, write then in the flyleaf of your Bible, so that when you are tempted in the future, you’ll know right where to go to find your ammunition!
  - Next meeting, I’m going to ask you to share what you wrote in the blank at the bottom of page 119 (or you can just tell me what happened) – that will be your report on how things went when you employed these strategies against your enemy in the coming week. We want to hear about and rejoice with you in your victory!



## **STEP 9: HOW DO I GET ACROSS?** (PAGES 121-130)

### **FINDING BRIDGE PEOPLE**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help them understand that their normal tendency to self-isolate – if accommodated – will be detrimental to their healing.
- To motivate them to seek out a few individuals who can help them bridge the gap between themselves and God and their healing.
- To give them practical ideas about what to look for in a Bridge Person.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

#### *The Necessity of Bridges / Bridges To Healing* (Pages 121-122)

##### • **Opening Question**

- ❖ *[Read the story out loud to them.]* What are some of the truths that stick with you from this story?
- ❖ One of the truths is that help will often come in unexpected ways and from unexpected quarters. Has there been a time in your life (not necessarily while you were in combat, but it could be) when help arrived for you in an unexpected way?

- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What were some of the positive characteristics of the Wisconsin Reserve unit engineers?
  - ◇ From Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (middle of page 122), what are some things that a companion can prove to be useful in?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How expectant are you that help will arrive for you as you work through your Combat Trauma? What do you think this help will look like? Have you considered that help coming in the form of other people?
  - ◇ Most of you have been dealing with Combat Trauma for quite some time now. Who has been a real help for you so far? Name some names, and tell us a story about some of the things he or she did for you.
  - ◇ If God is our Healer (Exodus 15:26), why should we waste time and energy involving other people to help us with our healing process? [See first paragraph in the “Bridges To Healing” section on page 122. The people involved won’t **heal** you, but they’ll help you construct an environment where God can most effectively heal you.]

### Friends of Faith / God Invented Bridges (Pages 122-123)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ [Read Mark 2:1-12 about the four friends who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing.] What great truths occurred to you as you listened to this story?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What were these four men willing to do to help their friend? What was at stake for them? What was at stake for the paralyzed man?
  - ◇ What was Jesus’ response to the determination and faith of the four men? [He was impressed – and He granted them their desire that their friend be healed.]
  - ◇ How do you think the paralyzed man felt after all this was over?
  - ◇ [Read the five verses in the “God Invented Bridges” section (page 123).] In each verse, try to find a principle that would tell us how God intends for us to help each other.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Would you be willing to be like the paralyzed man and let your friends help you?
  - ◇ Has anybody been offering to help you? What is your usual response?
  - ◇ If no one has been offering to help you, why do you think that is? What can you do about it?
  - ◇ It is a common mindset of someone in the military to “serve and protect” others. You are willing to sacrifice even your *life* so that others may be safe. How difficult is it for a man or a woman like you to *receive* service and protection from others and to let others take care of *you* for a change?
  - ◇ When should a troop be willing to set their pride aside temporarily and accept help from others? What happens if they don’t?

### What Can We Expect From A Bridge? (Pages 123-125)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Before we go into this section, what are some characteristics that you would like to find in a friend you could trust to help you with your healing?
- **Content & Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What Bridge person characteristics do you see in **Proverbs 17:17** (bottom of page 123)? Will a true friend bail out on you when you’re experiencing adversity? What will they do instead?
  - ◇ Were you able to think of any people that you could write down in the blank provided near the bottom of page 123? If so, if any of these people were ever in a jam, what would you be



- willing to do for them? Do you think they'd be willing to do the same for you? *[In all probability, they would!]*
- ◇ Read **Acts 20:35** *[top of page 124]*. When you do not allow your friends to be Bridge people for you, how are you depriving them? How did you fill in the blank there, about how you respond when you have to be a receiver?
  - ◇ Read **James 1:19** *[middle of page 124]*. How did you fill in that blank – what should a Bridge person be good at? Why is this important to you? What if someone that you're looking to for help is a real talker and you find it hard to get a word in edgewise – what should you do?
  - ◇ In **Proverbs 27:17** *[bottom of page 12]* it says that “a friend sharpens a friend.” What do you think that means? What are some of the unpleasant aspects of being “sharpened” by a friend? How well do you take criticism? What do you usually do when someone offers you some feedback that you don't much like? What if this person is a very good friend? What if it's just a casual acquaintance? *[They should be willing to listen to everybody, weigh what they say, either accept or reject the criticism and be thankful to the person who was willing to take the risk and share something they thought you would benefit from hearing. However, if after a period of time it becomes clear that this person is nothing but a pessimistic critic who enjoys pulling people down, steer clear of him or her – and perhaps even communicate to that person that the things they normally share don't seem to help, only hurt, and could they limit their criticism. “Just being honest here.”]*
  - ◇ Read **Proverbs 27:5, 6** *[top of page 125]*. This is a step up from the previous verse. How do you handle outright “rebuke”? What would be necessary for you to be willing and able to accept a rebuke with a positive attitude? *[Then, cultivate that!]* Did you catch the intention in the first question in this section, about how you'd like your cancerous tumor taken care of? How did you answer? Who are some of the influential people in your past that made a difference in your life (the second blank)? Share some of the positive things they did that influenced you, but also see if you can remember some of the negative, hard-to-hear, corrective things they said or did which also helped you. Do you get the feeling they were willing to risk your friendship in order to open your eyes to a vital truth you may not know?
  - ◇ Read **Hebrews 3:13** *[middle of page 125]*. How important is receiving encouragement to you? According to this verse, what can happen to us if we are starved for encouragement? What are some things you can do to cultivate encouragement around you? *[How about – encouraging others? This is something the group should commit to do on a regular basis.]*
  - ◇ Would anyone care to share what they wrote in the blank, about some encouragement they've been needing to hear, but haven't lately?
  - ◇ What areas of “callous” are building in your life that could use some work? *[See discussion of Hebrews 3:13 at bottom of page 125.]* How could a bridge friend help you with this?

### A Formalized Bridge Relationship (Page 126)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ What do you think of the idea of establishing a few “formalized” Bridge relationships, where you speak candidly about your need for a supportive friend and communicate clearly what you need that friend to do and be? Will this be easy or hard for you?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What is one of the main things that causes a relationship to self-destruct? *[Third paragraph.]*
  - ◇ Look through the list of questions that you should ask someone who could be a Bridge for you. Are there any that you'd feel uncomfortable asking or discussing?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What should you do if your potential Bridge friend says “no” to any of the questions on that list?

- ◇ Would it be possible to establish a Bridge relationship with someone who has never been in combat? With someone who has never been in the military? What are the pros and cons of having a Bridge friend who has never been in combat or the military? *[Note: Just because someone has never been in combat or the military, it doesn't mean they can't be a helpful Bridge person. A man who has never had a heart attack can still be a great heart surgeon. With a GPS, a person who has never been to a certain city can still get you where you need to go. In the same way, a knowledgeable non-veteran can still be used by God to help you create a healing environment. Don't dismiss them just because they don't fit your pre-conceived ideas of what you need – God might know differently!]*

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Did you think of anyone that you'd like to begin a formal Bridge relationship with and write his/her/their name(s) in the blank provided? How will you approach them? When?
- ◇ Are any or all of the people in your CT Care Group able to be formal Bridge people for you? Discuss this as a group.

### Group Bridges (Pages 126-127)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ You are apparently already convinced of the positive usefulness of a group setting to work on your Combat Trauma. What aspects of it have been helpful to you so far?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Look over the list of reasons to be involved in a group. Put a check mark next to any that you have experienced since you've been involved with your present group.
- ◇ Look at each of the points listed under "Some helpful tips" *[middle of page 127]*. After each point, share what you think about it.
  - ◆ Do you agree or disagree with it?
  - ◆ Have you experienced or applied the principle that is mentioned?
  - ◆ Is it a principle that you haven't tried yet, but think you should?
  - ◆ What have you observed when others in the group employed the principle that is mentioned?

### When Is It Time To Call In the Pros? (Page 128-129)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ How many of you have ever been to a professional counselor, psychiatrist or psychologist? What did you think of the experience – was it helpful or not?
- ◇ What is your opinion of the counselor?
- ◇ Can a professional counselor be a Bridge person?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Look at the first four warning signs at the top of page 128. Have any of you ever experienced any of them? How long ago? What did you do about it?
- ◇ Are you *currently* experiencing any of these conditions? *[If so, do what the manual says, and – right after this meeting – take them to a professional who can give them some direct help. If no one can see them until tomorrow, consider having him/her stay the night at your house, or with someone you trust who could look after them.]*
- ◇ Now look at the next nine warning signs. Check any that you currently see in yourself. As you look at this list, do you feel you should make plans to begin seeing a professional counselor, if you aren't already?
- ◇ Read through the eight questions offered for you to ask a prospective counselor on page 129. How would you *hope* a prospective counselor would answer each question? What if they

don't answer a few of them as you hoped? Is it realistic to expect all of our criteria for a counselor to be met?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ If any of you are not currently seeing a counselor, but would like to, would you like for me to see if I can help you with that?

- **Application Concern**

- ◇ As you search for a good counselor or therapist, realize that some will be a good fit for you, but others won't. There are a number of issues that may limit their effectiveness for you: their personality, their counseling style, their spiritual/philosophical convictions, their training, their gender, their availability, their skills, their experience, etc. Ask God to give you insight and discernment and lead you to just the right one.



## **STEP 10: HOW DO I GET BACK TO "NORMAL"?** (PAGES 131-144)

### **DEFINING YOUR MISSION**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members envision and define what their "New Normal" will look like.
- To give them practical ideas about how to make plans to move from their current state of stress to a state of strength, stability, functionality and productivity.
- To inspire them to *keep going* after the group is finished and to remain intentional and proactive regarding their continued healing and service to others.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

#### *Opening Section* (Pages 131-132)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ What did you think of General Patton's observation of how to test for success? [*quote, near top of page 131.*]
- ◇ Do you feel you have indeed hit bottom and are now bouncing upwards? Why or why not?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ According to the opening verse in this Step [*1 Peter 5:10*] what must happen first before you will be perfected, established, strengthened and settled?
- ◇ How did you answer the first question on page 132 which asked in what ways you died while deployed?
- ◇ How did you answer the second question on page 132, about one over-the-top thing you hope to find in your New Normal world?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ From time to time in this manual it has mentioned that you will probably not be able to return to the "normal" you knew prior to combat, but that you *can* work toward a "New Normal." Is this discouraging to you? What do you think is meant by New Normal?
- ◇ The last paragraph of page 131 asserts that the New Normal can be better than the Old Normal for you. How is this possible?
- ◇ How was Jesus Christ's New Normal after His crucifixion, burial and resurrection different and better than His Old Normal?
- ◇ What did Jesus mean when He said in John 12:24 that when a kernel of wheat dies, it would produce many new kernels?
- ◇ How can this be related to your trauma and your progress toward New Normal?

- ◇ How quickly can you expect your journey from your current state to New Normal to take? *[See the section "After you have suffered awhile . . ." on page 132.]*

## Becoming Intentional About the New Normal

### What Needs To Change? (Page 132-137)

#### **Vocation?** (Pages 133-134)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ How many of you feel pretty satisfied about what you are currently doing vocationally? What were the numbers you wrote down on page 133 about how much or little you like your job?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How long should you wait after coming back from combat before you make any major decisions? *[Fourth paragraph under "Vocation?" – wait one month for every month downrange.]*
- ◇ Is it a good idea for you to start having dreams for your future? *[Yes!]* Who else has dreams for your future? *[God – and they're real good ones! Jeremiah 29:11.]*
- ◇ What's the difference between a "job" and a "career"? Which do you have right now? What might keep a combat veteran from pursuing a "career"?
- ◇ What did you write down in the blank at the top of page 134, about your "Dream Career"?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What can you do this week to start the process of identifying and pursuing your "Dream Career"?

#### **Location?** (Pages 134-135)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ How do you feel about your current location?
- ◇ If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- ◇ What did you put in the blanks near the bottom of page 135, asking for five characteristics of your ideal location?

- **Content Question**

- ◇ What are some issues that might make it a good idea or a bad idea for you to consider a move in the near future? What elements need to be in your environment no matter where you live?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ If your Dream Vocation couldn't be carried out in your Dream Location, what should you do? Which is more important to you, vocation or location? *[Consider the advice given in the second paragraph on page 135.]*
- ◇ How realistic is it to believe that God might want to work a miracle and combine your dream vocation and dream location just to make your joy complete? *[See John 16:24 at the bottom of page 135. He loves to make us joyful!]*

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What do you plan to do to make your long-term vocation and location a major prayer project in your life?

#### **Companions?** (Pages 136-137)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Generally speaking, would you say that most of your friends and acquaintances have a positive, neutral or negative effect on you?
- ◇ If you have some friends who you know have a negative effect on you, why do you continue to associate with them?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ As you read through the various “definitions” of what a friend is at the top of page 136, is there anyone who comes to your mind? If so, tell us about him or her.
- ◇ Go through the exercise in the middle of page 136. Think about one specific “marginal” friend of yours as you do it. Based on the exercise, what do you think you should plan to do with this friend?
- ◇ Can you think of a time in the past when your “good character” was corrupted by “bad company,” as expressed in the verse near the bottom of page 136? How possible is it that this could happen again?
- ◇ Is it possible that you are giving in to the tendency a person dealing with combat trauma often has: to isolate themselves from others? Are you trying to milk a bear? *[Quote at the bottom of page 136.]* If so, what can you do to reverse this trend?
- ◇ Are there some people whose names you felt led to write down in the blanks at the top of page 137? If so, what do you plan to do about them?

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ What steps can you take to solidify some of your positive friendships?
- ◇ What steps do you need to take to back away from some of your negative friendships?

### Facing Your Fears (Page 137-139)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ To what degree do “triggers” disrupt your day-to-day life?
- ◇ Have you been able to continue to engage in the visualization exercises from Step 4, where you brought Jesus into your traumatic episodic memories in an attempt to create stronger episodic memories? How has that been going? If you haven't been doing those exercises, why not?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Would a few of you like to share what you wrote in the exercise on page 137, listing your triggers and the effects they generate in you?
- ◇ Why is it important that you work to minimize the impact your triggers have on you? *[Some input on this in the last two paragraphs of page 137.]*
- ◇ What does the manual recommend you do to “face your fears” and reduce the control your triggers have on you? *[The method offered under “Battleplan” on pages 138-139 represents a simple technique for decreasing the effect that fears have on person called “Systematic Desensitization.” It is a type of classical conditioning therapy developed by South African psychiatrist Joseph Wolpe and has been used for decades by professional therapists with good effect. Especially as a person uses this technique while filled with the Spirit, and asks God to accompany him or her to the places of trauma and fear, there are strong reasons for hope that this approach will be very helpful. But many triggers have much deeper and more complex psychological roots than mere fears and phobias. In those cases, it's best to work with a trained professional to help the Combat Trauma sufferer gain victory over his or her triggers.]*

- **Application Question**

- ◇ If your triggers are fairly disruptive and they don't seem to be getting any better, what are some specific steps you plan to take to help yourself in this area?

### Setting Personal Goals (Page 139-142)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ How many of you have been intentional in setting personal goals since you got back from combat? How has that gone?

- ◇ What happens if a person doesn't think though and set tangible, achievable goals – especially a person who is “stuck” in the present and desperately needs to move on?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Read through the SMART criteria for goal-setting on page 140. Is there anything about those five criteria that isn't clear?
  - ◇ Who would like to share some of the goals they wrote down on pages 141 and 142? As each person shares, the rest of us will evaluate each goal based on the SMART criteria.
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◇ What did you think of Dr. Jonas Salk's quote at the bottom of page 140? Do you think dreams can indeed eradicate nightmares? *Your* nightmares? How does this fit into the frequent theme you've heard about in this manual regarding “intentionality”?
- **Application Exercise**
  - ◇ *Consider doing the exercise offered on page 142 where each group member writes out Long-, Medium- and Short-range goals. If the group is willing, it will provide a very positive way to encourage each other and to hold each other accountable to be intentional about their journey toward New Normal.*

### *Serving Others* (Page 142-144)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Each of you have served our country, our people and our families in profound and sacrificial ways while you were downrange, fighting for our freedom – and in fact, the entire time you were involved in the military. We'll never forget that. But now that you are back home, it doesn't mean your serving activities can now cease. Serving is good for you! As the manual says [*second to the last paragraph on page 142*], “Though it was service that got you into your present traumatized condition, it is service that will help pull you out as well.” With that in mind, what ways are some of you currently involved in serving others?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote in the first set of blanks on page 143, where it asks about the unique talents, gifts and abilities you possess that could be used in the service of others?
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote in the second set of blanks on page 143, about three specific ways you would like to serve others (these can be ways you are already serving, or ways you in which you have not yet served).
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ [*Read the story of Lazarus in John 11 aloud to the group. Then read the first three paragraphs under “Why We Serve . . .” on page 143.*] What truths do you learn from this story about Lazarus and from what was written in the manual. How does this apply to you?
  - ◇ How do you think your Combat Trauma has uniquely qualified you for service?
  - ◇ You had your season for killing and breaking down. Now it's time to heal and build up. The old is gone, the new has come. How likely is it that this can become a new theme in your life, capable of taking you to your New Normal?



## **FINAL MEETING**

Your final meeting should be a great time of celebration and honor. Plan on having a dinner, invite spouses and family members. Have each group member come up and say a few words about what they experienced during the time the group met and then lead the group in prayer for that person.

This would be a good time for you to read aloud the **Epilogue** found on page 145, about the priceless vases that were made so because they had first been shattered and reconstructed using gold-mixed glue. This makes a good final word of perspective and inspiration for your group members and their families.

It would also be appropriate to present each group member with a memento of some sort – a certificate, a medal, a coin, a small carving – something physical that will remind him or her of their time in this Combat Trauma Care Group and of all God did during that time.

Your next job – if it hasn't already been accomplished – is to get them involved in some sort of service to others. A great idea would be to encourage them to lead a Combat Trauma Care Group or to assist you in your next one. Don't let them stop growing now! Keep them motivated to continue seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)!



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<sup>1</sup> Judith L. Herman, M.D., *Trauma and Recovery* (Harper Collins, 1992). Page 183. Dr. Herman is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. H. Norman Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling* (Regal, 2003). Page 29.

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Page 156.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these principles come from Dr. Aphrodite Matsakis, *Trust After Trauma* (New Harbinger Publications, 1998). Pages 327-328. Additional principles come from Dr. Patrick Stone, former professor of psychology at George Fox University who has worked extensively with Vietnam veterans and was wounded in Vietnam himself.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Larry Crab, *Shattered Dreams* (Waterbrook Press, 2001). Page 123.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Aphrodite Matsakis, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Complete Treatment Guide* (New Harbinger Publications, 1994). Page 222.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Page 38.

<sup>9</sup> Laurieann Chutis, A.C.S.W., Dir. of Consultation and Education Services, Ravenswood Community Health Center, Chicago, IL – Article: “Flashbacks” can be read at [www.mnwelldir.org/docs/mental\\_health/flashbacks.htm](http://www.mnwelldir.org/docs/mental_health/flashbacks.htm). Also Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Pages 210-226.