

Dr. Eric Patterson

## Warrior-Guardian, Lethality

Well, with the note that recording is in progress, let me just say it's an honor to speak to this group. Ma'am, thank you for joining us.

And my thanks to you and to the general for your patronage of this group and for the investment that you make in a rising generation of particularly chaplains leaders, but really strategic leadership across militaries around the world. And as Christians, We have things that are worth preserving, they're worth defending, and we see models of that straight from the Old and the New Testaments.

I've had the pleasure of speaking to this group a couple of times in the past, first about rightful heroism.

And then second, thinking about warriors as guardians and protectors. And I had planned to primarily focus today on citizenship.

and the warrior as a citizen and how to think about that because the Bible actually has, I think, quite a bit to say about that.

Jeff asked me to refocus attention a little bit into one of the things that's being talked about so much.

not just in Western militaries, but around the world. And that is thinking about lethality. And so if it's okay with you, Here's what I'm going to do. What I'm going to do is I'm going to talk a little bit about the two ways that we got to this moment.

or this word that no one really used that word, all caps, if you will, until very, very recently.

But I'd like to talk about the two trends. So I'm speaking really to the specialists in a sense. So those of you who have a lot of military experience, I'm going to say I'm going to kind of just define how I think we got to where we are.

But then...

pivot to with a thought to our chaplains, to our chaplains in the field as they're working with both speaking up the chain of power about limits and restraint, But they're also talking about kind of rightful defense, rightful self-defense, rightful killing where the limits are down the ranks.

to junior officers, in particular to our enlisted personnel, I want to kind of expand a biblical worldview for thinking about this concept of lethality and killing, rightful killing as distinct from vengeful unjust, hate-driven murder, okay? So for the specialists, just to catch you up, everyone from the U.S. Defense Secretary, through lots of the strategic literature over in recent years that's focused on special operations forces, et cetera, has focused on lethality.

And I'd like to give two reasons why we're in this moment to set the stage for our specialists. So first, on the one hand, at one extreme, since the late 1990s, we've had a strong either semi-pacifism or quasi-pacifism or outright pacifism in the legal academy, in the philosophical academy, among many theologians. And let me just give you a few of the examples.

All of the efforts to shackle politicians and military leaders such as the Anti-Landmine Convention, the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine, trying to extend the Convention on Conventional Weapons to other things, such as cluster munitions, on and on and on and on.

There's been a whole set of activist efforts to try to make it harder to prosecute war.

I'm not making a judgment call, but what I'm saying is often those people don't just take the weapons of war.

they seem to actually hate national militaries. We've had a similar thing happen, particularly in Western philosophy departments, people like Jeff McMahan, David Rodin, and their ilk who call themselves, in a sense, just war thinkers.

I would say they actually don't like national militaries. They don't like political leaders. And what they've tried to do is to shackle militaries and law enforcement from doing the jobs that they need to do. I think that a byproduct of this time is also Western publics that are soft, that are weak, that are cosseted, and a little bit utopian. Let me just give one example and that is that in the United States, I spent many years doing military bands during strategic communications, doing public affairs for the Air National Guard.

And it always struck me, I mean, it's been more than a decade now that less than 2% of America's young people at the age of 18 are fit enough physically to join society.

the military. And so you have a huge disjuncture between a public that's been increasingly taught that not just war, but warriors are evil, et cetera, among our young people at the same time that they just have no concept of what it means to train to be a Marine or to be a sailor, to be an airman. And then particularly since 2020, we've had a huge rise in anti-police, anti-law enforcement, anti-national security personnel sentiment for a variety of reasons.

in Western publics, but in particular tied to the claims of police brutality and whatnot during the summer of 2020. I say that mix on the one hand And you tie that to the extremely restrictive rules of engagement of the second half of Iraq and Afghanistan.

that many feel led to the loss of American lives and benefited the terrorists and the criminals. That mix, on the one hand, has created a counterforce saying, you know what? We need more lethality.

We need soldiers and airmen and law enforcement and who are ready, who are able, who are unrestricted in prosecuting war against the bad guys.

Now, part of the elements on that far side, if you think about the far swing of the pendulum, And our books, like Jeff mentioned to me, Sean McFaith's work, these 10 new rules of warfare from his book in 2019.

there's a group of people who say, listen, we live in an increasingly disordered world. So the Western liberal order of strong state governments is falling apart. Second, we live in the democratization of firepower. So terrorists and criminal cartels have advanced weaponry And they have advanced logistics. Think about how the criminal cartels work throughout Latin America.

They've got planes. They've got miniature submarines. They control entire cities and regions.

In other words, we have kind of city-states run by narco-traffickers and whatnot or Afghan warlords or warlords in Africa, They effectively function like many city-states with a huge amount of firepower and very sophisticated tools.

And so it's in that world, a dangerous world of failed and failing states of illegitimate forms of authority.

of the BRICS challenging Western dominance, meaning Brazil, Russia, India, China, etc., of a rising authoritarianism that acts with impunity, like Vladimir Putin has, think about the past decade, attacks on Georgia, attacks on Ukraine, attacks on Moldova, the bullying of countries in Central Asia. In that world, in a world of decreasing order, We need a new focus on a kind of a ruthless lethality because we're going back to the law of the jungle.

So in terms of scene setting, on the one hand, since the 1990s, Post Rwanda, post Bosnia, we've had this effort, particularly by the international community, to shackle Western militaries and politicians from using the military instrument And a countervailing set of arguments saying, look, the world's getting worse. It's not becoming more Canadian. It's becoming more Afghan.

And we have a role and we need to be thinking more and more about troop protection, military necessity, and the deployment of force in in vigorous and even ruthless ways. I think that's how we've gotten to the moment that we're in. And I apologize for gross simplifications, but those seem to be two sets of arguments that are passing by each other. With that in mind, What I'd like to do, I'm gonna pause and take any questions that you have here, but then what we're

gonna do is we're gonna pivot, say, Okay, so what does the Christian just war tradition have to say about lethality? And I think it has a lot to say because it focuses on limits and restraint.

And I think that that's the right way to be thinking about lethality. I'm not entirely against it whatsoever.

but we want to get it right. So let me pause and open it up at this point for any questions and answers on kind of this first part, this scene setting of where we are.

in 2025.

Yeah, Eric, I have one comment for you, which is kind of a question rolled into it, too.

The reason I wanted you to comment on this, and thank you for making these remarks, is the idea that we assume that this is something new.

And perhaps didn't the just war tradition grow out of the idea that the world was that to begin with? It was almost an anything goes and...

Different religious people over time. You see this in the Jewish traditions. You see it in, of course, Christianity, but you also see it in some Buddhist traditions.

In Hindu traditions as well, they're saying, no, there has to be limits on this somewhere. It's just not an anything-goes.

kind of world and so how do we think about this in terms of character in terms of restraint, in terms of competence, all of these issues.

Yeah, well, I think first you're right that part of God's common grace or natural law is that there is some sort of limit thou shalt not murder, at least not murder your mother or something of that nature. Thou shalt not steal, at least not from your little sister.

that there is a fundamental moral code, we believe that as Christians, that has permeated around the world.

But we also believe as Christians, of course, I don't want to give any slack to the idea that there's only one true way through Christ.

But there are these echoes throughout major civilizations, cultures, and religions that are very, very important. And part of it is the stewardship principle, although we often don't talk about stewardship as much that word in the just war tradition. Let's face it, the Jewish injunctions not to kill all the trees in the wells The Quranic instructions not to poison the water and cut down all the trees. We have the same thing in some of the Hindu and the Buddhist literature.

Part of this is a stewardship part that the day after the hot war stops, we all still have to live.

including even if it's a vanquished people or it's a new ally or it's a respected adversary on the other side of the border.

We have these principles there that are stewardship principles that can see beyond the horizon wisely of our immediate, immediate.

And I think that that's very important.

Any other questions or comments kind of on this setup of where we're at? Any observations or anything? Otherwise I'll turn to this, specifically to just war and lethality.

Sure. Well, let me say this. I'm going to look carefully at notes because I want to be really precise on these topics.

So does this principle of lethality mean that anything goes? Because I think that's our concern. Wouldn't you agree? Our primary concern is when we start hearing about lethality and the elevation of efficiency in killing, which is what it sounds like, I think for all of us, it rightfully says, whoa, we, you know, As Christians, is that the right path to go down? And of course, we all agree the ends don't justify the means.

So if lethality means anything goes, the ends justify the means, whatever it takes for my side to win in the immediate term.

If that's all it means, of course, as Christians, we're not supportive of it. But that doesn't mean that a refocusing on winning...

on victory and defining that in moral limited terms is not a good thing. And it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have a focus on robust training for men and women in uniform that helps them be protected and helps them to get the job done.

That's, of course, a leadership stewardship principle, right? If backing off from lethality means that we send into combat poorly resourced, poorly equipped, poorly trained individuals who are a danger to themselves and to others.

That's poor leadership. That's poor stewardship. So if lethality is about those things, getting them right, then it's not a bad thing.

And so let me make a few points about this. First, the just war tradition reminds us that we fight for something, not just against something. The just war tradition reminds us that we fight for something, not just against something. So remember, Just War 101, we start with the question, when is it just to go to war? And we answer that with three primary criteria that it is legitimate authorities to make the decision to use force.

that those authorities make that decision based on just cause and right intention. Just causes are things like national self-defense, Writing a past wrong.

bringing justice to evildoers or preventing further wrongdoing. Those are St. Augustine's categories.

And of course, right intention has to do with the heart.

Are we acting out of neighbor love? Are we acting on behalf of justice? Are we seeking security? Are we trying to protect the weak in our heart? Or are we acting out of hatred, wrath, bitterness, vengeance? And so when we ask this question, We fight for something, not just against something. When we're speaking about lethality, if we're under authority, And we're fighting for the defense of the vulnerable. We're fighting for justice to restore something that was taken. We're fighting to end aggression.

and we're doing these things out of a sense of rightful patriotism and love of neighbor, then lethality in the sense of, enhancing our ability to do that is not a bad thing. But that's the first, I think that's the first question to ask about the lethality concept.

Is it on behalf of something good, not just against an enemy? Second, tied to this, is a recognition as Christians that the limits of the just war tradition protect our soul and protect our society.

So the limits and what I would call trained lethality is focused, directed, but it is restrained.

limits protect our soul and they protect our society. What do I mean by they protect our soul? Well, Well, first of all, that just war criteria of right intention. Frankly, we have a lot of work to do to be training our young military personnel and our law enforcement.

on rightful patriotism, of love of comrades, love of neighbor, a respect for human life. These are all appropriate biblical principles. And by doing that, by doing all of that work on the front end about the value of human life, but also the value of society.

of protecting law and order, the rule of law, by emphasizing that with our troops, we're helping them to understand but frankly, protecting their own soul because we're showing them what they're fighting for. We have to also inculcate in them That the dangers of giving in to hatred, to vengeance, to wrath.

Many of you have heard me make the distinction between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. The young Anakin Skywalker who becomes Darth Vader is motivated and by a vengeful hatred. And you may recall in the movies when he was a boy that Yoda said to him that, The fear in his heart, the fear that he couldn't control things and the anger that produced. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hatred.

hatred leads to suffering. And isn't that the story of Darth Vader and the dark side and all of the bad and evil?that the inability to control, by the way, isn't that the story of the human condition? If we haven't surrendered to God,Our fear and anger of not being able to control the things around us so often lead to competition, to struggle, to hatred, to bitterness, to revenge, to suffering.

And contrast that with Luke Skywalker, who has a very similar birth and situation growing up in essence as an orphan. But instead of making those types of choices,that fed the anger and things. In a sense, he put himself under the discipline of a master warrior.

And it's a love of comrades. It's a love of his friends like Leah and Han Solo and others. And then a wider set of love and a sense of responsibility to the good side that leads him to be a noble warrior, a Jedi, not an evil, hate-filled warrior.

And the same, of course, holds true in all parts of life.

the just war tradition reminding us so that if we're training people to defend their neighbors, to defend our country and to kill,But focusing attention on the constructive side. We're doing this to stop evil. We're doing this to stop the bad guys.

but emphasizing that we're not hating them, that we're not dehumanizing the enemy, that we're not using, for instance, racial hatred or racial strife to define the other that we're fighting on the battlefield.

That's one of the things we want to get right when we're talking about lethality. We don't want a doctrine of lethality that says that other side is...

And think about all the racial epithets that we could use or that were used, say, during World War II or something.

We don't want to be going down that type of thing. We don't want the dehumanization of the Vietnam era that called the other side racial epithets.

They may be our enemy. We may be forced to kill them, but we're fighting on behalf of something and we want to protect the soul.

and our society by not emphasizing hate, vengeance, bitterness, wrath, etc. Third, and tied to this,is that we need to be thinking about lethality in terms of post-war construction and post-war conciliation.

Now, here's a startling fact from the social science literature.

Fast, harsh, aggressive wars that end quickly because of the strong level of force that were used are often easier to tie off Come to a good conclusion and have peace afterwards.

And there's actually quite a bit of data on this about humanitarian interventions, because many humanitarian interventions start in small increments And then we add a little, we add a little, we add a little, we add a little.

The other side just keeps destroying things. And ultimately those types of slowly, uh, building types of interventions actually result in a lot more deconstruction, a lot more stuff has to be rebuilt, a much longer time window for bitterness in people's hearts to happen. And so a third part of thinking about lethality is kind of this balance about thinking about how how the mechanical and aspects of kinetic warfare, in other words, what happens in the killing and in the destruction, the balance between being very targeted, but very aggressive, and maybe aggressive isn't the right word, effective, not just in targeting, but in actual killing or destruction of an enemy or enemy's a weapon silo or an enemy's military base or military convoy rather than little pinpricks Getting that lethality right actually can be helpful in the reconstruction at war's end and the conciliation.

And again, I'm not talking about widespread destruction. I'm talking about how forceful demonstrations of force that use enough power in the moment on...

on a specific battlefield can help us to get more quickly to war's end but also more quickly to a form of long-term justice and conciliation. Now, part of this, when we're talking about lethality, is the way that we're defining our terms. So if by lethality, what we're talking about is decisive victory, And we're talking about actions towards the end of security and peace that are conclusive.

Absolute, convincing, definitive, indisputable. They may be fierce. They may be ferocious. They may be aggressive.

But those types of use of force, when we're talking about lethality, I think are different.

because they're seeking the end of justice and peace, they're different than things like savagery, brutality, ruthless, barbarous, bloodthirsty, cruel. And so get...

As we're talking about lethality, especially as we're talking to younger officers, when we're talking to enlisted personnel, it's going to be important for us as leaders to be helping them to understand We want to train you. You're in the profession of arms. You have a role to preserve, to defend, to guard, protect.

And in doing that, there will be killing. You will use force. But force is different than violence. Killing is different than murder.

And a big part of that comes down to what is the cause and what is happening in your heart? What is the intention? You know, the Bible has a lot to say about hatred.

Don't let the sun go down on your anger. That word is actually kind of bitter wrath. It's not righteous indignation.

The Bible in Ecclesiastes tells us there's a time for peace and a time for war, a time for love and a time for hate. Is there really a time for hate? That word in the Hebrew, as I understand it from looking at some commentaries, that word is often a word for disgust.

It's a word for righteous indignation. It's for righteous anger. That phrase actually looks a little bit different if it is There's a time for peace and a time for hostilities, a time for love.

at a time, and if you think about hate more in the framing of hostilities, and there is a time for righteous indignation or hostility.

towards an aggressive or unjust other.

And of course, we're told many times by the Lord to avoid hatred in our hearts. And so that I think is the role. It's a huge role for chaplains and for senior military leaders.

to help us to get these things right. Let me just conclude with, I had planned to talk more about what does it mean to be a Christian warrior as a citizen in a society? but I think that you can see that this lethality conversation actually points us in that direction. You see, none of us want our militaries to be a separate cast, C-A-S-T-E, outside of society.

In other words, we don't want them to be society's mercenaries. We don't want them to be society's scapegoats. We don't want them to be having In other words, dirty or bloody hands doing the dirty work of society. By the way, that's not the biblical view. There's not any time in the Bible when military personnel or law enforcement or those who serve in public office like judges and magistrates, et cetera, there's no time in the Bible where they are listed or categorized as having some sort of dirty hands by virtue of the office that they hold.

So we don't have this scapegoat type of view, but you all know there's plenty of people out there who actually see the military.

as its own cast and as a scapegoat for the rest of society? No.

We have to say, we as Christians have to say, no, no, no, no. A rightly ordered society has lots of vocations.

And to steward the common good, among them we need those who are protectors and defenders. They're under the law. They're under authority. They're under public officials' leadership.

They are citizens. They are our sons. They are our daughters. They are our brothers. They are our sisters. They are our husbands and wives. They are our fathers and mothers.

They are woven into our society. They don't lose their citizenship. And so their moral cultivation Their ethos, including their military ethos, has to resonate with the values of our human rights loving, freedom-loving democratic societies. There's not some other external group of paid mercenaries to protect us.

That is not the biblical way. We want our warriors to love our most fundamental values.

the values of the Bible, and of course, the political values of, excuse me, that I think that we all hold dear. So to recap, the argument that I've made is not against lethality, but it is that lethality has to be understood from the just war tradition. It's under the rule of law.

it's under government authority first. Second, it has to be based on our understanding of just cause. And third, and for chaplains in particular, they have to be helping us cultivate the inner soul of our fellow citizens, those who are in the profession of arms, the right intention category is very, very important.

And then that leads to the way that we train and that we prepare, the way that we train our troops on proportionality, discrimination or distinction, and military necessities.

All of those things, what they're doing is they're defining lethality in terms of effectiveness.

and they're defining lethality in terms of intentional limitation and restraint.

And in conclusion, that this is just characteristic of the kinds of young men and young women who we want to attract into the profession of arms, who want to serve us in these national security and domestic security roles, And the kinds of citizens that when they take off their uniform, we want to reintegrate fully as, as, as civilian citizens.

into our societies. So I'm going to stop right there and open it up for your comments. I welcome them, your critiques, and your questions. Thank you.

Yeah, Eric, Doug Hanson here, one of three of us from Colorado, Colorado Springs area. Thank you very much. Really appreciate your comments and.

your insight.

Having spent 33 years in the military, it's already been 12 years for me since I retired.

So I suspect that your insight is much closer to truth ground truth than perhaps I'm seeing already from a distance. But a couple comments. One is, I think the term, use of the term lethality is unfortunate. I know that term is being emphasized, A term, if it were me, I would prefer to use the term a warrior mentality or a warrior ethic And then to borrow something that you said earlier, which would be the ultimate goal of a warrior ethic would be a noble warrior.

And to me, when you put that word noble in front of warrior, that implies that there is this understanding of There's a time to be aggressive and there's a time to always win in the context of restraint and just war theory and whatnot.

I think, now you're closer to this than me, but I think this administration and the Secretary of Defense and so on, are using this word lethality and oftentimes the warrior ethic is to bring that back into the military. I say that You know, I sit on nomination boards for high school kids entering the academies.

And what's interesting to me is that most of them talk about wanting to enter the academy But it's all for reasons, largely for reasons that don't have to do with the military.

And they may parrot words like, I want to serve my country and I want to be a soldier.

But when you ask them what their future is, well, I want to be a doctor, I want to be a lawyer, and basically I'll do my five years and get out and do this.

And so I think what the administration is trying to do is make sure that certainly those wearing the uniform, understand that ultimately their job is to defend this country.

and they need to do it. They need to be prepared to do it and to have that warrior ethic.

But to define that warrior ethic by using the word ethic behind warrior means that, yes, you're a soldier. There's a time to kill, not to murder.

but there are constraints to it. So I think what you're promoting and saying is, I hope at least, inherent in what the administration is now saying when they use the word lethality. But I think that the word lethality has connotations particularly among non-military folks, which is what 98% of our country or something that has no no background, no history, no knowledge of what it's like to be in the military. They hear that word lethality and they equate that with killing and maybe even murder.

So I think it's an unfortunate word that they're using. And I would probably speak to the same subject that you are, in a different set of terms, whatever that's worth. Thanks.

All we can do in the present moment is recognize that the Secretary of Defense is using that language and I think the things you've said have a lot of wisdom in them. It so happens we're in a moment where that word comes out. I do want to emphasize, I think, that There's a couple of ways that we got to this moment that I didn't mention. One is the Secretary of Defense and many of the men around him in the senior parts of the Pentagon fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and felt like their hands were tied behind their back.

you know, that terrorists were allowed to get away, terrorists, they couldn't bring in strikes, they couldn't fight back.

And that this not only caused a lot of deaths, but also caused a lot of PTSD and moral injury.

Tied to that is a sense that particularly during the Biden administration, there seemed to be a glorification of alternate lifestyles Join the military and get your sex change operation, you know, rainbow flags, all the training. You know, I retired in May of 2021.

So I was seeing already how aggressive in the first months of that administration the efforts, but it started well before that. The efforts were to really change the narrative on these types of things.

and what was felt like a devaluing of the military's ethos of strength and a lowering of standards when it came to PT, but also this kind of all this bizarre stuff that just a few years ago seemed like mental health issues. The last people it would bring in would be people with mental health. The military was actively recruiting them.

kind of bending to trends in society. So I think the lethality thing has to be in its current context recognized as as specifically addressed at least to those two things. And I think you're right that we have to, we have a role to play and chaplains are going to have a role to play and Christian military senior leaders, of which there are many, have a role to play about explaining, helping define these terms.

I will say that I had a very different experience than Pete Hegseth in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was on the special forces side of the house.

And we did have many more freedoms to be lethal and to be warriors.

But having said that, I can tell you that the constraints were on us. I remember the first time uh that i was downrange and we had a target and an f-15 was launched and uh on its flight path we were frantically doing the collateral damage calculations, right? And within about a minute before that aircraft struck, The calculations came forward and said there's too high a risk to the civilians. So we waived it off, just waived it off.

It made me feel good that we had a system and we had an ethos that said there are constraints to war.

And it played out there. So at least my experience was there was definitely a mindset of lethality.

but with healthy constraints. Now, whether that was based on a Christian view, that depends on the commander and whatnot, but the just war, the just war constraints were always emphasized with every legal analysis of a combat operation. Every commander has his or her hands tied because when they want to do something, almost the first person they turn to is the lawyer. The

lawyer tends to be the one that says, well, you can do this and you can't do that, according to laws of war or whatever. And so there's always that consideration.

And I think the feeling is that maybe those constraints have just gotten so out of hand. And as you say, since the Biden administration brought in DEI and other kinds of emphases. There's a swing to bring the culture back to at least what I saw 12 years ago. So I guess there's been a rapid change in the last 12 years that maybe this administration is reacting to.

Anyway, others should ask questions, more important questions.

It's quite interesting, in South Africa, a few years back, some of our generals made a statement that the military Christian fellowship would make the soldiers too soft, too weak. That was their perception that and therefore, this ethical warrior training and teaching and advise our generals properly on proper ethical warfare. I haven't got all the right terminology here.

So at the moment, we've got an admiral that's now a Military Christian Fellowship President and a young intern and he's going to make opportunity for him to speak at different forums on ethics.

So I understand the importance of military not seeing military Christian fellowship or Christians as being soft and um but rather that they're ethical in their behavior and as far as warriors. In fact, many would say the Christian makes the best warrior. And like you say, protecting his soul is very important. Also that he does the right thing. Mm-hmm.

I also think the PTSD aspect is very important that this would surely help reducing PTSD if soldiers fully understood what they were fighting for and why and that they had a job to do.

The other interesting thing is that I teach at a school in Simonstown, Nautical Science, and of the 70 odd students, now, I'm a Navy man. It's actually a merchant Navy environment.

As much as I try and tell him how good my career has been and how exciting and adventurous and rewarding, I've never had, maybe one or two only have ever shown any interest in the Navy, which is...

might be because of our past possibly probably and the majority of the students are African, but that's also interesting that there's no interest whatsoever in joining a fighting Navy or as such. So thank you. I really enjoyed the talk. And that's just a few thoughts on my side.

As I say, I think our generals and admirals need to know that the Military Christian Fellowship is not making the soldiers soft. And that's what we need to get across.

and they make the best soldiers. Thank you. If I could just pick up one thing from Peter, and that is this about particularly about moral injury. And you're going to have Tim Demme speak, my good friend, in a couple of weeks.

And an argument that he makes and an argument that before him, and he cites our mutual friend Mark Lavecki, in a book that's a super book that I would urge you all to get, *The Good Kill*.

which has a lot to do with moral injury and how to prevent it by Mark Lavecki, a huge emphasis for these two guys is our culture, our society is not preparing people before they're age 18 to have kind of the values that are going to undergird integrity, service, excellence, duty, honor, country, et cetera.

our core military values, which are rooted in much deeper Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman virtues, if you will.

Our 18-year-olds don't get to the military prepared with those. And our young people, whether they become officers or enlisted, they're not also prepared by our schools, by our civic institutions, by our families and churches by the time they're 18 or 19 and they come to us, they don't really know what's worth defending anymore in Western civilization. They've grown up in families that are broken, They've been taught to trust no authority, right? Mother and father divorced, church broken, schools broken, politics aflame.

So by the time they get to the military, they've been kind of taught, don't trust anything. Western civilization is just oppression, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

They don't come with kind of a healthy respect for the family, for authority itself, the principle of authority and respect for authority.

They don't come with a respect for their own country and its history and values. They don't come with a respect for the kind of fundamental core principles that are part of our society.

Unless you have all of that, you're much more likely to get on a path of moral injury, what Tim calls spiritual injury, And of course, those people have a higher likelihood that a physical trauma or a moral trauma will result in PTSD as well, right? There's a lot of work to do on the front end, but that type of work lowers the likelihood down the road of burnout, of soul harm, what Aristotle called it, we call it moral injury today, by getting on the front end. So I'm glad you're having Tim Demme to talk about it.

Because I think he has something that can be quite helpful. And his new book is very, very good. Yeah.

Please, Jude. Oh, yes. Thank you so much for these insights and the I want to add on something from my elder, Peter, that the same story happens in our military in Uganda and maybe across most of the region armies around East Africa. But particularly for my country, where we have generals and so on, many of our superiors, the commanders, who came out from a guerrilla force, a guerrilla army.

after spending over five years fighting to liberate and take over power.

This has been one of the challenging topic to explain to them or to explain to others and every time You talk about this, they feel that maybe still you want to make Eiza the force to become too weak.

or too soft, as Fita was explaining the other side in South Africa. I remember a few days ago, I think last month,all the other months, one of the generals told me, no, no, no, no. We can recognize you as a Christian, but we don't want you to be too radical. We don't want you to get too lost into the Bible things and so on, because we want you to be ready so that in the time we say give you an operation,You don't tell us the biblical issues and so on. This is their mindset. And that's how they think that the military should operate.

It is helping us whenever we have such insights. The biggest challenge was to explain to, especially soldiers who have been in the combat,We have tried this with Ivan since we began the ethics training to explain the difference between killing and murder.

was a very, very big, big problem because many of them had the trauma and some of them are still having trauma thinking they murdered.

They are mixing the two.

And unless they get these topics and these lessons, they are not getting the lead at all. Somebody is on the front line, but he's thinking alone, maybe in himself, he's self condemning. But I remember one time sharing with us, I think two years ago,about when I was in Mogadishu in 2011. And here comes one of the bad guy confronting, scamming in my arc of fire.

He has already shot some of our boys are dead and so on. I had 100% chances of putting him out of action.

But again, I had to remember what does IHL say? If this guy has risen up his hands, has already surrendered, what should I do?And I did what I can. I had to put him under arrest. I called him my superior, who was a sergeant by then.

And we checked and found him with some blades around.

his pockets, and we handed him over to the armies of that country. But in five minutes, he was gunned down.

Today, I feel so happy that I was not pulled into that action. Though the guy was shot dead,at last, but it wasn't me. And that one gives me so much courage because I had to take my personal decision at that time I didn't see a reason of putting him out of action because he had already surrendered.

So the issues we are talking about this topic is too much, especially when it comes to our boys and girls who are on frontline. We need a lot of these.

And it's our prayer that it gets an open door penetrate and it reaches into where it can be accommodated at higher echelons, I think it will save and make better soldiers. As Peter said, A Christian leader who is too rooted into the word of God can make a better soldier. I have no doubt with that.

I've been on frontline at least 75% of my 16 years of service. And I've seen these that really if you have you are rooted into the word of God, you can make a better soldier. So we pray that these trainings, these lessons can go, let God open the door.

that we can have them shared at the other levels in our militaries. Thank you so much.

I don't have anything to add to that really remarkable thing other than to say that first, your story Tells it like it is, you know, this, this very important thing about you lived up to the principles of your training and things and, and it protected your soul.

And second, those troops that you're talking about who have a sense of trauma from their past, of course, we know Healing can be very, very hard. And yet the Lord chooses in many instances for healing to happen instantaneously. So whether the Lord...

And so we as Christians, we have an answer and the answer for things, for the trauma of the past, the answer for the crimes of the past.

The answer for the disappointments of the past, the answer for evil and sin from the past is that Christ can make new.

And so we have a blessed hope, and I think it's a hope that other religions actually don't have in the same way, the power of the Holy Spirit.

to rejuvenate the inner person, the transformation of the mind that Paul talks about.

Sometimes the Lord always will save immediately, but he doesn't always restore immediately. Sometimes the healing process many, many times is much longer.

for a variety of reasons. That's in God's sovereign hands, and we don't know that. But we have a true hope in that.

And first and foremost, we're Christians, even before we're officers or chaplains. And so finding ways to provide that is crucial.

And the last thing I'd say in all of that is the greatest man of war in many ways in the Bible, or maybe the greatest warrior, as an individual warrior, is David. And yet read the Psalms and see what his heart was like.

And the Psalms show the full range of emotions when he was down.

when he felt like he'd been unjustly accused when he was, when he, but it's the expression of a life, a lived life through, what he says in his prayers of the Psalms. And I think that that's the other thing is, is we're not asking our warriors to bottle it all up and hide it in the corner of their heart.

All of their humanity, all of these, you know, the anger that they feel, the injustice that they feel, the sorrow that they feel, the joy that they feel.

The exhilaration, all of the intensities of life, the greatest warrior of the Bible, David, had them and put them on paper for us. And so I think that that's also a thing that we can be constantly pointing our young warriors to and our officers.

Are you reading the Psalms? These are the, you know, these first 90 Psalms. I mean, these are the words of a warrior. You ought to be reading these. Look, look.

He was down at times. He was angry at times. He told God how he felt. There were times where he felt bitterness in his heart towards an enemy. He told the Lord that.

But the Lord guided him on a trajectory of life towards effective leadership and warriorship over the course of a lifetime.

And that's perfectly appropriate. I think we can keep pointing people back to the Bible about its kind of brutal honesty.

Does anybody else have any remarks to make? Because I'm just mindful of the time. We're about the one hour mark right now.

Do you have any closing thoughts, Eric? I'll just conclude by saying thank you for allowing me to make these remarks. I've mentioned before that I think a very good resource for thinking about how just war thinkers and Christian realists, to use that Augustinian term, think is the free online website.

ProvidenceMag.com. It's the home of Providence, a journal of Christianity and American foreign policy. I think it's very useful for leaders. There's really not much else like it these days that's thinking from a Christian perspective.

on national security issues if I can be of service or we have further questions or comments um please do email me. You all have my email or Jeff can make it available. I wish I could be with you for each of your monthly things.

And Jude, Ivan, and your colleagues, I really admire the work that you're doing. You're doing it in really on the front lines in many, many ways. So God bless you, Jeff. Thanks. You're very welcome, Eric.

I'm going to comment on that PDF you sent me. I just haven't done that yet. Oh, that'd be great. Thank you. There's some really good stuff in there.

I just want to leave you with one quick word. And that word is training. You know, we talk about the academics and, But training is where the head meets the heart.

especially in contexts that are really inflamed and you cannot get into combat without having every part of your soul inflamed. You can't, I've spent six years at the one inch level of combat.

And there's all sorts of stuff that happened there.

But training is what kind of brings it all to mind because we throw the word around PTSD.

PTSD is an autonomic nervous system reaction to stress. Moral injury is different.

It's how we attach meaning to what we feel.

And sometimes the meanings that we take from these experiences are the product of the training we either receive prior to going into combat or some of the reflection we receive after combat.

And that really makes a difference. Jude and Ivan, what really impressed me It was almost a year ago, but one of the training that I sat in, there was a comment in the chat room that went off to the side.

And there was a reflection that two members were having about what to do with child soldiers on the battlefield.

It was an incredible conversation. But you could see the thinking trying to attach to the training that's going on.

And that impressed me about the importance of things we're trying to do in Acts.

to take the things that Eric told us today and try to make that operational and tactical for soldiers throughout the world.

As an army chaplain, I always took a ribbing from my soldiers. They always considered themselves carnivores.

And I was a herbivore.

Less than that. But I did start out as an infantryman and There is a part of us that says it has to be aggressive. It has to be lethal. But that's always been a part of the profession.

what is not been a part of the profession at all times is this idea of when to turn it on and when to turn it off. And an ethicist named Dick Couch would remind SEAL teams that that's kind of like a rheostat or a thermostat. It's not just a switch that you're on or off.

It's this thing you have to dial up or dial down and the experience and the self-control you need. to discern when to do which. And that's a life of prayer. It's a life of reflection. There's a whole lot of stuff behind this.

And I just thank you all for being a part of that, because I think that's the mission that we're actually looking for in how to take our faith.

and make that a part of this military discernment cycle, not just for ourselves, but for the others that we serve with.

in the middle of that. And the last thing I'll leave you with as part of this training, and I think it's real helpful, why I'm thinking of bringing, um, General McChrystal in to talk about this is his latest book on character does one very helpful thing.

It's not going to give us great Christian insights. That will bring to the training itself.

But instead of talking about this thing called static values, He talks about values in terms of our convictions as human beings.

And what does the Bible say? Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Correct? So conviction basically takes the head to the emotions to the actions.

and drives us as human beings forward. So I'll just leave you with those thoughts.

And just say God bless everyone until we talk again next week or next month. And thanks again, Eric, for everything you've done.

And for the rest of you, it's great seeing you online. God bless you all.

Hey, Jeff, do you have a minute to stick on for just a second? Yes, I do. I'm going to turn off the recording, though. Okay. I just want to...