

Dr. Charlie Reynolds, Chaplain (Colonel), USA, Retired

Warrior Priest

Okay, the material that I'm sharing comes from a book that will be published this spring by Good Faith Media. It's called A Quest for Warrior Priests.

enlisting warriors to be healers and peacebuilders.

And the material comes from chapter 3. It's called A Call to Be a Warrior Priest. And I have changed the slide slightly since Jeff gave them out.

And since this is an ethical group, I decided to start out by asking an ethical question.

that I think every ethicist should have asked. And if you haven't, you should anyway. Can the role of a warrior be a divine calling? And my second week in the military, One of my captains, Mark Glasgow, came up to me and said, Chaplain, if killing is a sin, can Christians be a soldier? And I did not have an answer for him.

And I could tell he was really struggling with this, and I didn't want to just throw an answer off the top of my head.

And I said, Mark, let me get back to you. I need to look at that. It's not something I had really thought about being a chap, and I should have, but I hadn't.

And I'm not going to give the full answer to that question because Jeff has already done that in his book on...

care for the soaring soul and he does a much better job than I can But the conclusion I came to after I looked at many passages of Jesus' interaction with soldiers was that Jesus had to have known what soldiers do. He had many interactions with soldiers. They were all really positive. And he never condemned soldiers for their actions.

And that said to me that if this is wrong, certainly Jesus would have said something.

And I think, again, if you read Jeff's book, you'll see how he talks about the ethical dimensions of that.

I believe that defending others is the calling of a warrior. And that that can be a divine calling.

And I'm gonna ask Messimo, would you read this slide for me?The warrior's calling is a blessing and a cursing. A blessing because you are created to protect the downtrodden of the world who cannot stand for themselves against The evil that men do. A custom because you have to fight battles you never wanted in the first place.

So it's a big blessing. Yeah, it's a big blessing. Yeah, go ahead.

Biologists are really the answer, but when it is it, it's the only answer.

The list of violent acts goes on. Wishing won't make it so.

This is the true form of most of life and it's totally true of stopping and preventing violence. Prepare for violence while praying for peace.

There are evil people out there who want to do evil. There's a lot of shootings. I know in our country, but other places as well.

And those people are not stopped by praying, okay? And so I think warriors definitely is a calling. There are some biblical precedents for that. In Exodus, Ramses was basically carrying out genocide.

He was killing the firstborn of the Hebrews. And God said, I'm not going to allow this. And he calls Moses to be the warrior.

Another example of that is with Jesus, with the cleansing of the temple.

The merchants were overcharging the poor.

the space that they were conducting, that they were selling stuff in was the court of the Gentiles.

It was supposed to be an area where the Gentiles could come and worship, but there was no room for them to come and worship because all the space was filled up by the cellars.

of the merchandise and particularly the animals for sacrifice and the the priests were profiting from those sales. Part of it was given to them.

And so this was an injustice and hypocrisy and exploitation. And Jesus stepped in to stop it.

I think that this is the role of the warrior is really embodied quite well in what we call the Special Forces Prayer. I was with Special Forces. I was the SWCC chaplain. SWCC is the Special Forces Training Center at Fort Bragg. In fact, this prayer is in a stained glass window in JFK Chapel.

And so, Jeff, would you read this prayer? Jeff, your mic's not on.

That helps. Yes. The prayer was made in 1961 by Lieutenant General William P. Yarborough who asked his chaplain, John Stevie, to write a prayer for a group of Green Berets who were shipping out to Laos. The prayer goes as follows.

Almighty God, who art the author of liberty and the champion of the oppressed, hear our prayer.

We, the men of the Special Forces, acknowledge our dependence upon thee in the preservation of human freedom.

Go with us as we seek to defend the defenseless and to free the enslaved.

May we ever remember that our nation, whose motto in God we trust, expects that we shall acquit ourselves with honor and that we may never bring shame upon our faith, our families, or our fellow men.

Grant us wisdom from thy mind, courage from thy heart, strength from thy arm, and protection from thy hand.

It is for thee that we do battle, and to thee belongs the victor's crown. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.

Okay, I think that prayer really embodies what I'm trying to describe as a divine calling of a warrior.

And now let's suppose an army is the aggressor.

that they're the ones that are doing the ugly stuff, okay, to the innocent.

I think that's when it's the responsibility of a chaplain to be a conscience.

Before I took the oath of office, I hesitated. In fact, the day before I was to take the oath of office, I called Chaplain Don Crowley, who had recruited me. He was a senior chaplain for the state of California. I was going into the California National Guard.

And I said, I don't know if I can take this oath or not.

because I was to obey the orders of the president of the United States. And if the president asked me to do something that was immoral, I couldn't do it.

And he said, Charlie, I'm glad you're struggling with this. He said, part of your responsibility as a chaplain is to be a moral conscience.

He said, now, if you find something morally wrong every time you go to guard drill, you're not going to last very long.

But he said, once or twice in your career, you may need to confront a commander with a moral issue.

And so I really do think that that is it. And he said, you may lose your career, but it's your responsibility to do that.

And so I share that with my chaplains that I supervise. I think that's an important part of the role of the chaplain.

I, so now I want to talk about, okay, I've talked about what's a warrior. What is a warrior priest? And I love the origin of that word priest.

In the Latin, it's a bridge. And the priest is to be a bridge between God, man, heaven, and earth.

That is an awesome responsibility. That is a humbling responsibility.

But I love that definition. And so the priest is the one that stands, that really is the way to, is the bridge to God.

And you felt that as a chaplain. I mean, you would as unworthy as I felt.

I knew when I walked up to those soldiers, they saw me as God's presence. And that was a humbling but an awesome responsibility.

And so the warriors can stop a conflict, but they rarely resolve a conflict.

In fact, many times they make the conflict worse. In fact, World War I, which is really a very unnecessary war, the Peace Treaty of Versailles, created so many problems that we still are dealing with today.

And so, and only when relationships are healed is conflict resolved.

And so it's the responsibility of the warrior priest to go beyond being a warrior, but to also do those things to try to bring healing.

And that's the calling of the priest, to be the healing relationship between people and God, relationships between God and people.

And my book is really on evangelism. And to me, that's the definition of evangelism.

Evangelism is healing relationships between people and God, but also people and people, because the two, you can't do one without the other.

And I explain that in my chapter on theology. But we're also to be more than that. Warrior priests are also to do what you're doing with ethics.

It's the responsibility of warrior priests to train others to be healers and not as well.

I give four examples of persons who were healers of culture. One was Mother Teresa, who was Roman Catholic.

One was Mahatma Gandhi, who was Hindu. One was Martin Luther King Jr., who was Protestant, a Baptist pastor.

And see, I need to read, Steve, would you read these two slides for me? These two bullets.

To the best of your ability to grow in your understanding of and relationship with God and show your love for God as how you treat your fellow man.

Number two is to be willing to risk your life to go places where there is conflict who attempts to bring healing.

Okay, these are the, what I see is the two requirements of being a warrior priest. The fourth member as I, is, was Michaela Yossasevi.

And she represents 60 million girls deprived of education worldwide.

She's won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in trying to encourage leaders to buy books, not guns.

And I intentionally chose a Roman Catholic a Hindu, a Protestant, and a Muslim, because you don't have to be a particular religion to be a warrior priest.

A warrior priest is anyone who feels called of God to bring healing to his world.

And I have met healers from many different walks of life and many different faith groups.

Trying to move this around where I can.

Okay, I don't know if you can see the pictures on your screen or not, it shows up on mine.

some of the i'll go over some of the characteristics of warrior priests um These are not limited to the ones I give.

Warrior priests may have many characteristics. These are just some that I picked out that I think are important. And these are not exclusive. I mean, a warrior priest doesn't have to necessarily have these traits, but I think these are some things that I saw that I feel like are important to be a warrior priest. One is that a warrior priest must be humble and dependent.

upon God. For the first five and a half years of my life, I was a struggling church planter.

And I mean struggling, okay? I mean, I had to depend on God. Sometimes I wasn't sure if I was gonna get a paycheck the next month, okay? And there was a part of me, even when I was a colonel, that was still that struggling church planter. And I thank God for that.

because we should never lose that sense of dependence upon him. And I think that's critically important.

A warrior priest strives to redeem both individuals and cultures. I think probably all of us can name someone that we helped to find a redeeming relationship with God, okay? And that changed their life.

One of the best examples I know of is the book *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand.

which is very different from the movie *unbroken* okay uh uh angeline jolly uh left out the whole part about his conversion in a Billy Graham crusade and about how that totally changed his life and made him a wholly different person.

uh but uh that's just you know i think we all are familiar with what that means um His name was Louis Zampaneri. There's also cultural redemption.

And cultural redemption is where you redeem a whole culture, a whole society. And one of the best examples I know of that is Mother Teresa.

who has now 40,000 over 400, 4,000 followers, working in 123 countries around the world. That's not just even a cultural redemption, that's a world redemption.

of really trying to make a difference.

Another characteristic is that warrior priests are saved by grace. We are flawed human beings, all of us.

If God had to have perfect people, none of us qualify. And where your priest can have some serious flaws at times.

But somehow God is able to overcome our imperfections and for his light to shine through.

And I think we, again, have to recognize it is impossible for us to do what we do without God's presence.

The things that warrior priests do are impossible tasks. They can't be done without God.

And bringing healing is a, healing is something only God can do.

or your priests have to be willing to go where it's dangerous. Is anybody familiar with the angel of Fredericksburg? a guy by the name of Richard Kirkland. If you've ever been to the Fredericksburg battlefield, there's this statue of him on the Fredericksburg battlefield.

The Battle of Fredericksburg was an absolute massacre.

The Confederate Army had strong defensive position. General Bergson sent wave after wave after wave of Union soldiers, and they were cut down.

And that night they were crying and screaming out in pain all night long, those who had been wounded and were still alive.

And it continued the next day. The battle didn't continue. But everybody was afraid to go out and help these men that were screaming for help because they thought they would be shot.

And finally, Richard Kirkland, went to his brigade commander, Colonel Kirkshaw, and said, I've got to go help these men. And he said, no, you can't go. You'll be killed.

And he went back and he kept listening to them. And finally he went back and he begged him to let him go. And he said, okay, if you're willing to go, go.

He gathered as many canteens as he could from his peers. And he went out and gave water to these men who were dying from thirst. And, uh, I need to see who hasn't read. John, would you read first? Well, Cal, you go ahead. Okay. You want me to do number four? That bottom line down there. Yeah. Okay. Of the thousands of warriors watching the ocean of suffering humanity.

most of whom claimed to be Christians, Kirkland alone had the courage to respond. He alone mustered the courage to be a warrior priest, to reach out with compassion to heal an enemy who had killed several of his closest friends.

Okay, that's a warrior priest. That's having the courage. I mean, if we're not willing to die, And that was it was that way for all of the chaplains, all of us that were in Afghanistan, Iraq, we all went places where we could have been killed. If you're not willing to do that, you're not ready to be a warrior priest.

So another characteristic of a warrior priest is the warrior priest must be a team player.

Before we deployed to Afghanistan, my brigade commander, who was at that time Colonel, who later became General Nicholson, who was the senior commander in Afghanistan later, He took us on the staff ride of the Gettysburg.

And I was thinking to myself, what are we going to learn in Gettysburg that's going to help us in Afghanistan? I mean, we'll have fun. It'll be a great, nice time for staff, but I didn't see how we could learn anything about, that would apply to Afghanistan.

In the course of that staff ride, he explained to us how before the Battle of Gettysburg, the Confederate Army was a well-oiled army that had won almost every major battle they had fought.

And their last battle before Gettysburg was Chancellorsville, which was just almost a decisive victory.

And of course, Stonewall Jackson had been killed during that battle by some of his guards when he was out scouting.

And he, the other generals were, they knew that Stonewall Jackson had been Lee's you know, favorite general, they were all competing for that role. And General Nicholson showed how these staff conflicts and their egos affected the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg. And he stopped and he paused and he looked at every one of us in the eye.

that were there. He just looked, you know, and he said, we cannot allow this to happen to our army. We cannot allow rivalries and personal egos and misunderstandings to interfere with the success of our mission. And it was powerful. And we did learn something from the Battle of Gettysburg.

And I think we have all seen that. I've seen it with chaplains. I've seen it with chaplains.

know working together that just it was it was so much inner conflict and rivalry that it it was a I share in my book a story, a conflict between a director of religious education and a religious coordinator that affected the entire community that I was working in.

And the religious support had bittered the entire community. Nobody wanted to come to chapel. It was such an ugly mess.

Um, and so, and how I shall also share how God healed that. Okay. That was one of the times God was able to use me as, as a, as a healer.

And I think one of the ways we can avoid that is with prayer.

My second brigade chaplain was a chaplain by the name of Dan Parker. We met for breakfast every Wednesday.

And after breakfast, we had prayer together.

And Dan was very open with us. He had a daughter that he was having some problems with and he shared that with us. And so we felt open to share some of our hurts.

When you pray for somebody and you share life, that you have a different relationship with them.

And we never had those rivalries in that group. And every time I was a leader of chaplains, I would do that. I would have a time together where we could get together and pray.

And to my knowledge, there were not any of those serious conflicts that I saw in some other situations One of the things that all religions share in common is prayer. Every religion has a prayer as part of their faith.

Now with Muslims, and I never had a Muslim that I supervised directly.

But I did work with a group where the Muslim imam would pray with us. Okay, some, you know, have to bow toward Mac and be on a rug and that sort of thing. But it just depends on the individual. But that's something I think is really a way of dealing with that that can be helpful.

I think warrior-priest, I think they have to see the world through a dualistic lens.

I think they can't just see the world as all black and white. You know, all Muslims are bad. You know, all of us are sort of a mixture of good and evil, if we're honest. All right.

I had a chaplain, his name was Bill Robinson. He was an excellent chaplain.

But he sort of saw the world as black and white. He had been a former NCO. And so I decided to make, when I was at B-Spot, and I decided to make Bill the the sponsor of the Muslim service.

And he had respect for me. I couldn't have done this, okay? But he said, when I told him, I said, Bill, I want you to sponsor the Muslim service. He said, sir.

The only Muslims I've ever seen are through the sights of my M16.

And I think I told you he was a former NCO. And I said, Bill, I really need you to do this.

Well, the imam was a very... a very...

outgoing, just very talkative guy, a very extrovert, And he befriended Bill, and Bill became friends of his. And he sent me an email one day, and he said, sir, he said – The imam invited me to go to this imam meeting in Frankfurt, and I know I can't go, but I just wanted to tell you he invited me.

I emailed him back and said, Bill, you have to go. If he invited you to this meeting, it would, you know, that means he respects you and it would be an insult for you not to go with him and go to the meeting.

but I won't make you go by yourself. I'll go with you. And so the day before we're getting ready to go, he called, he emails me. He says, sir, do I need to check out a weapon? I said, no, Bill, you don't need to check out a weapon. And so he...

We went to the meeting and it was in German. So I started, you know, I interpreted for him and they were talking about how the kids weren't going to mosque and they weren't reading the Quran.

And they were going to discos and they, you know, were just listening to wild music.

And he looks over and he says, sir, they have the same problems we do.

And I share this story in my book and I make this statement and Cal, I'm gonna get you to read again if you would.

Okay. He was no longer looking at Muslims through the scope of his M16.

Yeah. Okay. So I tell that long story, but I think it's very important for us to see that there's evil and good everywhere.

And the world's not black and white. And I think we can't really see the world in perspective until we see that.

And this, I think, is very important, that God, it's been my experience that God is a lot bigger than the boxes we try to confine him to.

A lot of the things in my book that I share are outside of the box. In the Army, you have to plan.

But the things that God used me the most effective in weren't the things that were planned. There were doors that God opened and I was able to walk through.

Another character of a warrior priest is a warrior priest can laugh with God. God has a sense of humor. I'm so certain of that. You know, my wife told God she'd marry anybody but a minister.

And I can remember when I was in German class in college, And I'm saying, I don't know why they make it take a foreign language. I will never use this stuff. And two years later, I was a youth minister in a German church, German speaking church.

So, you know, and one of my most funny stories with God I grew up in a home where if a beer commercial came on TV, I had to go cut the TV down. And that was before remotes. So I had to walk over to the TV and turn it down.

I get to Afghanistan. I'm the Religious Advisor for General Austin and Ambassador Peter Bodie.

And my contacts told me they had closed all the liquor stores in Baghdad. Now, this is extremely...

significant because number one, they're enforcing Sharia law, which they weren't supposed to do. And number two, They are cutting off the, because Muslims couldn't sell alcohol, the other religious groups could. This was their main source of income.

And so they were having to, they were doing this And so I reported this to General Austin. When I finished my report, he'd usually say, thank you, Padre. This was, by the way, at the battle update brief.

which was being listened to by every commander in theater. It was being broadcast in Tampa at CINCOM headquarters and transcripts go to the White House.

And he would usually say, thank you, Padre. And the next guy would brief. He says, Chaplain, you need to get your facts straight.

He says, Prime Minister Maliki has assured me that they're only closed a few stores that are conducting illegal activity and that they have to cut down on legal activity.

I had, and I didn't know because it was Operation Udon that the Iraqis were listening.

And so in front of the Iraqis, I had contradicted what Maliki had told Austin.

And he calls my boss in and says, why did you embarrass me like that? And I call my wife and said, I may be coming home early.

Anyway, so as it turned out, I was correct. They had closed all the liquor stores.

And somehow they got my phone number out there. And every time a liquor store got threatened, they would call my office and I would pass it up.

And so we had a big meeting at the embassy. We had a couple of congressmen there and some VIPs and General Buchanan was introducing me. He says, this is my Baptist chaplain that protects our liquor stores here in Baghdad. So anyway, just, just a story about God's God's sense of humor.

A warrior priest needs to have prayer companions. You need to have everywhere that I went, I had one person that I could pray with.

that I could share my deep hurts, that I could share my concerns, I could share my fears. And I think that's so critically important.

And I have one of those now. And you need someone who wants to pray for you.

I have a man that's prayed for me for over 40 years. We were in the doctor ministry program together and he was walking down the hall and God said, I want you to take that boy under your wing.

At the time, I was at struggling church planter and would probably have been considered the least likely to succeed.

but he has prayed for me every day. One of his prayers for me was when I was a soldier, when I was in Baghdad, asked to meet with me.

And I knew from an Intel reports that the Sideris wanted to capture a American.

But I also knew that if he had invited me to his, by the way, he didn't for obvious reasons, all my meetings were in the embassy.

But for obvious reasons, he didn't want to come to the embassy. And I really felt like this was an important meeting. And all I could get was my chap and assistant and one other soldier to go with me.

And so this friend that had been praying for me, he said, Charlie, you can call me anytime. Well, it was 3.30 in the morning, Texas time.

And I call him up and I, I, I, I phone rings about five times and I get this sleepy voice to say, John, I can't tell you where I'm going or what I'm doing, but you need to pray.

And so those are the times when we need those prayer words. I call both my current prayer companion and John, Before I spoke today, because I was a little nervous and just having their prayers meant a difference. And I think we all need that.

So you need a friend to pray and you need someone praying for you. And then the last one is what I call the art of blessing.

Dora McCarty, who wrote a book called It slipped my name. Anyway, he has got a chapter. The Inner Heart of Ministry is the name of the book.

And he's got a whole chapter on the minister as a blessing. One of the greatest gifts you can give is a gift of blessing.

And one of the things I've started doing is when God puts it on my heart, Like, I would just, if I see someone that I feel like needs a blessing, I would just say, could I give you a blessing? It might be a clerk in a store whose I can tell is having a bad day. Now, I wouldn't do this in front of other people, but if it's, you know, if...

I only do it when God prompts me and it's just that person. I did this to a Colonel one day.

And he said, Charlie, this is probably the best thing. After I finished, he said, this is probably the best thing that'll ever happen to me today.

and uh i've never had one anybody turn me down when i say could i give you a blessing and and i don't even know if they're christian or not but uh one of them was a When I was in Wiesbaden, I was the Garrison Chaplain and so I was on the school board and we had a really good principal and my daughter's in high school.

But he was Jewish and he was probably gay.

And he had done a really good job and was getting promotion to a larger high school. And I was in his office talking about something else. And I said, Could I give you a blessing for your new job? And he looks at me sort of funny. He says, okay. And so I just said a prayer for him.

And I left and one of our chaplains wives worked in the office and she said he came in And he was so excited. And he said, nobody has ever given me a blessing, not a rabbi or anybody. He said, that was so wonderful.

uh so i think blessing is something that that or your priest, any minister needs to do more of. That's part of us being that bridge between heaven And men. And when we give that blessing, we are bringing heaven to them. And that's a very beautiful thing.

These are some of my references. I have many more in my book. One book that I would recommend to you is by Don Lewis. It's called The Warrior's Codex.

Sayings from the Heart of a Warrior. It's in this book that Don introduces the concept of a warrior priest. It's something that I got from Don.

And so that's one book that I would recommend. You can order it from Amazon. And you got these slides so you can look up the name of the book on the slides.

Okay, I've got 1243. And so I'll open it up for any questions you might have written down or any questions you might want to ask me.

Appreciate the presentation. This is Steve. This isn't directly with your talk, but you did mention Iraq and Afghanistan. So looking back.

I'm curious if it was worth it to you because Jeff knows I lost 59 in my Afghanistan deployment with the Fort Carson Brigade. Yeah.

Any reflections on if it was worth it, everything you and your soldiers went through, sir? Well, I conducted 43 memorial ceremonies. I mean, I supervised 43 memorial ceremonies in 16 months.

So AFSCAN is very personal for me. I don't know how to...

I mean, I don't fully know how to answer that question I can say this, after I retired as a chaplain, I worked at the Intelligence Command for two years as a religious advisor.

And I can tell you that there are many reasons why we lost in Afghanistan, but one of the main reasons is because we let the Taliban win the religious messaging war.

And there were two narratives that were very critical of that.

One is that Afghanistan prided themselves in overthrowing the occupier.

And the Taliban were able to convince the populace that we were the occupiers.

And so they were drawing on that deeply ingrained narrative.

when I would try to counteract that narrative, they would say, Chapman, we don't message religion.

And if you don't counter message, then you're letting the opposition win.

And religion, the idea of most American religion was just causes conflict, so we stay away from it.

Okay. But in many times, religion is very critical to what's going on. That's still a deep gap in our intelligence. Okay. Is impact.

in many situations, religion is critical part. The second is that, They were able to convince much of the populace that God was on their side. By the way, they were as much occupiers as we were. And that's what I was trying to message.

is that the religion and the form of Islam in Afghanistan before the Taliban was Hanafi, which was a very, very not a volatile form of Islam at all, a very somewhat peaceful form of Islam.

But they hijacked that and said this was true Islam, which it wasn't.

And so they were as much occupiers as we were. And they were able to convince... So...

All I can say is I think I'm going to answer that question by coming back to what I said is that I think, again, the mistake we made there is when the special forces went in and really eliminated the Taliban presence by themselves.

You know, they came in with laser target designators. They showed up with Dostum, the leader of the Lawrence Lions, and said, can you show us where the hideouts are? And he said, yeah. And so they got on horseback. You've probably seen the movie. And with those laser target detonators, they pretty much eliminated. We should have just left.

and said, listen, if you come back, we're going to do it again. But I think we felt this need to have boots on the ground.

So I didn't really answer your question. Every life, American life is valuable.

And I think one of the things that I always wondered if I would pull the trigger.

and I was in an RPG attack, I know how to pull the trigger. And I'm glad that I had that experience because they helped me in counseling soldiers.

Because I found that it's about getting back to your family and taking care of your buddies. I didn't have a gun, but I would have if I had one.

it made me realize that war is serious. War is, and before we ever go into a war, it has to, you know, the decision, what, Once the war takes place, it's not murder. But once that decision has

been made to go war, that's where you have to say, is murder worth it? And if you enter a war, you have to say, is it really gonna be worth the loss of American lives? So I probably didn't answer that question well, but I tried. That was helpful. I appreciate the story, sir.

Charlie, this is Cal. The Ministry of Acts is of course worldwide and covers many denominations.

It has more of a lay audience than a theological-trained audience, and so terms like priest, when we're speaking in one part of the world, there'll be a reaction because it's a theological word that they identify with a particular denomination or denominations. And I had this situation, for example, once in Brazil, speaking to, I don't know, couple of thousand of the MCF there. And when the translator mistranslated one word, like this, uh, I lost the audience, uh, and I didn't know what had happened. Uh, and so do you have any thoughts about this for us dealing with more lay people? Presentation, of course, is from a chaplain's perspective, and I'd love to hear a little bit more about the time when you're AFRICOM chaplain, because we have several of our team that are from Africa listening to this. But those are my two sort of questions or thoughts.

I think you have to try, certainly if you're using the term warrior priest, you have to define. I mean, I come from a Baptist background.

where we believe in the priesthood of the believer. And as cooperative Baptists, that's one of the things we really stress.

is that every believer is a priest. So that's sort of the perspective I'm coming from. I think you'd either have to change the term OK, because sometimes a term is so ingrained in a group that you have to change the words you use because they're never going to overcome their understanding.

of how they consider that term. So you have to find another word to use. It's like, for example, just warrior.

Yeah, just warrior. Or you have to explain to them, you know, hey, when I say priest, I'm not talking about a...

an office in the church. I'm talking about And you could quote some scriptures in the Bible where Paul says we're a kingdom of priests, okay? That we're all priests.

So you either have to redefine it or you have to change. But I think probably in this case, in Africa, probably saying just warrior would work better.

As far as my experience in Africa, that was an amazing time. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the African chaplains.

Had some amazing experiences there. Probably the most amazing was in When I was in Ebola, excuse me, a librarian for the Ebola crisis, I was the only chaplain there.

And so I gave ministry to everybody. In fact, the military journal just came out recently.
as a story about the work that I did there during that time.

Because, you know, there was one example of a chaplain that worked across lines with Navy, Air Force, and I...

I was the only one. I gave services for the Seabees, for the Air Force, for all the Army people.

I've had three experiences in my life when I share with my book. And I say this very humbly. I've had three experiences...

where I felt like I was not present and God was in my life completely. And again, I say that with full humility. I'm a flawed human being.

Saved by grace. But one of those experiences was when I was preaching during the Ebola crisis in Liberia.

And those people were hurting. I mean, General Williams came to me and said, Chapman, I know you're not supposed to do this, but you need to spend some time in the embassy.

because most of them have had family members that have died. The death rate for COVID was 10%. The death rate for Ebola was 90%.

Thank you.

and they've had to send their families home. And so when I started visiting an embassy, a man, one of their leaders asked me to come I thought it was lead a Bible study, but I found it was actually a church service. And she was asking me to preach.

And as I was preaching, I could just feel the healing. You know, it just...

And it's one of those three times in my life where, and I, I got, you know, I'm not that great a preacher, but I was, they asked, I was asked to preach and Several churches, of course, I couldn't go because of the Ebola, but you know I really felt like that was a time where God used my life because and I got a I don't have it in front of me. I would have brought it if I'd known the questions coming up. But Tony, the guy who asked me to preach, sent an email after we left. And he said, at a time, he said, I want to thank you and General Williams at a time when the whole world was turning their back on us.

You shone your light on our darkness and you gave us hope.

And I felt like part of what he was talking about was that sermon. You know, I just really felt the hope being lifted. So I love, again, love the time spent, spent some time in Congo right on the mouth of the Congo river.

I was in Senegal. I was in Malawi. So it was just, I really love Africa and loved working with African chaplains.

Thanks.

Any other questions? Yeah, Charlie, this kind of takes it in a little bit different direction. You talk about warrior-priest as a bridge.

between our faith in God and our calling as warriors, correct? Okay.

Where do you put the dividing line from those who see faith as a bridging between two different callings? or abridging, uniting two different callings, and those who simply wrap themselves up in a flag and you...

and equate that with the cross of Christ, and then cease to function critically in their calling as a warrior.

You see this happening in the US military today, and it's happened throughout history in different times and places.

So where's that dividing line? I could not see them as warrior priest because they are not healers. They're dividers.

Okay, can you say more about that? I think what I hear you talking about is Christian nationalism, okay? And that's one form of it, but yes. And what that's trying to do is it's trying. You know, Jesus, God does, in my opinion, does not try to force himself on us. And what that's trying to do is it's trying to force a particular understanding of interpretation of scripture on everybody else.

And that's divisive. That is not healing, okay? and it's also it gets very close to what I call civil religion all right and that you know it's interesting when I was a pastor You can say that a church paying your salary doesn't make a difference, but it does.

So I felt so much more freedom to preach when the church wasn't paying my salary. The danger in the military was falling into civil religion.

where everything that the military does, everything that the president says is God's will. And it's not, okay? The military can do, you know, if I believe that everything the military did was God's will, I'd have to stop worshipping him, all right? And our leaders are flawed human beings who can sometimes do things that are bad terribly bad and so when you wrap that in that, like you're talking about wrapping in that flag and that's it, you're giving, you're sort of, affirming this sort of civil religious concept that, you know, it's almost like, you know, everything America does is God's will. And that's not true.

is that that answer at all I think it starts to and I think there's an offset of that that we see in our society today, but I think it's a concept in the world today too.

is this idea that God equips us and empowers us And therefore, God is nothing more than the power source to get what we want in this world.

Well, it's a lot easier for us to create God in our image than to allow ourselves to be created in his.

Yeah, so Jesus makes me the best ranger or best special operator in the world versus as a soldier or...

or special forces, or military policeman, or doctor, or sailor, that I am a servant of Jesus.

I think you have to distinguish. I'm glad you brought this up because you have to distinguish that from that's not what a warrior priest is.

You know, that's, you know, uh, yeah.

Charlie, this is Cal again. You know that we have used and used biblical military ethics as a means of contextualizing the gospel.

And I'd like to hear your thoughts on that approach.

I think that was what you presented. He had a couple of our slides.

at the meetings in Turkey, for example. I was just sort of curious, as to this idea of merging evangelism with military biblical military ethics uh to contextualize the gospel you want to comment on that This book was written to it was originally written as a book on evangelism as a part of my role in uh global strategy forum as a military representative okay that's why i originally started writing this book and uh I'm not sure I'd answer your question, but I came to the conclusion that, like I said, that evangelism is it, and When Bill Wagner asked me to write the book, I only did it because I couldn't say no to Bill Wagner because he had been such a great supervisor to me.

And I went through sort of a period of not being able to write anything. And then I realized how much evangelism is like peace building.

It's about healing relationships between people and God and people and people. And that's what evangelism is.

And so I think you can, to me, you would use ethics in that context of saying, you know, Ethics is doing things the right way so that you don't hurt people.

so that you don't hurt God, okay? But also bringing into that the relationship with God.

To me, the key word is relationships. To me, that's what it's about. It's about us having a relationship with God and having relationships with our fellow man.

and the two are intertwined. And I don't have time to go into it, but I have got a whole chapter in my book on the theology of evangelism.

has done a series of Bible studies, inductive Bible studies for use in our ethics training.

And one of the very first ones is where it links in Luke 3, repentance. For example, John the Baptist is preaching repentance, but he's also bringing into it the relationship with military ethics of what the soldier should do and should not do. And Jeff has done a marvelous job on these. So that's sort of our pattern of for this idea of contextualizing the gospel through military ethics and evangelism.

In other words, we link it with repentance. Yeah, okay, yeah.

based on on on John the Baptist and well Jeff is the one that would be better to to to talk about the Bible studies but in any event thanks I think repentance is sort of why I was talking about when I said that we're imperfect. Okay. And I, uh, that, uh, One of the things I say in my book is I think every warrior priest has to have had a grace experience.

you know, where we recognize that Jesus did for us what we can't do for ourselves. Thanks.

Any other questions? I don't know what your... One of our participants in this, I don't know if he's willing to come on or not, is Yosef Abaganda, a chaplain...

in Africa, from Kenya. I don't know if he has any thoughts based upon what he's heard and being right in the midst of, I think, a deployment.

Joseph, are you available? Yes, yes. I'm very much available.

First of all, to thank the presenter for taking us through the characteristics of a warrior.

There are some of the things that I really would love to echo. Currently, I'm in Kismayu, Somalia, new airport.

the aspect of having someone that you can pray with, a prayer partner. That is something that I really agree with because In deployment, at times we ask a question, who shepherds the shepherd? Because whenever things are tough, whenever the going seems to be weighty on you, The expectation from the commanders is that you just show up with the right sense of morale, with the right sense of composure.

Yet in one way or the other, the things that are happening around the theater, they are affecting you.

whenever you have a support system, somebody that you can just call that I feel like overwhelmed, I feel This thing is too heavy. Can we pray? That is something that is really rejuvenating. Yeah, indeed, I agree that and also the aspect of being ready to go an extra mile, not just being convene in one place, that a warrior is ready to go an extra mile for the sake of the assignment that God has given us.

I concur with that and I think that is applying also in my life and I'm glad to hear that. I'm glad to hear that. Thank you so much.

I really affirm those two things, you know, to have that person that you can, your morale has to be up there, but you need that one person.

One person you can be real with. When we got extended in Afghanistan and the morale just went south, and I told my chaplains, person you can be honest with and hurt with, but you got to smile at everybody else.

And then also having that person that's praying for you. Both of those things are so important. Yeah. Very true.

And my prayers go out to you. I know you're in a difficult situation.

So thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. We did when I was at US Army Africa, we did ethical training for the Kenyan army.

When they were facing Boko Haram. In Nigeria? Yeah.

Okay, okay. And where are you? You're in... I'm in Kismayu, but I'm from Kenya.

Okay. All right. Excuse me. I was confusing. Yeah, I flew through the Kenya airport a lot.

Because it was a major problem. Yeah. He said Somalia right now.

Okay, yeah. And, of course, I was in Djibouti, which is right on the Somalia border. Yeah.

I was at Camp Lemonade.

Yes. So my prayers are with you.

I loved, I don't want to take too much time, but one of the things I love about Africa is the expressiveness. We taught ethics.

And we told the Africans, we gave them all the ethical issues that you deal with in the military.

And we said, now I want you to write up a scenario with one of these problems. And they came and acted out the scenario.

And that was so unique and so good because you tell Americans to do a scenario, they write something. But acting it out was so much better.

and so African. And I started doing that in the States. I started making them act out their scenarios because You're much more likely to follow through with something if you act it out. So that was something I learned from Africa.

Thank you so much. This is Jude speaking from Uganda. And I just want also to emphasize that We are so grateful for today's presentation, especially for echoing that being a priest warrior, it is a divine calling.

This is one of the subjects which is actually causing a few challenges here and there to explain to our fellow MDs.

men and women. Many of them, they still up to now, they don't believe that this is a divine calling.

And it still puzzles the understanding of some of our Christians whether really you can still be a Christian and serve in the uniformity service by virtue of the command and the control given by the superiors and the nature of the operations we go through.

But I believe that the more we are getting these lessons and experiences from you exemplars, coupled with other exemplars, especially like, General Dave Diwakaru, I think he's on right now. We are getting to know that many, many Christians are getting to appreciate the work of this biblical military ethics that's bringing out the real context of how being a Christian in uniform should be.

But also I'm glad you brought up something, especially the issue of killing and murdering is something that causes so many people.

It's a very, very hot argument. It becomes a hot debate every time you want to explain to people the difference, to distinguish between killing and murder.

We are so happy for us that every time we are getting these lessons, it's becoming easier to explain to many. And now people are getting to know that indeed they are doing the right thing. And they are differentiating now between the two aspect.

So for me, I'm saying that, yeah, we need more of these. And it's our prayer that God continue creating opening doors for us to expand these lessons.

to our MCFs wherever we are. Thank you so much.

I'm just a little bit mindful of the time. I don't want to close out if...

people want to talk more. But right now, does anybody have any more questions for Charlie? If not, I would ask, would somebody be willing to pray for us as we close out? I'll lead us in prayer. Great. Thank you. Holy God, I thank you for this opportunity.

Those of us who are chaplains are in a challenging vocation. Those of us who work with ethics are in a challenging vocation.

Father, we are dealing with an environment in which ethics is so important, in which um it's so easy to for moral injury to occur because ethics principles are violated And Father, we are spokesmen. We have an important work to do.

And so, Father, as I talked about in my presentation, we are totally dependent upon you. We cannot do it ourselves.

And what we're doing is so, so important. So Father, sustain us. Help us not to get discouraged.

Help us to be that bridge.

between heaven and those who are having to face some of the most difficult situations in life that any human beings can face.

And help us to bring your light and your presence in a way that brings redemption to your world. Amen. Amen.

And on that note, I would just thank everybody for being a part of our session today. We wish you all a blessed Christmas.

Yusef, blessings to you and prayers for safety for your unit and your families.

We'll see you again next month. General Doug Anson is going to be on, and he's going to be talking about the...

issue of worldviews and belief systems and how they inform our ethical values.