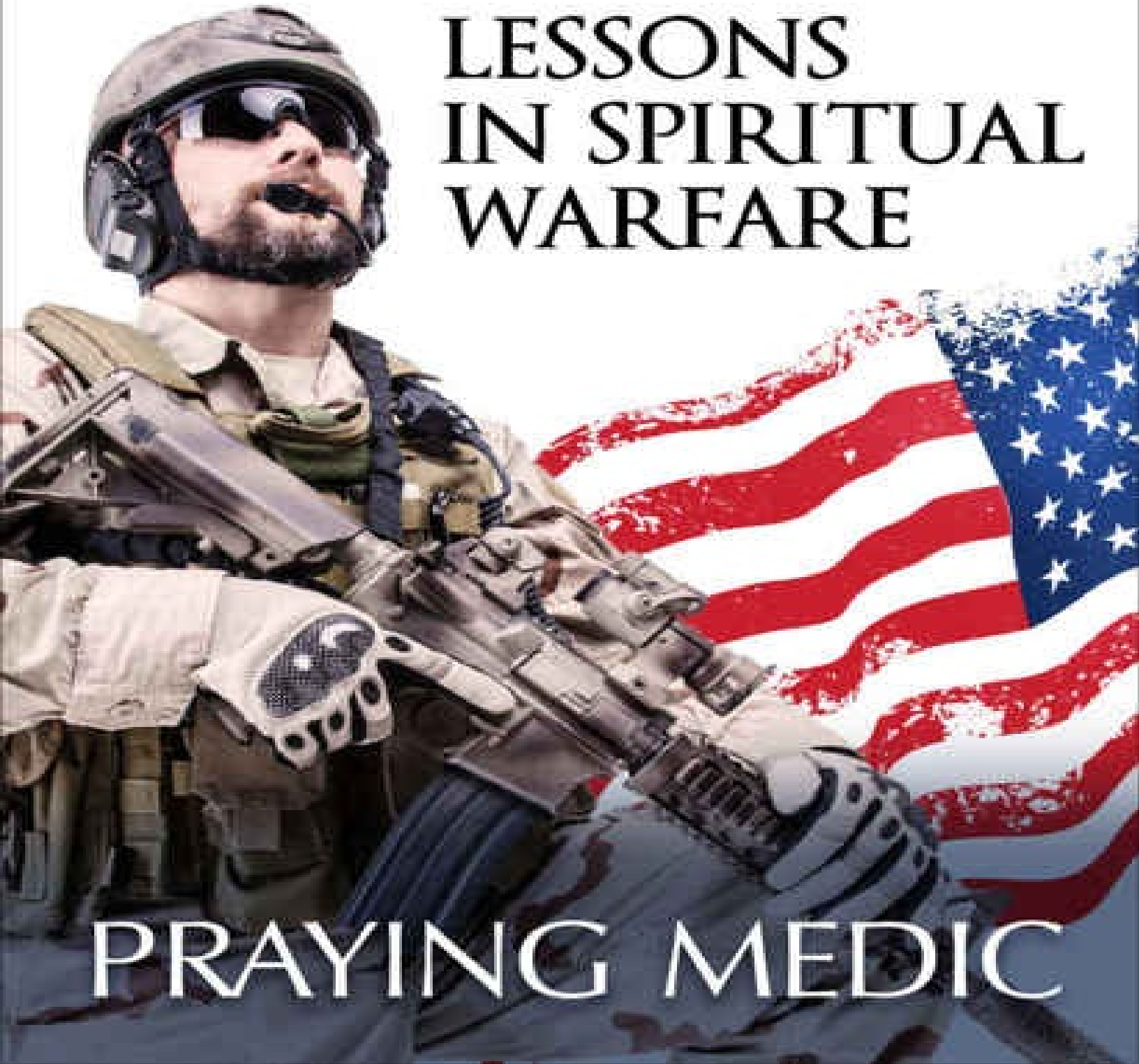
AMERICAN SNIPER

LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE



PRAYING MEDIC

American Sniper: Lessons in Spiritual Warfare

Praying Medic

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American Sniper: Lessons in Spiritual Warfare

By Praying Medic

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Introduction

For God speaks again and again,
though people do not recognize it.
He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night,
when deep sleep falls on people
as they lie in their beds.
He whispers in their ears
and terrifies them with warnings.
He makes them turn from doing wrong;
he keeps them from pride.
He protects them from the grave,
from crossing over the river of death. ~ Job 33:15-18 (NLT)

Early in 2015, I took a new job working as a paramedic in Phoenix, Arizona. Shortly after I was hired, I had a dream where I was given a pass by my employer that granted me free access to movie theaters. All I had to do was show the pass at the door and I'd be allowed into theaters without paying. The pass was a benefit of working for my new employer. In the dream, my coworkers and I were being taught how to use this benefit without abusing it.

Around the same time I had the dream, my EMT partner and I were having a slow shift and we were hanging out with another crew at a shopping mall in Glendale, just west of Phoenix. One of the EMTs got the bright idea to go into the theater and ask if we could watch a movie on duty. He returned and told us we could go in for free. American Sniper happened to be playing, so we went inside and took a seat.

As I watched the movie, I recalled the morning of September 11th, 2001. I was awaked that morning by a firefighter who solemnly asked me to come down stairs to the day room. All the firefighters and officers had gathered around the television. For the next few hours we watched as the twin towers went up in flames. We wept over of the loss of thousands of lives, including men and women

who worked as firefighters, police and paramedics. I think everyone in the room knew without a doubt the world would never be the same.

My EMT partner was in the navy before becoming an EMT. He wanted to become a SEAL and his only regret in life was not going to BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition /SEAL). He was qualified to go, but when they asked if he had plans to have a family he said, "Yeah, of course I want a family." They discouraged him from applying, warning that SEAL life and family life didn't go well together, so he had them remove his qualifying criteria from his record. My partner is a Christian and after watching the movie, we had many enlightening conversations about how the film portrayed the battle against the kingdom of darkness. For readers who have not seen the film or read the book, I'll provide a narrative of the story as we go. I apologize in advance, because this will be a spoiler for those who have not seen the film or read the book.

This book is a series of illustrations taken from the film about Chris Kyle, a man who served four tours as a Navy SEAL in the Gulf War. After watching the film and spending time asking God what He wanted me to learn from it, I began to see a number of spiritual principles emerge. The Holy Spirit connected various scenes from the film to dreams He'd given me that I didn't fully understand, until recently.

Although the film is filled with profanity, killing and other things which Christians might find objectionable, there are a number of parallels between the military actions of Navy SEALS and the kind of warfare we're asked to wage against the kingdom of darkness. I hope to convey those principles to readers through the use of allegory.

My goal with this book is to help you assess your spiritual armor and the way in which you use spiritual weapons and identify any deficiencies you might have. You may find that you're doing just fine. But if, as you read, you see deficiencies, you might consider checking out some of my other books which can help you become better trained and equipped.

In order for readers to grasp the meaning of the allegories I'll use, I'm going to ask you to look beyond the news stories and propaganda surrounding the war in Iraq and set aside any negative feelings you might have about it. It is not my intent to endorse or condemn either the film or the book *American Sniper*. I'm

not qualified to report on their historical accuracy. It's not my intent to comment on the actions of the U.S. military or its involvement in the war in Iraq. I'm not terribly interested in learning about how war is waged by the kingdoms of man. I am however, very interested in learning how war is waged between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of darkness. I hope as you read you'll be able to see into the realm of the spirit, where the real battle between darkness and light is being fought.

The Making of a Legend

I'd like to open this chapter with a passage written by C.S. Lewis, who reflected on his service in the army during World War I. Lewis was wounded by shell fragments on April 15th, 1918. His friend Sergeant Ayres, who was standing next to him, was killed instantly. Lewis' friend Laurence Johnson, who was standing nearby, was also killed:

"I came to know and pity and reverence the ordinary man. Particularly dear Sergeant Ayres, who was (I suppose) killed by the same shell that wounded me. I was a futile officer (they gave commissions too easily then), a puppet moved about by him, and he turned this ridiculous and painful relation into something beautiful, became to me almost like a father. But for the rest, the war—the frights, the cold, the smell of high explosive, the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, the sitting or standing corpses, the landscape of sheer earth without a blade of grass, the boots worn day and night till they seemed to grow to your feet—all this shows rarely and faintly in memory. It is too cut off from the rest of my experience and often seems to have happened to someone else. It is even in a way unimportant. One imaginative moment seems now to matter more than the realities that followed. It was the first bullet I heard —so far from me that it "whined" like a journalist's or a peacetime poet's bullet. At that moment there was something not exactly like fear, much less like indifference: a little quavering signal that said, "This is War. This is what Homer wrote about."
—C.S. Lewis, from *Surprised by Joy*

The main character of American Sniper is a Texas-born redneck named Chris Kyle. The film opens with a scene of Kyle perched on a rooftop in the city of Fallujah, Iraq. U.S. troops have been told that the city was ordered to be evacuated and any military-aged men they find are assumed to be enemy combatants, until proven otherwise. Kyle is checking out the path of a U.S. military convoy through the scope of his sniper rifle. He sees a man on a rooftop in the distance talking on a cell phone. The man appears to be watching the

convoy, which Kyle reports to his command through his headset. Kyle is told that if the man is reporting troop movement, he has the green light to shoot him. His marine backup suggests that he may just be talking to his girlfriend. Kyle is unsure. The man then disappears from the rooftop and a few moments later, a woman and a young boy exit the doorway of the same building and begin walking toward the convoy. Kyle reports the woman and boy to command, and notes that the woman is not swinging her arms as she walks and that she appears to be carrying something. No one in the convoy can see them to confirm. Kyle watches through the scope as the woman removes something from her cloak and hands it to the boy and he realizes it's a grenade. He reports what he sees and again gets the green light to shoot, but his marine guard warns him that he'll be sent to prison for shooting a child if he's wrong. The film then cuts away and the next 20 minutes are vignettes of Kyle growing up as the son of a religious father who stressed the ever-present threat of evil, the virtues of aggression, and the supremacy of the hunt.

Kyle's father taught him that there are three kinds of people in the world: sheep, wolves and sheepdogs. The wolves are those who prey upon the weak. The sheep are those who are defenseless against the wolves. The sheepdogs are those who protect the sheep from the wolves. It's a simple analogy, and it has a ring of truth to it, but I'm not sure anyone is predestined to one of these dispositions. I don't believe people are born in a way that forces them to become predatory, heroic or victims. God doesn't create sheep, wolves or sheepdogs. He creates children who are made in His own image. As we travel through life, the divine image in which we were created is affected for good or evil by the people and circumstances we encounter. Our encounters shape and mold each of us uniquely—for better or for worse. And it is all of these influences that cause us to behave like a sheep, a wolf or a sheepdog.

As a child, Chris learned to watch over his younger brother, Jeff. When someone picked on him, Chris came to his defense and in one scene, he gave the bully a beating he wouldn't forget. As an adult, he spent most of his time riding bulls, drinking beer, chasing pretty girls and getting into fights. In the same way that Chris drifted from one misadventure to another, many Christians find themselves drifting, spiritually. We go to church on Sunday, read our Bibles, and try to avoid getting into trouble, but inevitably, trouble seems to find us. We wrestle with various problems and seem to make little progress, no matter what measures we try.

The first seven years of my life as a Christian I traveled down a dozen different paths leading nowhere. I became a religious bigot, had an extramarital affair that ended my marriage, and struggled with various sins. Though I felt at the time I was a passionate believer, I had very few victories over the enemy. I lost more spiritual battles than I won. And perhaps more importantly, I never felt a great sense of significance; I felt like I was just another believer. In many ways I was drifting spiritually, with no real course or destination in mind, other than getting into heaven when I died.

No child dreams of growing up to be insignificant. We all want to do something great. God doesn't create us to be ordinary. He's placed a desire for significance in our hearts—a desire to do something to change the world for the better. Even though many of us live ordinary lives, God has uniquely gifted each of us. He's given us talents that have the potential to make us extraordinary. He brings us opportunities to make a positive impact on the world. The problem is that many of us haven't allowed ourselves to dream the impossible dreams or attempt the extraordinary things God wants us to do. It's apparent early in the film that Chris Kyle knew he was destined to do something extraordinary.

The film cuts away to a scene of Chris and his brother watching TV. They saw the news of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. Chris was infuriated that U.S. citizens were being attacked and felt compelled to do something about it. His anger over the attacks compelled him to visit a Navy recruiter's office. The recruiter suggested he might be interested in the SEAL program and handed him a pamphlet, but Kyle remarked that he wasn't much of a swimmer. The recruiter took the pamphlet out of his hand and said it wasn't for most men. Kyle grabbed the pamphlet back and proudly replied "I'm not most men." He didn't envision himself in a routine job as a sailor. That would be too safe. He set his aim high and endured the brutality of Navy SEAL training. Although he was the oldest man in his recruit class, Kyle proved he was up to the challenge. He knew he needed to master the various weapons used by SEAL teams, including the sniper rifle.

Kyle had an advantage over some of the other recruits, having experience shooting a hunting rifle. Although the rifle he would use as a SEAL was essentially a regular hunting rifle with some modifications, Kyle found that the skill he needed to accurately fire the rifle in combat conditions would take time to develop. Firing at a target over a thousand yards away takes focus, proper breathing and the mastery of other techniques that must be practiced often. He

would also need training in automatic weapons, the use of explosives, SCUBA gear, wilderness survival, navigation, and many other tools and weapons used in modern warfare.

A new Christian has very little that they bring to the spiritual battlefield from the world. We learn all kinds of ways to defend ourselves and attack our enemies as we go through life, but the Apostle Paul taught that the weapons of the believer's warfare are not like the weapons and tactics of the physical world. Spiritual weapons are spiritual in nature and it's only these weapons that can be used effectively against spiritual strongholds. Because spiritual weapons are so different from the weapons we're familiar with, they require special training and practice before they can be used effectively.

My introduction to spiritual weapons was illustrated by the following dream:

Dream
In the dream, I drove my car to a pawn shop with my children. I took some old things that I owned into the pawn shop and traded them in for a strange type of handgun. My kids waited a long time for me to come out. I left the shop with my new gun, but didn't want my kids to see it, so I walked around behind my car, then took it out and examined it. The gun had a laser sight built into it. It was wide, with a round bulge that seemed to be for the ammunition, though it wasn't a revolver and it didn't have a magazine. I didn't know how the ammunition was loaded. I began trying to figure out how it worked and decided to aim it across the street at a vacant lot. The gun fired two rounds, which I wouldn't have known, except that I saw puffs of dust rise from the ground where I pointed the gun. It made no sound and didn't seem to have a trigger, but seemed to fire by my thoughts. I put it in the trunk of my car and that was the end of the dream.

Interpretation In the dream, I traded in a bunch of things I had obtained from the world for a new, spiritual weapon. I believe this speaks of acquiring a new way of thinking and living. I had to leave behind the way of thinking I had acquired from the world and learn the way of thinking used in the kingdom of God. I also had to learn how to defend myself and wage an offensive attack differently. I had no idea how my new gun fired. I didn't yet understand how spiritual weapons operate, though I had obtained one that could be used effectively, once I was properly trained to use it.

I took my kids with me when I acquired the gun. This might illustrate the idea

that I was doing something they would need to do at some point in the future and I was showing them how to do it. But I was uncertain enough about what I was doing that I kept the new weapon hidden until I learned how to use it.

I was in the pawn shop for a long time before I came out with the gun. This probably symbolizes the idea that acquiring a new weapon is not a quick process. It takes time and those who are watching might have to wait for us.

The gun was activated by my thoughts, or as I exercised my will. Spiritual warfare is often a matter of how we choose to exercise our will. Ultimately, God and demons both want to subvert our will. Part of the spiritual training we must go through is learning how to consistently submit our will to the will of the Father.

First Tour

"War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend."
— J.R.R. Tolkien, from The Two Towers

The film cuts away to a scene of Kyle trolling for women in a bar. His booze-inspired antics draw the attention a woman named Taya. She tells him that her sister married a SEAL, who cheated on her and lied to her constantly. Taya tells him there's no way she'd ever make the same mistake. Always on the hunt, Kyle calls her repeatedly until she agrees to go on a date with him. She falls for his charm and they're soon married. On their wedding day, he and his fellow SEALs receive word that they're being deployed to Iraq.

Kyle lands in Fallujah and is teamed with marines who are going door-to-door through an evacuated city, searching for an al Qaeda leader named Zarqawi. Kyle functions as the "overwatch" for the group. He positions himself on the rooftop of a building and eliminates anyone who poses a threat to the marines below him. His moxie as a sniper is tested by his first challenge. The film cuts back to the opening scene where he watches through the scope of his rifle, a woman handing a grenade to a young boy. As the boy starts running toward a marine convoy with the grenade in his hand, Kyle pulls the trigger and kills him. The woman who is with him starts wailing and running toward the boy, with Kyle watching her closely. She picks up the grenade he dropped and continues running toward the convoy. She's about to fling it at the convoy when Kyle shoots her. The grenade falls short and explodes, leaving the troops unharmed.

Kyle returns to base camp where a fellow SEAL named Biggles congratulates him on his first kill. Chris is obviously disillusioned. His idea of protecting his country didn't include killing women and children. Despite whatever moral or ethical concerns he has, Kyle excels at his job. After a particular watch, He reports that he had six confirmed kills, which is more than all the other

snipers combined in the same shift. His fellow troops begin calling him "The Legend." Word of Kyle's deadly accuracy also gets out in the camp of the enemy.

At times, Kyle complained about being assigned to overwatch. In certain situations he wanted to be on the ground with the troops going door to door. He believed his training made him better equipped than the Marines who were doing the job, and he couldn't protect them once they were inside a building. He finally abandoned his overwatch post and joined the Marines, who welcomed him. As they went door to door, they found a home where the family had refused to evacuate. Kyle questioned the home owner with the help of an interpreter, showing him a picture of Zarqawi and asked if he knew who he was. The man said that Zarqawi's second in command was a man known as the "Butcher." He said he would give Kyle information on the Butcher, but he wanted $100,000 in return. Kyle promised to help him, and the man gave Kyle a name. He had the name checked out and it turned out to be useful intelligence, so they prepared to bring the man his cash.

As the SEALs drove back to the man's home to bring him the money, Kyle called Taya, who told him she just found out the baby she was carrying was a boy. Kyle was overjoyed at the news when his vehicle suddenly came under attack. The driver of his Humvee was killed and it crashed into a storefront. Kyle was thrown forward in the crash and dropped the phone while it was still connected. He bailed out of the Humvee and found cover with fellow SEAL, Marc Lee in a vacant building. Taya listened in horror to gunfire and screaming, not knowing what was going on. Kyle and Lee attempted to find out who was shooting at them. Chris realized he was at a disadvantage on the ground so he made his way to the rooftop. As soon as he opened the door to the roof, he was met by a rabid dog that tried to attack him. Kyle recoiled in fear then realized the dog was chained up. Although the chain prevented the dog from biting him, the vicious jumping, clawing and barking of the dog created an intensely stressful situation, made worse by the fact that a sniper was still shooting at him. This was Kyle's first encounter with a Syrian-born sniper named Mustafa. Kyle tried desperately to return fire but had a hard time because he was pinned down by heavy gunfire and the rabid dog limited his ability to move around on the rooftop.

The Butcher announced to everyone within earshot that he found out that the man had given information to U.S. soldiers. To get revenge, he killed the

man's son with a handheld power drill. He also shot the man in front of his family then yelled out a warning that anyone who cooperated with the U.S. military would die in a similar manner. The Butcher and Mustafa both got away unharmed.

The war he was thrust into required Kyle to mature rapidly. The cost of screwing up when you're a bull-riding, barfly isn't very high. You might end up broke or hung over and if you really mess up you might end up in the hospital for a few days. But as a SEAL, the lives of his entire team were on the line. One poor decision could get him and the team killed. His immaturity had to give way to wisdom and sober-mindedness. I had a lot of growing up to do myself when I first began learning about the kingdom of God. I'd like to share three dreams I had on the same night that illustrated my level of spiritually maturity a few years ago:

Dream One
In the first dream, I was in a classroom taking a freshman English class. It seemed like I should have taken this class years ago. Just like Kyle, who was one of the oldest men in his recruit class, I was older than the other students in this class. I was having fun joking with the teacher. I didn't see any need to take things seriously. I could see that the teacher had back pain from the way she was walking. I felt like I should pray for her to be healed, but I decided not to pray. Instead, I left the class and wandered around the school building not knowing where I was supposed to go next.

Interpretation This dream conveyed the idea that I had neglected to learn my spiritual language (praying in tongues). At this point in my life, I wasn't making much spiritual progress. Having fun was more important than learning about the kingdom, despite the fact that people needed me to learn how to operate in healing. I was wandering through life, not having a purpose or direction.

Dream Two
I was on a trip with a group of people who were visiting an island that was infested with demons. We stayed on one end of the island and remained tightly grouped together, for safety. A few people left the group and they were harassed by demons. Those who dared to wander farthest from the group got the worst of it. I was given a close-up view of the other end of the island. It was

a large rock formation that looked something like the famous "Haystack Rock" on the Oregon coast. In the dream, I knew that there were one million demons on the island and that all the people who lived there permanently were severely demonized—to the point of insanity.

Interpretation
One point of this dream was to make me aware that the demons I was going up against were real. It also told me they had the ability to make people mentally ill. The key to safety was found in being surrounded by other believers and that the surest way to become a casualty was to wander away from the group.

Dream Three
In this dream, I was with a group of people, who were planning to pull off a bank robbery. If you've seen the movie Reservoir Dogs, that's pretty much what happened in the dream, but for those who haven't, we had planned the perfect bank robbery. We were going to walk in, ask for the money and leave without anyone getting hurt. Well, that was the plan anyway. But in the dream, as soon as we walked into the bank, all hell broke loose. The authorities immediately knew what was going on. Gunfire erupted and people were being killed all around me.

Soon after the shooting began, I found myself on the top floor of the bank building, where I was involved in a desperate shootout. I saw dead and wounded people lying all around me and there were at least five or six people with guns who were doing their best to kill me. I had a sense in the dream that I was in a battle to the death. I knew with absolute certainty that if I didn't kill all of them, they would kill me. So with a cool head and extreme determination, I dodged their gunfire and systematically hunted and executed every one of them—even those who were wounded. After killing the last enemy, I went into an elevator, where a paramedic kit awaited me, as well as a uniform. I put on the uniform and as the door opened on the ground floor, I found an EMT partner and a gurney. We grabbed an injured person, put them on the gurney and made our way to the front door. I got out of the building without anyone stopping me.

Interpretation
This dream illustrated the fact that my friends and I were underestimating the strength of our enemy and the resistance they would put up. We thought the enemy had already been neutralized, and that we didn't need to worry about a

real battle—something that is frequently taught by church leaders today. But in fact, our mission would turn out to be a vicious battle to the death against a well-armed opponent that would take every ounce of commitment and determination we could muster. Anyone who hoped to survive would need to be skilled at using spiritual weapons.

My battle took place on the top floor of the bank building. The top floor of a building often represents a heavenly realm of operation. In this case, I was engaged in a realm inhabited by the spiritual forces of darkness. Jesus said that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. If you look at the way this sentence was constructed, it becomes apparent that Jesus intended for His church to assault the gates of hell. It's our job to take the fight to their turf, and this is what is portrayed in this scene.

Another concept that was illustrated in this dream was the idea that my best way to avoid detection by the enemy was to blend in with the crowd. At the end of the dream, I grabbed my medic gear and a partner and we left the bank. No one suspected I was a party to the robbery. Working in an average job has allowed me to avoid becoming a highly-visible target for the kingdom of darkness. Some people fail to realize that being a highly-visible public figure puts a large target on your back. I don't seem to suffer the kind of harassment a lot of other Christian leaders do. I believe some of that is owed to the fact that I've kept myself anonymous.

Second Tour

"Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage."
— C.S. Lewis, from Mere Christianity

When Kyle returned to Iraq for his second tour, word had gotten out that he was a talented sniper and a bounty was put on his head. It's dangerous enough to be on a team like the SEALs, but the bounty on his head would create even greater problems for him. During this tour, the team would look for the Butcher in Ramadi. The team—and Kyle in particular—would be stalked by a sniper who had committed himself to waiting for the right opportunity to take them out.

After one mission briefing, a team member named Marc Lee expressed concerns to Kyle about their involvement in the war. He began to question the validity of their mission based on ethical questions he couldn't resolve:

Lee: (holding Chris' Bible) "Is this thing bulletproof? You never open it so I assumed..."

Kyle: "God, country, family, right?"

Lee: "You got a God?"

Kyle: "You getting weird on me?"

Lee: "We had this electric fence around our property in Oregon and us kids used to see who could grab it and hang on the longest. War feels like that. It puts lightning in your bones, but it makes it hard to hold on to anything else.

Kyle: "You need to sit this one out?"

Lee: "I just wanna believe in what we're doing."

Kyle: "Evil lives here, we've seen it."

Lee: "It lives everywhere."

Kyle: "You want to invite these (expletive) to come fight in San Diego? Or New York? We're protecting more than this dirt."

There are many ethical dilemmas surrounding U.S. military actions overseas. There are plenty of reasons to question the ethics of any war. And yet, if you're going to enlist as a soldier and fight in a war, you* must *find a way to put those ethical concerns out of your mind, or they'll weaken your passion and rob you of your resolve to remain committed to the mission.

While Kyle probably heard the same ethical objections to the war that Lee had, in his mind, there was a bottom line that carried more weight than any other argument. They had to stop the terrorists in their own country or live with the possibility that they would bring their brand of terror to U.S soil. And that was simply not an option Kyle was willing to live with.

Kyle adapted well to life as a SEAL team member. The teams place a high value on looking after one another and ensuring the well-being of the entire team. His life was now set on a course that would make him the most feared and the most revered sniper in American military history. Once he found a mission that he believed was worth fighting for, he was fully committed to it. You could question his passion for God, and you could question his commitment as a father and husband, but you couldn't question his commitment to his SEAL team and to the missions they were given. In those areas, he refused to give less than his best effort. For Kyle, quitting would never be an option.

A few years ago, I had a dream where a small team of believers was assembled for a special mission. The team had seven or eight members. I was one of the team members. We received specialized training and weapons that were to be used on a very dangerous mission. We were told about the mission and informed that it was basically a suicide mission. Although we didn't know who was going to survive the mission, we knew some of us would not be returning. In the dream, there was a deep sense of commitment to the mission and the team. We knew there was an enemy that had to be neutralized and we were all excited to engage the enemy.

This is the same kind of commitment and passion Kyle showed toward his missions and his team. He was fully convinced that he was prepared and equipped to handle anything the enemy would use against him. Kyle and his team fought an enemy that was very deceptive. Improvised explosive devices were hidden everywhere, waiting to be triggered. He never knew if the child walking down the alley would be just another kid, or an armed killer. Soldiers are at a strategic disadvantage when they're unable to easily identify their enemy. One of the major problems of guerilla warfare is that you might accidentally kill an innocent person and you can be court-martialed and imprisoned for killing a non-combatant.

In order to wage warfare successfully, we must understand who our real enemy is. The apostle Paul reminded believers that our warfare is not to be waged against other humans—who can easily be seen—but against spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. And this is a huge problem for the body of Christ.

Many of us spend our time and energy getting into battles with other believers, thinking that they are the enemy. Other Christians are not the enemy, but teammates fighting on our side. Just as a navy SEAL is at risk being killed by friendly fire, believers are attacked by other believers all the time. We all come under the occasional influence of evil spirits that convince us to attack our brethren, instead of directing our attacks against the real enemy. The problem with friendly fire in the church is one of spiritual immaturity.

One way to come under attack as a Christian is to hold a view of God that is different from the view someone else has. Many Christians identify themselves according to the theological views they've embraced. What we believe to be true about God can unconsciously become our identity. When someone disagrees with our view of God, they aren't merely challenging a theological viewpoint. They're challenging the validity of our identity. And since our identity is the foundation of who we are, many Christians will attack you personally if you challenge their view of God.

Wise Christians take their identity from the Father Himself and not from what they believe to be true about Him. They know that they are exactly who He says they are. And because their view of God is not their identity, you can challenge their views and they won't attack you personally, because you aren't attacking their identity. You're merely disagreeing with their views.

When we attack other believers, many times it's because we have not yet accepted our true identity, and this prevents us from being perfected in love. One barometer of spiritual maturity is our capacity to love others and avoid attacking them. Love suffers long, it doesn't seek its own, it's gentle and not prideful, it bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things and it never fails. When we allow God to establish our true identity, it becomes easier to show unconditional love to others.

Kyle's boldness as a SEAL came from the fact that he knew who he was and he knew what he was authorized to do. The SEAL trident he wore was a constant reminder of who he was. He knew that the Navy had the power and authority to authorize him to carry out his mission. Just as SEALs need to know these things, believers need to know who they are and what authority they have.

When I became a Christian, I listened to preachers who drilled into my head the idea that God saw me as a worthless sinner. I was taught that He really didn't like me very much, but He decided to save me, despite my wretchedness. I accepted this view of myself and after a while the word "sinner" became my identity. For years I lived a powerless, defeated life. When you believe that God is only willing to tolerate your behavior so far, it leads to a life of fear. When I was ready to hear a different perspective, God said He didn't see me that way. He said my true identity is a beloved and cherished son, and not a worthless sinner.

One night I had a dream that revealed something important about identities. In the dream, I was walking along a street and kept finding people who were lost and emotionally disturbed. They'd lost all sense of their identity. As I talked with them, it was revealed to me what their true identity was. I reminded them of who they were and their identities were restored.

The more you accept God's love for you personally–the more your identity as His child will be established. And the more your identity as His child is established, (and your false identity is removed) the more the power of His kingdom will become manifest through you.

Manifesting the kingdom of God is a matter of understanding and accepting your identity in Christ. Through many different dreams, God began showing

me things that I would do which seemed impossible. He showed me how I would affect people's lives around the globe. His plans for me were so much greater than the plans I had for myself.

Rather than a life of mediocrity, He showed me the inheritance we have as heirs of His kingdom. As sons of God, we have truly been given exceedingly great promises. Many of us are afraid of becoming prideful. In an attempt to remain humble, we prefer to see ourselves as less than how God sees us. When we see ourselves this way, we destroy the work He wants to do in and through us. True humility isn't thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself exactly the way God thinks of you—not more and not less.

The key to living as a mature child of God lies in knowing your identity in Christ and knowing how He wants to work in you. You must shed the false identities you've accepted from the world and receive the identity given to you by God.

Kyle's team got intelligence that the Butcher may have been holed up in a particular building. The team broke into a home across the street from the building where the Butcher was reported to be hiding out. The man who lived there with his family said they had no knowledge of any terrorist activities. The SEALs watched the building from his home. When the man told them it was a holiday, they realized they were going to have a hard time getting into the building. Arab men are notorious for their hospitality and the man invited the team to be guests at his dinner table.

The SEALs joined the man and his family for a meal. As the man reached across the table to his son, Kyle noticed that his elbows had "shooter strawberries" like his own. This tipped him off to the fact that the man might not be as innocent as he claimed. Kyle got up from the dinner table under the pretense that he was going to the bathroom and searched the apartment until he found a hidden compartment in the floor filled with guns and other weapons. He returned to the dinner table and put the man in a headlock then took him into the other room to show him what he had found. He told the man he would either help the SEALs get into the building or face trial. At gunpoint, the SEAL team forced the man to knock on the door of the building across the street. The SEALs entered the building, and engaged in a furious firefight, clearing one room after another, looking for the Butcher, who escaped through a tunnel.

As the SEAL team left the area, Mustafa got Kyle in his sights, but once again, he was surrounded by too many other soldiers for the sniper to get a clear shot. The troops returned stateside and Taya was tearfully reunited with her husband.

If a team of soldiers is going to work effectively, they must have clear communication with command and with each other. SEALS rely heavily on the use of wireless headsets for communication. The headsets allow them to describe the obstacles and enemies they're facing, to solve problems efficiently and quickly, and to communicate a plan of action. A key part of the communication network involves relaying information to command and receiving orders on how to proceed.

In the practice of spiritual warfare, being able to receive information from the Holy Spirit is worth its weight in gold. Let's use healing the sick as an example:

Using simple commands to heal soft tissue and joint injuries can be effective in about 80 percent of cases, once you have a little experience under your belt. I generally command whatever spirits are present to leave and then I command ligaments, tendons, bones, nerves, and cartilage to be healed. Using direct commands for healing is a good place to begin, but there are other ways to get people healed and some diseases don't respond very well to verbal commands. Even though this approach works well, I advise people not to rely on it exclusively.

I see healing as warfare and just like with any other kind of warfare, there are a variety of weapons at our disposal. Sometimes a sniper rifle is the weapon of choice. Sometimes a grenade is better. And once in a while a 2,000-pound bomb is needed to get the job done. If you're having problems getting someone healed, ask God for the right weapon.

Commanding healing is like engaging in close combat with the enemy. It's effective in most cases, but it has limitations. There were times when Jesus confronted the enemy directly to get someone healed or set free of a demon and times when He did not. Consider the paralytic from the story in Matthew chapter nine, whom He told to take up his mat and walk.

Jesus didn't command the paralytic to be healed or cast out a demon. He

didn't even touch him. He gave him a command to obey, which he couldn't obey unless his body was healed. His body obeyed the command and was healed, so that he could stand up. In this example, Jesus didn't even acknowledge the presence of the disease. He commanded the man to do something that required healing to happen.

Recently, the Lord had trained me to use a similar approach with the people I pray with. In September of 2011, I received two prayer requests via Facebook for healing of tumors within a couple of days. One was a brain tumor and the other was a thyroid tumor. Both patients were about to undergo surgery within 24 hours. In both cases, when I closed my eyes to see how the Lord wanted me to proceed, I saw a throne.

Most of the revelation I receive about healing comes through visions that I see in my mind's eye. I know from past experience that when God shows me a throne, He wants me to make a declaration as a king would. The throne that I see represents the fact that believers have been seated with Christ in heavenly places (see Eph 2:6). Since I've been seated with him, I operate in these encounters more as a king than a soldier (see Rev 1:6). This approach doesn't involve commanding the disease to leave. I simply make a declaration that requires healing of the disease in order for the declaration to come to pass, just as Jesus told the paralytic to stand up. In both cases, I declared that the doctors would find no tumor when they went into the operating room. I didn't command anything to leave, or ask God to heal them. It was a short declaration and nothing more. In order for the declaration to come to pass, the tumors would have to disappear. In both cases, I received a message the following day that when the patient was taken to the operating room, the surgeons couldn't find the tumors. This is equivalent to a 2,000-pound bomb being dropped from heaven. It's quick and clean and doesn't require direct engagement of the enemy. God wants everyone to be healed, but in some cases, people aren't healed because we haven't received information from God about which approach will get the job done. The only way to know this information is to ask and obey what God tells us.

Third Tour

A man may have to die for our country: but no man must, in any exclusive sense, live for his country. He who surrenders himself without reservation to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which, of all things, most emphatically belongs to God: himself.
— C.S. Lewis, from The Weight of Glory

Kyle redeployed for a third tour and continued the hunt for the Butcher. After racking up an incredible kill-count during his last tour, al Qaeda gave him the nickname "The Devil of Ramadi" and the bounty on his head was increased.

During Paul's third missionary journey, an interesting thing happened as recorded in this account in Acts chapter 19:

"God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" Seven sons of a certain chief priest named Sceva were doing this. But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered."

Paul had been doing warfare against demons for many years. In the gospels, when Jesus was about to cast a demon out of someone, the demon said, "Jesus, Son of God, what have you to do with us?" As a result of their time in the war, Jesus and Paul had developed a reputation in the demonic world. But the sons of Sceva had no such reputation. We might ask ourselves what reputation we have in the camp of the enemy.

During their first mission, Kyle's friend and fellow SEAL, Biggles, was hit in the face by a ricocheted round from Mustafa's sniper rifle. He survived the hit, but was in ICU for the rest of the tour. In retaliation, the team decided to go hard after the Butcher and Mustafa, being motivated by revenge. Escorted by a tank that crushed everything in their path, they surrounded and entered a building that was the last known location of the Butcher. The team began clearing one room after another when they suddenly came under heavy fire. Marc Lee attempted to lay down suppressive fire, but was shot and died immediately in a bullet-riddled hallway. Mustafa and the Butcher once again got away unharmed. The team returned stateside to mourn and bury their fallen comrade.

Following the graveside service for Lee, Chris discussed with Taya what really led to Lee's death:

Taya: "Marc wrote that letter two weeks ago. Did he say any of that to you?"

Chris stares absent-mindedly into the distance.

Taya: "Chris? I want to know what you thought of his letter."

Chris: "An AQI informant called in a tip. Biggles had just been shot. We were operating off emotion and we walked into an ambush… but that's not what killed him. That letter did. That letter killed Marc. He let go and he paid the price for it."

Kyle believed Lee's ethical concerns affected his commitment to the success of the mission. He believed it made him less vigilant and an easier target for the enemy—and ultimately cost him his life. Many times, it's our own lack of passion and commitment to our mission that makes us an easy target for our enemy. Jesus said to the church of Laodicea:

"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!" (Rev 3:15-16)

The issue Jesus addressed with these believers was their lack of passion and commitment. He knew that without it, they were sitting ducks for the enemy and useless in the war against the kingdom of darkness. The same is true for us today.

Lee wrestled with the ethical issues surrounding the war in Iraq. The ethical issues believers wrestle with can stem from the problems they witness in the church. Some local churches are rife with corruption. Some do very little to help the poor. Others allow too much gossip and slander. Some church leaders have been involved in sex scandals. Some have been guilty of abusing power, while others are guilty of greed, manipulation or dishonesty. No one can deny that these problems exist. But if you focus your attention on the problems, they can cause you to lose your passion for God. Dwell on them long enough and they may even cause you to walk away from God completely. When our passion is directed toward leaders and institutions it is passion misplaced. Religious leaders will disappoint us. Religious institutions will make mistakes, but God is always faithful and deserving of our passion, even when religious leaders and institutions are not. Our passion must always be directed toward God. Like Kyle, we must find a way to keep our concerns in proper perspective, and focus on the big picture if we're going to remain passionate about our mission.

Fourth Tour

"You shall have me on a certain date, not before. I will die in your wars if need be, but till then I shall live my own life. You may have my body but not my mind. I will take part in battles but not read about them."
—C.S. Lewis, from Surprised by Joy

Despite the growing problems he and Taya were having at home, Chris felt he needed to return to the war. He couldn't bring himself to tell her, but the war against the Butcher and Mustafa had become personal. Kyle couldn't stand the thought of them on the loose, killing people at will.

Chris: "If something ever happened to me—you'd meet someone else. You'd be alright."

Taya: "Do you want to die? Is that what it is?"

Chris: "No."

TAYA: "Then tell me why you do it. I want to understand."

Chris: "I do it for you. To protect you."

Taya: "No you don't. I'm here. Your family is here. Your children have no father."

Chris: "Without this, there's nothing."

Taya "It's not about us anymore. You don't know when to quit. It's over. You did your part! We sacrificed enough! Let somebody else go."

Chris: "I could never live with myself."

Taya: "You find a way! You have to. I need you to be human again. I need you here. If you leave again, we won't be here when you get back."

Chris couldn't tell his wife this, but part of his motivation for returning to Iraq was almost certainly revenge. The iconic emblem of "The Punisher" had become a symbol the SEALs rallied around. They even began calling other SEALs "punishers." The Punisher was a graphic novel based on a fictional vigilante, who employed murder, kidnapping, extortion and torture in his war against crime. Motivated by the killing of his wife and two children by the mob during a shootout in New York's Central Park, the punisher waged a one-man war against crime. Being a war veteran and a master of martial arts, stealth tactics, and guerrilla warfare, he made use of a wide variety of weapons. The SEALs needed something to motivate them to keep pursuing their enemy and The Punisher served as a dark role model for them.

Although in the natural world, revenge is one of the worst motivators, in the spiritual realm, it can be used quite effectively. I've seen thousands of people who have been given diseases, made crippled, and killed too young by the kingdom of darkness. Some people believe God is the one who gives us sickness and that He is the one who ultimately kills us. But Jesus turned this belief upside down. He said He had come to give life and that more abundantly and that the thief had come to steal kill and destroy (see Jn 10:10). Jesus healed multitudes—including entire villages—and He ruined every funeral He attended by raising the dead back to life. If death and sickness were the will of God, no one in history frustrated the will of God more than Jesus. God wants us to heal the sick. This view is based on the fact that I've seen thousands of people healed and the fact that Jesus said His disciples would do the works He did and even greater works (see Jn 14:12).

A few weeks after the 9/11 attack, my father died of cancer. A few years after that, my older brother died of cancer. A couple of years later, after I spent 24 hours in his hospital room doing spiritual warfare to save his life— my younger brother died of cancer. Although I prefer to wage war as an act of love for my King, some days I'm motivated by other things. I want nothing more than to punish a few demons and teach their friends a lesson. Love is the best motivator there is—but I'm not above being motivated by revenge if it helps me fight a battle now and then.

Chris decided to deploy for a fourth time. Not long after landing, he and the team set up to look for the Butcher in Sadr City. It had become obvious that wherever the team went, Mustafa was going be there waiting for them. A shootout between the two snipers seemed inevitable. After arriving at his new

post, Kyle learned that his fellow SEAL, Biggles, died on the operating table during surgery to repair the wound to his eye inflicted by Mustafa. If Kyle needed any more reason to put a bullet in Mustafa's head, he had just found it.

During one overwatch post, he watched a man walk out into a street carrying a grenade launcher. Kyle killed the man, who dropped the grenade launcher in the street. A young boy who had been playing nearby was startled, ran over and struggled to lift the grenade launcher on his shoulder in order to aim it at a convoy of U.S. soldiers. Kyle prepared to shoot the boy, while whispering desperate prayers for him to drop it. The boy finally dropped the weapon and ran away. He was relieved, but the stress of making life and death decisions every day was wearing on him.

Kyle and his team were told that engineers were trying to construct a wall around Sadr city but a sniper kept picking them off from over 1,000 yards away, leading the team to believe it was Mustafa. Sensing this was his chance to get a shot at his enemy, Kyle and his team were sent out to protect the troops building the wall despite the approach of a sandstorm. They positioned themselves on a rooftop, aiming in the direction they believed Mustafa was shooting from. However, Mustafa had moved and was now shooting from a different location. He killed another soldier working on the wall, which caused the SEALs to scramble to set up in a different direction.

Kyle believed he had spotted Mustafa through his scope. He reported the sniper was a little over 2,000 yards away. The rest of the team didn't think he could even see Mustafa at that distance, let alone shoot him. The team spotted a large number of insurgents walking around the building and they feared that if Kyle took the shot, it would alert them to the SEALs' location where they'd be outnumbered. The team leader called for backup, but it would take time for them to arrive. The team leader asked Kyle not to take the shot until they had backup. One of the SEALs encouraged Kyle to take the shot if he thought he could do it.

Throughout the film, Kyle reported what he saw to command through his headset and they give him instructions on how to proceed. He had standard guidelines to follow for engaging obvious combatants, but any time he was unsure, he was free to contact command, who would make the call for him. In my relationship with God, I try not to presume too much about what my task is when I find what I perceive to be an enemy. I report what I see to God and we

begin having a dialogue. He asks questions, which I hear as thought impressions in my mind that are distinct from my own thoughts. They're not unlike a commander speaking to a soldier through a headset. The spirit-led believer is always safest when they report what they see, ask for directions, and then do what they're told, to the best of their ability.

Kyle finally had Mustafa in his sights. Years of anticipation had been leading up this moment. Not wanting to miss a rare opportunity to get a shot off, Kyle took the shot and killed Mustafa, but the insurgents heard the gunshot and swarmed the roof. The four SEALs were outnumbered and out-gunned so they tried to conserve their ammo by taking out the insurgents one-by-one as they approached through a stairwell. Kyle tearfully called Taya from the rooftop in the midst of the shootout and told her he was ready to come home. The SEALs shot their way off the roof just as their backup arrived, and just as a wall of sand engulfed the city. They made a run for a transport truck, but had difficulty in the sandstorm. Three of the SEALs made it into the truck but Kyle fell behind when he was shot. They slowed down for him and he barely made it into the truck. Kyle had finally vanquished the enemy that had been stalking him for years, but the one time he disobeyed an order from command, it almost cost him and the team their lives.

In 2009, I had a dream in which I was on the run from an enemy who was trying to kill me.

Dream
In the dream, I walked along a road in a wooded area. At one point, I went into the woods and met up with a group of soldiers in battle dress uniforms (BDUs). Shortly after leaving the road, I became a soldier and my clothing turned into BDUs. We carefully made our way through the woods without being detected by the enemy and then came to a house and went into the basement.

From a window, we watched a large group of soldiers on a football field performing a musical number from a hit Broadway play called, "M-1". The soldiers executed perfect formations while singing songs and occasionally firing their rifles. Then the scene changed to a house.

I lived in the house for a couple of days with a woman I didn't know. I slept in a screened porch on an army cot. The woman slept beside me on her own cot.

At one point in the dream, a phone rang and I answered it. The person who called pretended to be a friend, but I knew it was my enemy. I looked out the screen window and saw a sniper on a hillside about a half-mile away. He had me in his sights and was ready to shoot me. The sniper was the person on the phone. He was trying to verify my location, but I told him I was somewhere else. The woman next to me didn't know what was going on. I knew I was going to be shot in a few seconds, so I yelled out "SNIPER!" I quickly rolled off the cot onto the floor as a bullet came through the screen but missed me. I picked up the phone and taunted the shooter, telling him he was a crappy sniper. Suddenly, we began taking heavy gunfire and bullets ripped through the wall. I taunted the shooter again saying, "You must be the worst sniper in the world if you can't even kill me with an automatic rifle."

At this point in the dream, I left the house and decided I needed to find a safer place, so I went to a large hospital. I put on scrubs and blended in with the employees. I pretended to be an employee for a couple of days. I slept on the top floor in a doctor's suite. Some days I pretended to work in housekeeping, other days I pretended to work as a tech in the emergency department or the operating room. Sometimes I'd wear a surgical mask to hide my face. I tried to avoid having contact with anyone who was looking for me. As long as I was in the hospital, I felt safe.

Interpretation
The sniper, who tried to kill me in the dream, represented my spiritual enemy (probably a demon) who had been assigned to take me out. I have many friends who have shared dreams with me over the years where they were being chased, beaten, hunted or in some way harassed by an enemy or a group of enemies. Most of the time, these dreams are messages from God tipping you off to a problem.

The Apostle Paul reminded believers that their enemy prowled about like a lion looking for people to devour. The enemy sees us as prey. When you're being treated like prey in a dream, God is telling you that you're being too passive in your spirituality. In these dreams, the dreamer is usually without any weapons. The message here is that it's time to get trained and equipped to fight back. Sometimes the best defense is a good offense and many of us need to learn how to put our enemies on the defensive. If in Christ, we're more than conquerors, then it's imperative that we learn how to wage spiritual warfare wisely and effectively.

The soldiers I met while walking on the road symbolized other believers. There are some Christians who feel as if it's okay to be on their own in their walk with God. I know people who feel as if there's no place in the body of Christ where they fit in. They've said, "I guess it's just you and me, Lord." They don't live in close fellowship with other believers. This is a dangerous way to live.

The bible refers to Christians collectively, as the body of Christ. The apostle Paul taught that all the parts of the body must remain connected and they must function together for the mutual benefits that we receive from and provide to one other. Although it might seem like a good idea to allow ourselves to become isolated at times, the risk of being preyed upon by the enemy is too great and the benefits too few. Although this doesn't necessarily mean we must attend weekly church services, (most of my fellowship is done online) we must become part of a group of believers who encourage and pray for one another regularly.

Mustafa had several opportunities to take Kyle out, but each time his movements with the SEAL team prevented him from getting a clear shot. Kyle was protected by moving with a well-trained and well-equipped team that provided support and protection. The brotherhood and camaraderie found in the SEAL teams is legendary. Being in combat is incredibly dangerous, but some of the danger can be reduced by being a part of a well-trained and well-equipped team that works in unison to achieve common goals. I have over the years, relied on a team of people who pray for me and assist me in all my spiritual battles. I prefer to work with a close-knit group of people. I've enlisted the prayer of friends, and have asked them often to pray for my protection against evil spirits that would try to harm me.

The musical performance we watched in my dream represented the power of worship as a form of warfare. Our morale had been low because we were being hunted by the enemy. One of the enemy's greatest weapons is discouragement. But the worship we watched lifted our countenance. Prayer and worship are more powerful weapons than we realize.

The things I did in the hospital represented my ministry in the field of health care. It's worth noting that I was trying to blend in to my surroundings and not draw attention to myself. SEAL teams rely on stealth and the element of surprise. They take great care to avoid drawing attention to their activities. One of the major keys to their success has been their ability to conceal their

presence. In the same way SEALs try to avoid drawing attention, I've always enjoyed relative safety ministering to people in health care, as long as I didn't do anything that would draw unnecessary attention.

Between Tours

"We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. I have heard others, and I have heard myself, recounting cruelties and falsehoods committed in boyhood as if they were no concern of the present speaker's, and even with laughter. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin. The guilt is washed out not by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ: if we have repented these early sins we should remember the price of our forgiveness and be humble." — C.S. Lewis, from The Problem of Pain

One of the main things the film focused on was the tension in the Kyle's marriage caused by Chris' deployments. A SEAL team member isn't just gone when he's deployed. The teams train constantly and are involved in other activities that leave very little time for family.

Chris never seemed to be fully present in the moment. His thoughts always seemed to be somewhere else. "Even when you're here, you're not here," Taya screamed. He also seemed blind to what Taya was going though as she raised their children without his help.

Just before redeploying for his second tour, Taya found him watching a video of soldiers being killed by a sniper. Chris rushed to shut the TV off when she entered the room, but she told him she'd already seen it. She wanted him to open up about what he was going through, but he didn't want her knowing about the atrocities he'd seen. He figured telling her would only make her worry more.

Chris was raised in a family where sharing openly about your problems was discouraged. Military life exposes you to things you believe cannot be told to anyone, except those who are in combat with you. Yet Taya wanted to know what he was thinking and his reluctance to talk to her was a constant source of frustration. As his involvement in the war dragged on, his trips home seem more like obligatory, tension-filled pit stops than occasions to connect and grow with his family.

Although we mean well when we keep our problems locked up inside, we only sabotage our relationships with those who care about us. One of the cornerstones of healthy relationships is transparency. Although you might have a fondness for someone, the more transparent they are with you and the more open you are with them, the more the two of you will be able to trust one another. The greater the transparency—the greater the trust.

My wife and I are what some people might call "church drop-outs." After attending the same church for seven years, I went through a messy divorce with my first wife. The church I attended was large and it was easy for me to keep my private life hidden. Like most people, I kept the things I struggled with to myself. That is, until my ex-wife had a talk with one of the pastors. She told him all the gory details of our divorce. She wasn't a believer and didn't attend church, so she had nothing to lose by telling him her side of the story. Not long afterward, I was asked to meet with the pastoral staff. I was judged by the pastors to be in rebellion against God and asked not to return to the church. If I had any doubts about keeping my dirty little secrets to myself, this removed them. I got the message loud and clear.

I know many people who have had similar experiences in the organized church. They made the mistake of thinking they could open up to people about their problems and they were shut down and asked not to speak of such things again. Some were kicked out of their congregations because it was discovered they had problems. Some were told they may not even be saved.

It's been said that the church is the only organization that shoots its own wounded. The risk of being judged and condemned in church is so great that many people find it safer just to play along with the game. If you want to get along in church, come to the gatherings with a pleasant smile on your face, act nice, dress nice. Tell people how great God is and never under any circumstances discuss anything you're struggling with. It's just going to make people uncomfortable and cause problems.

If you happen to be in a position of leadership, the pressure to appear squeaky-clean is even worse. Leaders aren't supposed to have problems. They're supposed to have their act together. The tenure of a church leader is usually at the discretion of a board of elders who will remove troubled leaders in a New York minute—to keep the sheep safe from people who aren't perfect. I can' help but chuckle at times at the saying that was made popular by church

leaders: "The church isn't a museum for saints. It's a hospital for sinners." And yet, we're expected to act like saints who have all our problems under control.

I empathize with leaders who don't know what to do with troubled believers. It's a sticky situation when someone obviously needs help but you don't have the training it takes to help them. But if the church really is a hospital for sinners, we must find a way to heal the wounds that cause us to remain in spiritual bondage.

With each of Chris's deployments, episodes of stress were more easily triggered. Loud noises startled him. Taya gave birth to their second child—a daughter. When Chris visited the hospital, he saw his daughter in the nursery and she began to cry. The nurse was tending to another baby and didn't immediately attend to his daughter. He became increasingly agitated and screamed at the nurse.

After coming home from his final tour, Chris was still disconnected. At a family barbecue, Taya found him watching the TV intently as if it were on, when it was actually turned off. She tried to get him to join the party and they watched the children play. A dog grabbed the shirt collar of a boy and was tugging at it. He was reminded of the rooftop scene where he was pinned down by sniper fire and a rabid dog was perilously close to attacking him. Chris suddenly ripped off his belt and grabbed the dog as if he might beat or strangle it until Taya cried out in horror. Chris clearly needed help with the emotional trauma he had suffered.

A few years ago, after having decent success with physical healing, I asked God to teach me about emotional healing. I studied a number of approaches that have been used successfully by friends and I met with people who were having success with emotional healing. I tried some of my own theories out and God helped me with some key dreams that illustrated important principles. The remainder of the book will explain the process I now use to help people receive healing of emotional trauma.

Most of the methods of emotional healing in use today take a couple of hours per session. In my line of work, I don't have a lot of time to pray with people for healing. I needed to find a way to get people healed during a 10 minute trip to the hospital. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I developed a method of

emotional healing that has proven to be easy, short and effective. It doesn't require people to dwell unnecessarily on their past. It heals the wounds caused by emotional trauma and in some cases, also provides relief of physical symptoms of chronic pain.

Emotional Healing Dynamics Our soul is shaped every day by the interactions we have with each other. Every video we watch, all the interactions we have with our family and coworkers, and every encounter we have with God have an impact on the person we are becoming. And if we have problems today, they are likely the result of things that happened in our past. If we want to change our current behavior, we need to change the way the past has affected us. And while we can't change the events of the past, we can change the way in which they affect how we live today.

The way in which we respond to present conflicts was shaped in our soul during our youth. When we faced one event and one challenge after another, we developed ways of responding to them—sometimes developing appropriate responses and sometimes not.

When we are young, we learn to respond to specific events with an emotion. If we react with joy to a specific event, a memory of the event is made and our soul records the emotion of joy. If we react with fear, it leaves a memory in our soul reminding us that we reacted with fear. Later, when faced with a similar event, if we recall the memory of the previous one and how we reacted, it can cause us to react the same way. This leaves another memory of fear, which reinforces the previous memory and makes a future response of fear more likely. Later still, the response of fear can become generalized to all similar events, which leave their own memories, further reinforcing the response. When Chris Kyle lashed out at the dog at the family gathering, the memory of the event on the rooftop with the rabid dog was triggered, causing him to react with the same emotion.

When we experience sudden rage, it's often the result of the memory of an event from our past being triggered that caused us to feel rage. When we feel rejection, shame or any other negative emotion as a response to a certain situation, there is often the memory of a similar event from our past being triggered which causes the emotion we're presently feeling. The goal of emotional healing is to break the cycle of responses related to past memories and their emotions.

Trigger Alert: If you suffer from a condition such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), or Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), the following exercise may trigger unpleasant thoughts and may cause you to suffer an acute episode, which could be dangerous to you. Please consider having a trusted friend or counselor in the room that is willing to assist you, if you decide to do this exercise. You may skip this exercise if you do not want to risk triggering an acute episode.

Receiving healing of painful emotions and memories can be a fairly straight-forward process that consists of three simple steps:

1. Identifying the painful emotion associated with a particular event.

2. Asking Jesus to take the painful emotion from you.

3. Asking Him to heal the wound in your soul caused by it.

For many people, emotional healing really can be that simple. The main problem I've found with emotional healing is that people who are extremely rational by nature tend to ask a lot of "why" questions in the middle of the healing process, which causes distractions and impedes the healing process. It doesn't matter why something happened to you; the only thing that matters with regard to healing is how it affected you. If you focus on the emotions you're feeling, and identify them one-by-one and allow Jesus to heal them, it's likely that you'll experience healing of painful memories and emotions.

I recently received healing of emotional wounds from my own childhood. I'd like to share the process I've used since then to help other people receive healing. (You might ask a trusted friend to help you with this exercise or you can do it yourself.)

One of the things Jesus purchased for us on the cross is healing of our painful emotions. The Bible says that Jesus has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (see Is 53:4). If He has borne them for us then we don't need to carry them any longer.

Healing painful emotions usually requires you to go back to events in your life where you can feel an emotion that is troubling you. Once you have accessed the memory of a particular event and you feel the emotion associated with it, ask Jesus to come to you. If the emotion you're feeling is sinful, (such as

hatred or jealousy) confess it as a sin and ask Him to forgive you of it. Say that you believe the blood of Jesus has taken away the penalty and consequences of your sin.

Tell Jesus you want the emotion removed from your soul. Ask Him to heal the wound in your soul caused by the emotion. Tell him you receive His healing.

An optional step that some people find helpful is to ask Him to give you something positive to replace the negative emotion that you're giving Him. If you ask Him to take away sadness, you might ask Him to give you joy. If you ask Him to take away anger, you might ask Him to give you peace. If the emotion is there because you believed a lie about that situation, ask Him to show you the truth about it.

When you are done with this, bring the memory of the painful event to your mind again. If the emotion was healed, you should not be able to feel it any longer, but there may be other negative emotions that you can still feel. Determine what negative emotion is strongest and do the same thing with it that you did with the first emotion. Tell Jesus you want the emotion removed from your soul. Ask Him to heal the wound in your soul caused by it and tell Him you receive His healing.

When you are done, bring the memory of the painful event to your mind again. Once more, try to determine if there are any negative emotions. If there are, repeat this process until you can bring the event to your memory and you feel no negative emotions. This process can be used on any memories that are associated with negative emotions.

If you'd like to be healed of all the emotional trauma you've received over your lifetime, you might consider beginning with the earliest memories you have that are troublesome to you. Use this process to receive healing of the emotions of that event, then go to the next event from your past that stirs up negative emotions when you think about it. You can go year-by-year if you'd like from early childhood to the present.

If you apply this process to all the emotionally traumatic events you can think of, you will probably find a great deal of freedom afterward. I've seen a number of people receive healing of physical symptoms of illness and injury after going through this process.

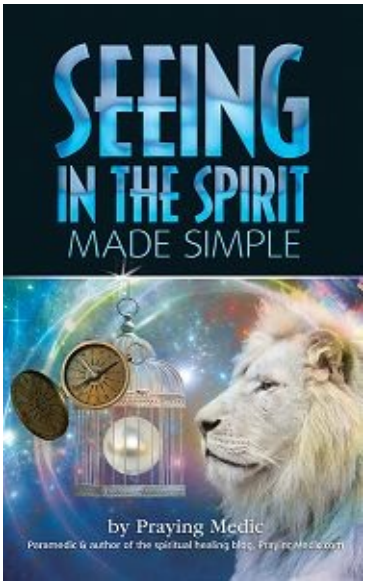
After you've had your soul healed, you might consider keeping it healed. This approach also works well in the moment. It can be used to heal those minute-by-minute hurts, wounds and offenses we run into every day. Just give the painful emotion you're feeling to Jesus and ask Him to heal the wound caused by it.

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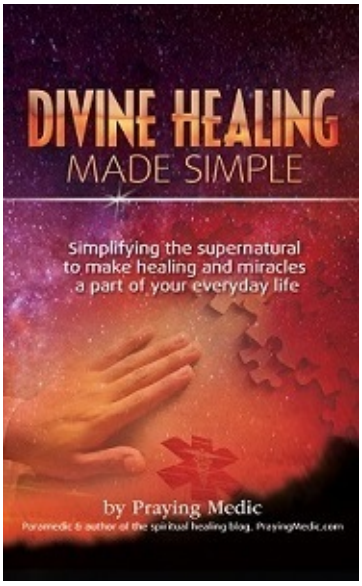
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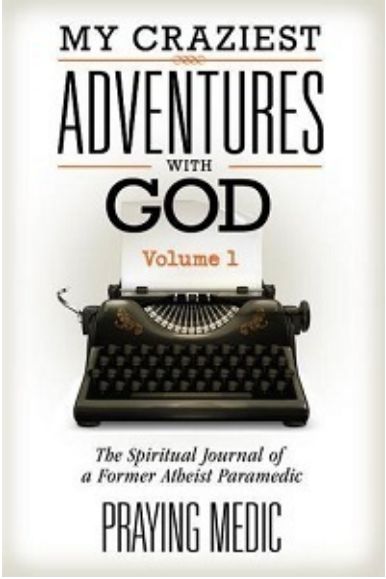
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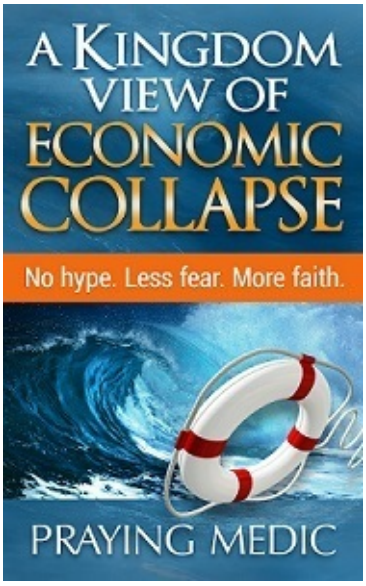
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