

# SHORT LEADERSHIP STORIES

## CONQUER YOUR DREAMS

by

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# BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

## THE NIGHT MY SON WAS BORN

*The night my Son was born* I had to no choice but to be still and know that He was God!

Just one of the many versus that inspires me is Psalm's 46, verse 10. This particular verse has special meaning from a personal experience.

The KJV states it like this; “***Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth***”.

Good leadership skills come from every part of life, including and most importantly the scriptures.

Before getting into this story I must point out one other scripture from James that impacted me that night. It tells us that no matter what the plan, it should always start with us on our knees asking for His will to be done.

The KJV of James, chapter 4, versus 13 through 15, says; “***Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.***”

I can analyze both scriptures for Psalm's and James backwards and forwards and it never stops having a new meaning. The knowledge that it provides to me as a leader in business or as the head of my family is unmeasurable.

The lesson I learned the night my son was born was that I need to start each day on my knees. My plans mean nothing if they are not His will, but only mine. My biggest problem is that I dive into something without asking for His guidance, then I want Him to come behind and clean up the mess I've created!

In every part of our lives this scripture should be considered. Our God is mighty and powerful! But more than anything else, **He is full of love, mercy and grace!**

I got a special glimpse of that the night our third son was born! In addition, I have come to realize how important the scriptures that I quoted above are to my life.

He was born two months early several years ago in a small out of the way hospital where modern technology was still trying to catch up. This is not to say that the medical staff were not outstanding because they absolutely were the best that night. It was in a new small community several miles from any major metropolitan area.

My wife, Robin, was having a very tough pregnancy with our son. I don't think a day went by that she didn't feel bad. I was growing very use to working and taking care of many of the normal duties around the house for her and our two boys. It gave me a new appreciation for everything she did for all of us.

I'm embarrassed to admit that this often made me resent the situation a little bit. I came from a background where you just sucked it up and toughed it out. As a former Marine it even strengthened that position more. Robin spent most of the day not being able to do the day to day chores, that she had always been faithful in doing. I was having trouble understanding why! I wanted to be compassionate, but inside I was getting frustrated! God was trying to teach me, but I didn't want to attend His class right now. I wanted it my way, and my way only!

To make matters worse we found out she was pregnant right after we had closed on a brand new house. So that meant on top of moving everything in and putting everything away in it's proper spot, we also had to consider window coverings and all the other items you need for a new home. Guess who had to take on that responsibility also? That's right, poor pitiful me.

This was our very first brand new home! Actually our first home other than a thirty year old mobile home we had just moved out of. I guess we all have to start somewhere. Anyway the backyard was all dirt. We had no patio or sidewalks in the back. Which meant if we didn't get anything accomplished soon our two young boys would be dragging in all that dirt via their feet quickly.

Somewhere in all of this was another lesson from God. Just like the verse in James where they talk about making plans for a year. Ours plans are at the mercy of God. Robin and I had made our plans without knowing the future even though we thought that we did. Funny how that works!

We had purchased this house without ever considering having another child. As a matter of fact, having another child was really not in my plans at all. Not because I didn't want another one, but because we had tried for so long and never were able to. The closest we had come was when Robin had a miscarriage a few years earlier. That was a very traumatic experience.

I was having trouble learning that God is in control and I need to be still and know that He is. I can make all the plans in the world, but if it is not His will, I am spinning my wheels. I couldn't seem to learn that I needed to include Him in my plans, asking Him for direction. I needed to seek His will, not mine.

I know many times you hear people say, why did God allow that to happen. Well if you jump out of an airplane without a parachute what do you expect to happen? On your way down do you expect God to miraculously place one on your back? Now don't get me wrong, He could do that! But free will comes at a price. If you want the freedom of being able to pick and choose what you do. Then don't be surprised that there are consequences to those decisions.

As I had mentioned earlier during Robin's entire pregnancy she felt horrible. I still remember all the people would tell Robin how sorry they were that she didn't feel good. Selfishly I was thinking, Hell, you need to feel sorry for me. I'm the one having to do all the work! Yes, I was very selfish! Not very proud of that right now.

Well, God has a way of making you attend His class whether you want to or not! He was about to show me several things including that our little plans we make mean nothing if we have not included Him in them.

When we found out she was pregnant it was a very joyous occasion. We were very excited and thankful.

Our first two boys were adopted. I almost hate to say that they were adopted because there is not one day that goes by that I don't thank God that He brought them into our lives. Anyone that would infer that somehow an adopted child is not loved as much as a natural child has not experienced both.

Our oldest boy was abused physically and I am sure emotionally from birth. He was removed from his home at the age of four months by a Police Officer. The Police were called to the home because of his biological father that had broken the arm of a neighbor. When they went into their home they discovered he had been abused badly, as well as, they had no food or items to care for a child of that age.

When he came to our home at the age of seven months he would just lie there and do nothing. He wouldn't cry. He wouldn't try to roll over or move around. Nothing. He had some bruising on his little body close to his private area. When you would start the vacuum or run the shower he would go absolutely nuts in fear. Something had obviously happen to him with both the vacuum and the shower. Made you want to take those parents and beat the living crap out of them.

Eventually he began to become more comfortable with everything. The one thing that he really enjoyed was eating and watching Disney movies. He could watch the same movie over and over and over again. Bambi was one of his favorites. Mainly because that was one of the few we had but he sure enjoyed it.

Today he is all grown up! And when I say all grown up, I mean all grown up. He is about six foot four and over three hundred pounds. He is intimidating. But a teddy bear! Great son. He still likes movies and food!

My other adopted son was not quite so lucky. He was born addicted to cocaine and for the first three months of his life he had to experience withdrawals. He was diagnosed early with bipolar and ADHD. Later he has been diagnosed with schizophrenic and multiple personalities. He is currently undergoing treatment for both. He is a wonderful son nonetheless and we love him to death.

Again, our plans did not include anything close to what I described above for our one boy, but God knew. Now I don't believe God gave him the mental illness, but God knew that he would have it. I believe that his mother through her free will chose to make horrible decisions that he will have to live with for the rest of his life.

Anyone that tells you that drugs only affect the user is full of it. They need to spend a day in my son's shoes!

I don't love either one of these boys any more or any less than my two other children. We experienced everything you can imagine with all of them. We changed their dirty diapers. Cleaned up projectile vomit. Held them when they cried. Rushed them to the doctor in the middle of the night when they were sick. Watched every game they played when they were in sports. Went to all the special performances they participated in. Got in arguments about stupid things. Listened to them whine about not being fair. Rushed them to the doctor to have peas removed from their nose. And on and on and on.

Now back to the birth of my third son.

Robin had been feeling bad and thought she needed to go into the doctor again. Now this unfortunately I must say was not unusual so I was not alarmed. The bad news this night was that it was getting late when she decided that she needed to go. I guess it must have been around six or so that evening and with the boys having school the next day I decided that I would stay home with the boys.

I also had to work the next day which meant that I would have to get up at my regular time of four in the morning. My bedtime was at nine pm sharp.

Robin had asked a friend of hers to go with her. Fortunately she agreed and off they went. I didn't give it a second thought only because this was not the first time.

My plan that night was simple, but God had not been included in it yet!

After Robin left I quickly got the kids a bath and ready for bed. After tucking them in and making sure they were settled I was able to relax for about an hour or so before nine o'clock came. Now you have to remember this was during a time when cell phones were only for the elite of which we were not a part of. Therefore, I was not able to call and find out what was going on. Somehow without cell phones we were able to survive though.

I crawled into bed and said my prayers. Now prayers for me at that time and even sometimes now was a laundry list of my selfish needs. Yes I lipped off a few times about His will but down deep it was all about mine. Within a very short time I was sleeping.

At 10:35 pm I was awakened from sleep by the ringing of the telephone. I know it was that time exactly because those numbers were burned forever into my memory as I rolled over and looked at the clock.

My first thought was why isn't Robin answering that damn phone and who in the hell is calling us at that time of night! Don't they know that it was rude to call that late! Within seconds I realized that Robin wasn't there as the phone continued to ring. I then quickly crawled across the bed since the phone was on Robin's side.

As I picked up the phone a screaming voice came over it yelling, "You need to get to the hospital right away! Robin is having the baby! Get here now! Get here now! Hurry!"

I calmly asked at that point.. Just kidding! I couldn't believe what I was hearing! My brain was having trouble processing what I had just heard! This was not possible since she was only seven months along! We still had two months to go! We weren't ready! I wasn't ready! Our plans didn't include this! My plan didn't include this!

I jumped out of bed and quickly got the kids dressed. Now why I decided to get the kids dressed I am not sure. I guess I figured Robin would be upset if I took the kids out of the house with just pajamas on. Not sure, but I got them both dressed in a matter of minutes.

Robin, who also plans ahead did have a bag already packed for when the day came that she did have to leave quickly for the hospital she would be ready. Her plan didn't include already being at the hospital while I was home sleeping, but either way it was ready for me to grab.

I quickly strapped the kids into their car seats! I ran back into the house and grabbed the bags she had packed and threw them into the trunk.

The hospital was over twelve miles away. I am still not sure how I made it there so quickly but I arrived and into the emergency room at 11:00 pm. That meant that I was able to take the call from Robin's friend, get the kids up and dressed, put her bag into the trunk and drive there all in just twenty-five minutes. Although I don't know for sure, I'll bet I broke the speed limit by just a little.

Right after arriving and announcing who I was looking for a nurse escorted me and my two boys into an empty patient room. Inside that room was Robin's friend. The nurse told me that Robin was in surgery right now delivering the baby.

I must have asked a hundred times how Robin and the baby was doing and she would not answer. She kept telling me that the doctor would be in as soon as he could. That generally meant the kiss of death! The moment I sat down I drew my two boys to me and began to pray out loud.

I don't remember specifically what I prayed but there was a peace that came over me that I can't explain. Maybe for the first time in a long time I was including God in my plan instead of asking Him to clean up the mess I made. I might have been asking for guidance instead of barking out requests.

My son was officially born at 11:04 pm.

I don't know what time it was but the doctor came into the room and knelt down by me and my two boys. He quietly said Robin is fine but I don't think your son will make it!

Those words struck me like a ton of bricks!

It was almost instantly that I blurted out that my son would be fine. Please take me to him now! I don't know why I said those words. Maybe God said them for me, I don't know. But I said them! I meant them! I believed them!

He didn't respond to them. He just said yes, I will take you to him. He warned me that what I would see would be very hard to deal with!

He led me out of the room and just a short fifteen or so feet from there was a room that had large glass windows on two complete sides of it. There in the middle of the room was a table where six people were hovered around. On that table was my son.

They were all frantically working on him! His heart was beating out of control! What that meant was that it was beating so fast the heart monitor couldn't keep up with it. They say over three hundred beats per minute, but they weren't sure. They had no idea what to do to get it under control. It had already stopped twice prior to me coming into the room, but they were able to get it going only to have it beat out of control again.

If a person only got so many heart beats in their life he was going through his very quickly.

The thoughts racing through my head were crazy.

As my two boys stood by my side I knelt down to tell them that everything was going to be just fine.

They were starring at their brand new baby brother, just like me they watched at what was going on in front of us across the room. The six people were still working on him. Every once in a while one of them would look over at us! You could tell the desperation in their eyes.

At this point I never considered the possibility of him dying. My prayer earlier to God was that he would be fine and I believed it. I believed God would make this ok! I didn't deserve it! But that night was a special night that God gave me the peace that it was going to be alright!

All my Marine Corps training could not prepare me for the amount of strength it took to be able to remain calm and comfort my two boys. I had to transfer that same peace that God had given me, to them.

I had to remain calm and peaceful. If they saw their father out of control what message would that send to them. Now they knew it was a serious situation even though they were only six. Yes they knew. You could see it in their eyes.

Another nurse came over and told me that they had contacted Loma Linda University Hospital and a helicopter was being dispatched with a medical team to get my son and transfer him to that hospital. She told me that they were much better equipped to handle his situation.

The time was about 11:30 pm now.

Shortly after this I was also asked if I wanted to see Robin. Of course I did!

My wife is absolutely incredible! She just had her stomach ripped open and our son pulled out from an emergency C-Section, yet she was conscious and her main concern was for our new son.

Now all those thoughts that I had for the last seven months during her pregnancy that I felt like she was faking it immediately vanished.

How do women do it? How do they endure the unbelievable pain of child birth? She is special.

I told her that I had seen our son and that they were doing everything they could to help him. Although I was confident that he would be fine, I needed to make sure I gave her all the information I could. I held her tightly and we prayed.

I then left her and went back to our son. They were still working on him.

I began asking what was taking Loma Linda so long? Why weren't they here yet?

They didn't know. They just kept reassuring me that they were on there way.

Minutes turned into hours. The time was now around 4:00 am when they finally arrived.

It was a team of four. They worked quickly to package our son up into a plastic covered small stretcher on wheels. This was not any ordinary stretcher though. It had all the bells and whistles. Like something out of Star Wars.

They methodically placed our son into the compartment making sure to hook him up to all the monitors within it. It seemed like it took them forever but realistically it was not that long. Eventually the nurse closed the compartment door and sealed it.

Almost instantly after she sealed it the heart monitor flat lined.

As a parent watching their child on a heart monitor, this is the very last thing you wanted to hear. The sound of it still rings loudly in my ears when I think about it. It is the sound of death.

I had not thought about him dying up until this very moment in time. When I heard this sound my first thought was having to go in a tell Robin he had died! The thought was overwhelming!

How could I bury my little boy! I hadn't even gotten a chance to hold him in my arms yet! Hell we hadn't even picked out a name for him yet!

The sound of the flat line kept ringing out as each second ticked away. The nurse looked at me as she was attempting to unlatch the compartment that she had just securely placed him into. She screamed out I need the baby paddles. Another nurse yelled back that they didn't have any. The panic in her eyes told me she was alarmed by that news.

About ten to fifteen seconds had passed by as she continued to get into what was soon becoming the tomb of my son!

At that moment another peace came over me! I can't explain it, but it was extremely comforting. Just as I felt this peace, a moment later his little heart started on it's own.

No help from anyone! It just started back up! God has the ultimate plan! We can do all we want to try and intervene, but he is the one in control.

God created this universe from nothing. I don't think he needed anything to restart my son's heart!

The nurse in almost utter amazement reversed her course and began closing the compartment up again. This time with a real urgency.

Robin had told me that she wanted to see him before he left for Loma Linda so I reminded the nurse that she needed to either take my son to her, or her to him. But I told her that he was not to leave the hospital until she had a chance to see him.

They had honored this request by wheeling Robin out into the hall in her hospital bed. As I stood by her holding her hand they wheel my son in his space like compartment right up to her bed. She squeezed my hand tightly and cried as she told him that she loved him and that we would see him soon. The courage and determination Robin had was unquestionable. A parents love is unmatched only by God himself, who is love.

The nurse said I have to take him now. My wife nodded and off he went. I gave Robin a quick kiss as I took my two boys and followed him all the way to the helicopter. They placed him into the craft with urgency. This whole time I was talking with God. He had reminded me that he knew how much a son could be loved and what it meant to lose one.

As the helicopter took flight in the dark of the night from this little hospital in the middle of nowhere, I knew he was going to be just fine.

The boys and I rushed back and told Robin that he had gotten off OK and that we would need to get to Loma Linda. I kissed her goodbye, and off we flew.

After stopping at home to get cleaned up and something to eat I couldn't help but call Loma Linda to see if my son was doing ok.

I looked up the telephone number in the phone book and called the main number to them. I told the operator answering that my son had been transferred there via helicopter. She said one moment and transferred me to another number.

There was about one of two rings and a man answered the phone. In a very concerned voice the man began calling out medical information such as; I have an eight hour old male infant with a rapid heart beat of over 300 beats per minute. He continued on with other vital signs before I could interrupt him. I was trying to talk over him by telling him I was the father. He then went Oh My God; I thought you were the cardiologist. He then told me that he had to end the call since he was busy working on my son and needed to take the call from the cardiologist.

It was an eye opening call. I wished that I had not had the call but it was too late for that now. It prompted me to hurry myself up and get to the hospital.

I flew around the house and before I knew it the boys and I were on the road again this time heading in the opposite direction. The hospital was about an hour away, but fortunately it was against the morning traffic. We made the trip in only about forty five minutes. I won't say that I was speeding again, but. .. Maybe I was speeding a bit!

When I arrived at the hospital I was quickly directed to NICU.

After I got up to the unit I was quickly told that only parents were allowed into the area to see infants. The reason was that it was flu season and they could not take a chance of bringing the flu into the unit. I certainly understood the reason for the policy, but it through another road block into my plan.

My two boys were only 6 and I had no one to watch them while I was in the NICU area to see my other son.

I put it into God's hands and gave my boys some activities and toys to do and decided to go into the NICU without them. I also informed a nurse that they were there.

In order to get into the unit you had to scrub your hands all the way up to your elbows and then wear a gown over your clothes to get in. I did not want to be responsible for any young child getting sick, no matter mine or someone else's, so I scrubbed the suggested time of two minutes. I think I counted in my head to make sure.

Once inside I could not believe what I saw.

My dear little boy was hooked up to every kind of gadget you can imagine along with a breathing tube down his throat. He was considerably smaller since he had lost the water weight that had bloated him just hours earlier. When you have a bad heart it produces fluid around the heart and other parts of your body. He was born weighing three pounds ten ounces, but the fluid from the heart pushed him up another pound which equaled over one third of his body weight. That is a lot.

So when I saw him for the second time he looked so much smaller and very fragile. It struck me for the first time how much he had already experience in his life, yet he wasn't even a day old yet.

Made me feel a little guilty about all the times I would complain about having a bad day. It didn't come close to comparison with the type of day he was having, and it was his first and only day so far.

God has a way of helping us to realize how lucky we have it.

As a parent I wanted to make it all better, but I couldn't.

I watched him and every movement he made for about ten minutes. I knew that he was a fighter. All the IV's and gadgets he had piercing his little body didn't seem to bother him at all.

I knew I needed to get back to my other two boys. I couldn't imagine going back to get them and finding out that they had wandered off somewhere.

I quickly rushed back to them and I was relieved to find out that they were still there playing.

I was then able to speak with the doctor. He informed me that they were able to get his heart beat under control by using the baby paddles to electrically shock his heart back into a normal rhythm. He told me he most likely would be in NICU for three to four months. He was not sure at this point if there was any permanent damage to his heart, although he expect there to be some. They would have to do an echo cardiogram and other tests before they would know for sure. Their first priority was to stabilize him, which was what they were attempting to do right now.

I thought to myself, that three to four months was an eternity. What did he mean by they needed to stabilize him? What things could be wrong with his heart? Why would his heart do this in the first ptace?

I thought about the friends we had in New York when I was stationed there in the Marine Corps. They had a little boy that was born with a hole in his heart. He had gone into what they thought was a fairly routine surgery when his son was eight or nine I think, and he died during surgery. The funeral was one of the hardest I had been to in a long time.

My son was less than one day old and I already loved him more than words can say.

I was reminded again of the scripture; "Be still and know that I am God".

We too often get caught up in the day to day things that have us scrambling around trying to take care of every little thing that comes our way. We forget to include Him in those things and ask His will. I needed to slow down and let Him handle this!

I took a deep breath and told Him that I was turning it all over to Him. After all I didn't have a medical degree. I couldn't worry my son's heart back to normal. The only thing I was capable of doing was being close by to be there for him.

The boys and I decided that we would travel the hour plus trip back to the other hospital and see Robin, their mother.

When I got back to the hospital I told her everything about the telephone call on the way to Loma Linda. What our son looked like and what the doctor said about his condition.

We decided on a name for him! His name would be Tyler Scott.

She said then with a determination that I knew I was going to be unable to stop, "I am leaving this hospital tomorrow no matter what!"

I told her that was impossible! She had just had her stomach ripped open and our son pulled out through emergency surgery. She was crazy if she thought that they were going to release her to go home.

She said again, "I don't care! I am leaving this place and going to see our son! Tyler needs me and I will be there for him!"

I knew that was it. Now what kind of fight were we going to get from the doctor?

Well he strongly disagreed and said the only way she would be able to leave is if she signed a release stating that they were not responsible. Although I agreed with the doctor I knew that I was not going to change her mind. I knew her all too well to know that there was nothing that could stand in her way between her and her children. That still holds true today for her. Don't get in between her and her kids unless you like trouble.

I decided now that I needed to get some rest before I clasped onto the ground. I was running on pure adrenaline and if I didn't get some sleep it was not going to end well.

The boys and I went home and crawled into my bed and all of us slept like babies for about four hours. It was just what we all needed. We were all together and it was just what the doctor ordered. We all had a small escape from the reality of what was going on.

Once awake again though I couldn't help but want to go back to Loma Linda and see Tyler again.

I felt like a ping pong ball. Not sure which direction to go in!

I was able to arrange for our neighbor to watch the boys this time though. What a blessing!

I went through the scrubbing procedure again, not leaving any step out of the process. I made sure that I scrubbed for at least two minutes all the way to my elbows.

I grabbed a chair and just sat beside him for several hours watching him and just day dreaming about his future. I would put my finger by his tiny little hand and every once in a while he would grab it. He was so very tiny. His little fingers were not able to go all the way around my finger. I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time.

Being a parent is the hardest thing in the world. Here I was trying to be all things to all of my family and could barely be anything to any of them. My wife was at one hospital. My two boys were at a neighbors and my son was here in this hospital. Each one needed a different part of me.

I was the leader of my home, but unable to satisfy 100% of their needs. Was I a failure? No! I was something you refer to as human. What I did give them was everything that I had. I gave them honesty! I gave them time! I gave them attention: I gave them respect! I showed them compassion, understanding, and humility!

I finally decided that I needed to get back home.

The following morning I woke up and needed to get to the hospital where Robin was staying. Was she really going to be able to get out of there like she wanted?

I had my doubts!

Well, I should have never doubted her. When I got to the hospital she had everything packed and was ready to go. The only problem was that she needed to be in a wheel chair since her stomach was not even remotely close to being healed yet. Stretching it in anyway ran the risk of it tearing the stitches out and causing serious damage. This was not a good plan at all, but I was not going to stop her no matter what!

They reluctantly released her after we signed all the paper work promising not to sue if something happened. Though I thought I was crazy, I signed the documents.

When we got to Loma Linda and scrubbed in, Robin was amazed at what she saw. My wife is an incredible women and I am lucky to have her. You could not ask for a better mother.

Early that morning before we arrived, Tyler had pulled his breathing tube out of his throat. The alarms had all gone off, but instead of panicking they decide to see what would happen. Would he be able to breath on his own? As it turned out he did! He pulled his own breathing tube out and was just fine.

God at work again!

We both got a chance to hold him this time. I didn't want to hold him until we both were there together. It was an amazing feeling. He was so very tiny. His hair was jet black. Robin counted every finger and toe. She inspected him carefully and I understood why. The IV's and monitors got in the way a little but that was life.

The nurse and doctor reminded us that this was going to be a long recovery process, and that it would most likely be three to four months before they could even consider letting him go home. He would be getting the echo cardiogram soon and that would tell them more about the damage that was done to his little heart.

We asked why this would have happened. They had no explanation at all. They said sometimes things just happen. Imagine that!

We spent an enormous amount of time with him that day and it was great. Robin used a breast pump and was able to get him breast milk. This was very hard emotionally for her though. She felt a little detached, but nonetheless, she did what was best for Tyler.

We took every opportunity to pray that we could. It was a constant process in our minds of addressing this with our God!

The next day we learned the results of the echo cardiogram. The doctor told us that his heart was not damaged at all in the process. He was amazed that nothing had been hurt. He couldn't explain why. He told us that they would be doing another test in a few days.

I thought to myself that they most likely didn't believe the results, therefore, they would run it again. Not sure though.

Well they did run the test again in a few days and it again gave the same reading. No damage was done to his heart. Wow! What a relief again.

Prior to that we had an elder from church come and lay hands on him and pray for healing.

Several days went by and each day he made huge improvements.

They even started talking about the possibility of Tyler going home. Heck it had only been about ten days or so and they were already so amazed at his improvements that the discussion of home already began.

Two problems though.

The first was that he was still on oxygen, which really didn't matter much. That would be a slam dunk making sure that his oxygen tank was working and he had the tiny little nose inserts in. The reason for the oxygen was that his blood oxygen levels needed to be close or over 90% without it. His was around 60%.

The second was more of a problem. He was not sucking very well on the bottle and still needed a feeding tube sometimes. So they had to teach one or both of us how to insert the feeding tube down his throat. Once the feeding tube was fully inserted you would basically pour the breast milk slowly into the tube.

I volunteered to learn. Well I guess I volunteered. When someone looks at you and says your it, does that constitute volunteering. If so, then I volunteered.

I held him in my left arm where his back was resting down and he looked up at me. With my right hand I took the feeding tube and slowly and gently was able to insert it into his mouth and it went very easily down his throat. Now prior to doing this they have you mark the amount you need to insert so that you don't keep pushing after it is in his stomach. It wasn't hard at all.

Sometimes in life we make things so much harder than they really are. If we just sit back and take a deep breath it can make things easier.

Well I was officially trained now; however, I was hopeful that I would not have to do this on a regular basis. But I would if necessary. I would have done anything if it meant it would help him.

A few more days went by and it was now day seventeen. He no longer needed a feeding tube and all his IV's were out. The only thing he needed was oxygen. Everything else was stabilized. They had even ran another echo cardiogram and it was absolutely normal.

They then said the magic words. He can go home tomorrow! The joy that Robin and I had at that moment was tremendous! On the other hand we were nervous.

They said just a week or so ago that it would be months before he was able to go home, and now they said tomorrow.

God was at work in a very big way. Sometimes when we ask for a miracle we are expecting bells and whistles and some big production to take place. Instead God just makes it happen right before our eyes nonchalantly. He gets the glory. Don't ever forget to give him the glory!

Were we ready to bring him home tomorrow? What would we need? He was on oxygen so that seemed pretty simple. What would happen if the oxygen tank stop working in the middle of the night? What would happen if he pulled it out when we were sleeping. After all he pulled his breathing tube out of his throat while the nurse was right close by.

Here was another time I just needed to be still and know that our God is God!

He just performed a miracle right before my eyes and I am already worried about tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. Today has enough worries in it.

We went home that night and got everything ready. Tyler would sleep by our bed for the first twelve or thirteen years or so, until we felt comfortable with everything. Well maybe not that long!

Robin and I had picked up the coolest bassinet in Mexico a few months earlier. It would be planted right by Robin's side of the bed.

The next day we went back to the hospital and Tyler was ready to come home. It was really true. This wasn't a dream.

We got another class on how the oxygen tank worked. It was no problem at all. The biggest issue was changing the value from one tank to another when it was empty which was a piece of cake.

Before long we were on our way home. We could not believe the miracle God worked through Tyler. Our whole church was so supportive in every way possible. With meals every night. With watching the boys. Most importantly with prayer.

When we took him to church that Sunday God got a standing ovation for what he had done for our son, and He deserved that and much more.

The final thing I would like to pass along is kind of funny. At the end of the first week we received a bill for \$100 for the oxygen. I thought that was kind of strange since I had 100% coverage on medical.

After calling them up they told me that they were sorry but home oxygen was not covered by our policy. When he was in the hospital it was covered. But at home it would not be.

I quickly said that I was not sure if we were going to be able to take care of him at home after all. The thought of insuring his oxygen tank was working properly was very hard for us. I told them I thought we may have to take him back to NICU at a cost of over \$3000 a day or so.

They told me to hold on a minute and she must have gone to her supervisor and explained the issue. When she returned she said that the oxygen would be covered and not to worry.

I told her thank you very much.

Tyler has grown up to be 100% healthy and has not had one problem with his heart since, except for maybe being broken by a girl now and then.

He played in every sport and was good at them. He is smart and may I say ***good hearted!***

Thank you, and may God Bless You!

# **INTEGRITY UNDER THE TRUE TEST**

## **DANIEL IN THE LIONS DEN**

The story of Daniel in the lions den is truly one of the most pure Christian inspirational stories of all times. His pure love for God truly put his integrity to the ultimate test!

We find the story in chapter six of the book of Daniel. We have all heard the story and there is no need to go over every single detail again. But I do want to stress some points within the story that stand out to me like no others.

Briefly the story took place during the rule of Darius. Darius liked Daniel a lot, and had placed him in a very high position within his kingdom.

Of course because of Daniel's status it caused a great deal of jealousy amongst the individuals placed below him. So much so that they plotted against him.

Now these weren't just everyday people. These were the presidents, governors, princes, counselors, and captains. In other words they were high ranking officials.

### **THEY NEEDED TO FIND SOMETHING TO DESTROY HIM!**

When they got together they decided that they needed to find out something about his life that they could use against him to destroy him.

Does that sound familiar at all to the way people still act to this day. Instead of trying to work hard and mind your own business, it is a lot faster to the top of the food chain to destroy those around you.

Kids are the perfect example of this! What is the first thing a small child will do to gain favor of their parents over their siblings? Tell on them! It may not even be that true! They are just trying to get to the top on the backs of anyone else in their way.

Do politicians do this today?

Well that is what the people were doing to Daniel. They examined his life with a fine tooth comb and could not find anything wrong.

Wow! Can you imagine! Someone looking into our life and not being able to find something that could destroy us. Wouldn't take someone long in my life to make me squirm a little. Maybe even a lot!

The only thing they could figure out was that Daniel would pray three times a day like clock work in his home. Throughout his life he didn't care who was in charge, what the rules were, he was going to worship the one and true God!

It started from the first time they brought him captive to Babylon. He would not eat the food they presented and with the help of God was given the proper diet. See chapter one of Daniel for that entire story.

At the time, Daniel's praying was no problem. But the people intended to make it a problem because they knew he wouldn't give up his dedicated worship to God. That my friend is a testament in itself of his Integrity! He was known for doing the right thing without compromise. Are you?

### **DANIEL'S INTEGRITY WOULD NOT ALLOW HIM TO STOP!**

So the people went to King Darius and asked him to make a decree for thirty days that no one would bow down and make a request from anyone except the King himself. The KJV states it like this “***make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.***”

Pretty straight forward. They knew Daniel's Integrity would not allow him to stop doing what he would always do. That was to worship his God. The one and true God.

Well king Darius did agree to this unknowingly that they had plotted against his friend Daniel. He signed it in such a way that it couldn't be undone. You see the people in that day believed that a king was like a God and could not make a mistake. So if a king signed a decree, it was irreversible!

## **FACING SURE DEATH HE DID NOT CAVE!**

So what do you suppose Daniel did? Like I said you know the story. Of course he went right on doing what he always did. He didn't try to hide it! He didn't try to delay it for thirty days! He didn't try to fake it by pretending not to! He just kept on keeping on! That's Integrity!

Facing sure death if he were to bow down to his God, the one and true God, he just kept on praying to him. He didn't change one thing about his normal routine.

Are you committed to doing the right thing. When you go into a public restaurant do you still pray before you eat, or are you afraid of the ridicule you might face? Do you cheat a little on your taxes? Will you let the cashier know if she gives you too much change? Will you not correct your boss if they ask you to do something totally illegal? Do you stretch the truth when it is to your advantage? When you have a non Christian over for dinner do you pray before eating or do you only do that with your Christian friends? When you are behind closed doors do you worship the one and true God or do you only do that on Sunday at Church? These are only examples of how we might change what we are doing because we have formed our behaviors around society.

Integrity is doing the right thing no matter what the consequences!

## **HE WOULD FACE DEATH OVER COMPROMISE!**

Daniel knew that if he prayed as he always did, he was going to be thrown into the lions den. Was he afraid? I don't know! But that showed a form of Integrity that can't be matched anywhere, or anytime.

He decided that he would face death before he caved into societies rules of going against God!

Now we know how the story ended, but Daniel didn't have the luxury of knowing!

I know that I would have probably caved like a house of cards! Each situation God allows us to experience that tests our ability to make the right choice makes us that much stronger in our relationship with him and his Son Jesus Christ.

Each experience makes doing the right thing a little easier! We can only do this with His help. By asking Jesus into your life as the Authority of it, will change you and make Integrity a little more, and little more, real everyday of your life.

Until maybe, just maybe, you will face the lions den as Daniel did and say, God I will follow you over them every time.

# **MARINE CORP GUARD DUTY**

## **AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE COLONEL**

Serving on guard duty in the Marine Corps was just a fact of life. You needed to just get use to it or you would be miserable. Here is another story about just one time I was assigned guard duty.

I had just graduated from the Marine Corps Communications Center Course in Twenty Nine Palms, California, and was waiting for my orders to Okinawa, Japan. I was was looking so forward to going.

I had just turned eighteen just four months earlier, two days after graduating from boot camp.

In an effort to keep all of us busy while waiting for our orders, I was assigned to guard duty. I really wasn't that upset since the alternative was working in the Chow Hall washing dishes and any other job no one wanted to do. So guard duty was like a party compared to that.

My lucky assignment was to guard a single building. A building that was right in the middle of the base. It had two tall fences around it. Both with barbed wire at the top of them. They were spaced out about ten feet apart, completely circling the building.

There was only one way into the building and that was through a double gated area. After that there was only one entrance to the building itself. The building was about sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. It did not have any widows at all.

The fence closest to the building was about ten feet away. There was a concrete walkway completely around the building. There were no bunkers, or anything else to protect me.

We were issued an M16A1 rifle with a magazine of only five rounds.

Our instructions were to change up our routine around the building during our four hour watch.

I know the first thing I thought about when the Sergeant told me this, was that if someone wanted in this building, they were not going to crawl over the fence and sneak in. They were going to shoot me, since I was a sitting duck. Almost like in a shooting gallery. I had no protection at all.

On the flip side of this was that if someone wanted to take me out, they had the protection of numerous things. Everything from other buildings that were close by to parked vehicles.

Anyway, my tour was four on, eight off, around the clock, seven days a week, for two weeks straight. Sounded good a first until about the third shift or so. You really never had enough time to do anything completely.

Being a Marine was all about endurance. No matter what the obstacle.

### **UP CAME THE FULL BIRD COLONEL...**

The night shift was the worst. Boring with a capital B. At the time I could tell you exactly how many steps it took to get around the building. I could tell you exactly how long it took. I could tell you how many cracks on the sidewalk. How many fence posts there were. You get it, I was bored silly.

One day while I was on the day shift, I was approached by a Full Bird Colonel. Keep in mind that is only one rank below a general and they had some power. He could make my life a living hell if he so desired!

The procedure for letting anyone into the facility was that I would open up one gate and then lock it behind me. I would proceed to the outside gate and prior to unlocking it and letting someone in, they would have to produce their identification card. I take that id card and match it to the name in the book and the signature that went with it. If they matched I would let them in.

Anyway the Colonel came to the gate. I proceeded through the first gate and on to the second quickly.

## **NOW HE WAS DOWN RIGHT MAD...**

I requested the Colonel's id and he presented it to me quickly.

I stepped over to the book just one step away and proceeded to try and find his name in the book. I did not find it right away. The Colonel became irritated and demanded that I hurry up.

He kept insisting his name was in the book and I needed to find it quickly and let him in.

I still was not able to find it. I was beginning to get very nervous now since the Colonel began threatening me with discipline for not being able to do my job.

Now it had been about three to four minutes which seemed like three to four days with the Colonel that could change my life growing extremely impatient. Well maybe not growing impatient, darn right full blown mad. I kept him in my sight at all times in the event he did something crazy.

## **THE GUNNERY SERGEANT CAME FLYING OUT...**

I ignored his demands other than letting him know that I was attempting to find his name, and showing as much courtesy as possible.

I picked up the phone that called directly inside and informed the contact that the Colonel was out here and I could not find his name on the list.

Within seconds he was out of the building and letting the Colonel into the building. The Colonel was very mad at me and the contact, who happened to be a Gunnery Sergeant.

I just knew my career was over, as short as it had already been. I thought to myself that how could this happen. Just trying to do my job, and trying to do it well, and this happens.

## **WELL TO MY SURPRISE...**

Well a few minutes later the Colonel came out and spoke with me. I'm thinking here comes the butt chewing and getting my new assignment in hell.

Well to my surprise he told me what a great job I did in making sure I did not let him in, no matter what he did to intimidate me. He congratulated me! He told me that I was able to stay calm, that I did not allow him out of my sight, all while staying professional. He said I followed every procedure correctly.

Wow, this sure ended a lot better than I thought it would just seconds earlier.

The lesson learned here is to always trust your ability, and to do what you were trained to do.

Stay focused and follow through. Making the wrong choice, at the wrong time, can change everything.

## **WHY RUNNING?**

While I was in the Marine Corps we did a lot of long distance running. It varied between running in formation and running independently.

The distance we ran also varied from around three miles, to as much as ten.

I personally hated running in formation. You were forced to run at the pace of whoever was leading you. Most of the time, it was a slow pace of around seven and one half to eight minutes per mile.

I always enjoyed running on my own though. I wasn't a very fast runner. Even if I ran at a seven minute pace it just was much more enjoyable to do it on my own.

I was always asked the question, why does the Marine Corps like running so much. They would tell me it just doesn't make any sense. Why not use a stair stepper, or a tread mill. Why run?

I guess I don't know what the official answer is. Nor do I pretend to speak for the Marine Corps.

I guess the obvious answer is that it is good for you. However, there is more to it.

Much more!

### **12 YEARS OF RUNNING EVERY WEEK!**

I spent a little over 12 years in the Marine Corps and almost without fail I ran at least three times every week. The last five years I ran three miles on Monday and Wednesday, and five on Friday. This happened every week for all five years.

When I was in Okinawa I had a goal of running three miles in eighteen minutes or less. I trained for at least six months by running at least three miles everyday. I missed it by one minute.

Boot Camp was an experience in and of itself, but as it relates to running it set the stage for the rest of my life. We always ran in boots. The Drill Instructor's always pushed us harder and harder. It always seemed like I would take one more step than I thought that I could.

Just some of the runs we made in formation while in boot camp were amazing when I think back.

At no time was anyone left behind. That meant if any Marine fell behind we had to either carry him or run around him while he tried to keep up.

This certainly instilled the concept of a Marine leaves no one behind - Period!

Now back to why I believe that the Marine Corps feels so strongly about running.

I believe it boils down to endurance. If you have never run a long distance, it may not make sense.

### **YOU LEARN SO MUCH ABOUT YOURSELF!**

You learn so much about yourself when you run long distances. Especially when you push yourself! This may not mean further in distance, but faster, or a more challenging course.

When you really truly push yourself to a point where you want to stop, and keep going, it makes you stronger. You begin to believe that you can do anything.

That "Don't Quit" attitude carries over into everyday life.

Whenever you're faced with a situation where "Quitting" is an easy option, you are programmed to say "Not Me". You are in a mind set of "Quitting is not an option."

### **DON'T QUIT ON ANYTHING IMPORTANT!**

Whether you are handling a tough client, a ridiculous report, an impossible presentation, or a child with a mental disability, you learn to push on. Finishing the race, no matter what the "race" is, Is Everything!

Don't give up on your client, your report, your presentation, or most of all, your Child!

# **INTEGRITY - YOU JUST CAN'T FAKE IT!**

I had heard a story regarding integrity several years ago when I was in the Marine Corps. I had spent twelve years as a Marine - and it will never leave me. You know what they say - once a Marine - always a Marine.

Now I don't believe for a minute that this story that I'm about to tell is true - but it - it gives a perfect illustration of what integrity is.

There was a General that used to love to take his Marines on forced marches every so often. There was just something about it that he loved.

Now if you do not know what a forced march is - it is where the Marines get into full combat gear - which includes their rifles - wearing their helmets - sometimes flak jackets - full pack - and then you would march out over rough terrain to a predetermined destination - and then back. Sounds easy doesn't it - yah right!

Now I will tell you that I have been on several forced marches and they are just a blast - almost as much fun as having a tooth pulled.

## **ARE YOU CUTTING A FEW CORNERS...**

Well the General heard a rumor that some of his officers might be cutting a few corners - when it came to filling their packs with the required items - such as a change of uniform - an extra pair of socks - extra boots - and other assorted items. He heard that they were taking empty cardboard boxes and putting them into the pack so that it looked full.

This of course would make their load quite a bit lighter.

So - not knowing for sure if this was true or not - the General decided that it was time to go on another forced march - but this time he decided that they should take a route that was even rougher terrain than any other he had ever taken before.

## **ARE YOU CARING YOUR LOAD...**

So the day of the forced march came - and they all marched out - and it was a very rough terrain - over rocks - thorny bushes - and more hills and valleys than they cared to mention.

As the story was told to me - they marched out about ten miles.

When they reached the half way point to turn around to march back - there were vehicles waiting for them.

The General then ordered everyone to remove their boots and socks and place them into the vehicles.

As you can imagine this was very confusing to the Marines - but when a General orders you to do something - you don't question it.

## **IT HAS A WAY OF DISPLAYING ITSELF...**

Once they all placed their boots and socks into the vehicle - the General then ordered them to get into their packs - and get out the extra pair of socks and boots that they had packed - and then put them on for the return trip.

Well - it did not take long at all to determine which officers had integrity - and which ones were about to end their careers with the Marine Corps.

Don't ever be the type of leader that fills their pack with an empty box.

# THE PERFECT WIFE

How do you define what a good employee really is? Or better, how do you define the perfect wife?

Good leadership skills helps you to understand the difference between a good and not so good employee.

I had an employee in the past that fit into the category of what I considered to be a good employee, or at least they did in the beginning. Everyone I am sure has had one of these.

They showed up for work everyday, and on time.

They took their breaks on time and got back on time.

They worked hard and stayed productive all day.

The amount of work and quality of work was outstanding.

They took care of the equipment they used and when they were done with it they would clean it and put it away properly.

If you gave them instructions you could almost take it to the bank that they would get it done correctly.

They voluntarily went out of their way to do extra things when they were caught up.

Now all of that sounds great doesn't it? I can hear you saying now, so what's the problem?

Many times when we get an employee like this we bend over backwards to give them whatever they need to keep them going in the same direction.

Do we give them too much power?

We may begin to over look other issues like how they may address some of their coworkers.

Maybe some little side comments they make to outside customers.

We may in a covert way turn over some power to them, by continually reinforcing how good they are. They translate that into, I'm so good that they can't do without me!

They catch a little break here and a little break there and before you know it you have a problem on your hands.

Here is how I can put it into perspective.

You have the perfect wife.

They show you all kinds of affection.

They are great at taking care of the house.

They are a great cook.

They are a great Mom.

They always look their best.

They support you in all things.

On, and on, and on! You get it! They are the perfect wife! The wife that everyone dreams of having!

They only have one little flaw. They like to date other Men!

Did I say little flaw?

Sometimes, we have to put things into perspective and realize that there are certain things that are deal breakers, whether in a marriage or as an employer.

Well this employee was the perfect employee except they crossed the line and it became a deal breaker.

In this particular case the employee was found to have been intoxicated at work. It wasn't over the legal limit but still intoxicated! They became so comfortable with the idea that they could not be replaced that they crossed way over the line.

It was a deal breaker!

We soon found out that the organization did not collapse after they were gone.

As a matter of fact after they were gone we found out that they had been making all kinds of remarks and being abusive to other employees.

These employees felt as though we wouldn't listen to them because the offending employee was so highly regarded.

Point is to be careful how you treat people. Everyone is watching. Don't, in an indirect way give to much power to someone.

That is not to say that you should not praise when praise is called for. Just see the picture clearly.

Don't create the perfect wife, where her only problem is that she likes to date other Men!

# THE UNREASONABLE REQUEST

Everything was going along fine one day when the Senior Vice President came in to my office and asked me to send out a message that he wanted all salaried employees to put in a minimum of a fifty hour week.

At the time I was his Human Resources Director. Now I understood that a fifty hour week was pretty routine and in most cases managers put in more hours than that.

But, the request totally caught me off guard. He had always been a reasonable person in the past. He generally never shot from the hip on anything. As a matter of fact in most cases he over thought things.

With that in mind I knew something had to be up.

He was almost angry when he said it. He followed up with telling me that while he was working his way up through the ranks it was always expected for salaried employees to put in a minimum of a fifty hour week.

I listened very attentively while he expressed himself.

When he was finally finished, I said that I agreed that there was an expectation for salaried employees to put in long hours. I told him there is no question that managing an operation takes hard work and long hours.

I wanted to get deeper into his reasoning so I began asking questions.

I knew it was more than just wanting to see managers (salaried employees) putting in long days, just because he had to when he was a unit manager. What was really bugging him .. I asked the question bluntly but politely, "What is not getting accomplished now?"

He hesitated a little and then started to answer but stopped. You could see he was trying to justify his demand.

Seeing that he was frustrated with the question I decided that I would carry my question a little further. I went on to tell him that anybody can look busy for ten hours a day, and still not accomplish a thing.

I told him there are some managers that can get ten hours of work done in six or less, and others that take twelve to fourteen hours to accomplish the same thing. Some may never accomplish it.

I asked him if it would be a better idea to reinforce his clearly defined expectations with his District Managers, so that they could carry those out with their unit managers.

I could see him thinking now.

I continued with letting him know that if the unit managers have clear expectations of what your goals are, then if they don't meet them we can take action. That action may be training, support, or worst case discipline.

Point is that we are looking for results not time.

He shook his head acknowledging that I was correct. He thanked me for challenging him on this request.

The point of this story is that senior leadership sometimes needs to be asked the tough questions to flush out what is really motivating them.

Good leadership skills will enable or equip you to be able to do this without offending them. I have always been very successful asking questions, instead of stating a position.

A question is less confrontational. I may start out the question by saying something like, "Let me play devils advocate for just a minute ... " Then I would ask the question.

This should be a standard routine process especially when changing or implementing policy that has a large impact.

If I would not have challenged his demand and put out a policy making every manager work a minimum of a ten hour day, I can tell you that productivity would have gone down, not up.

He was letting his emotions drive his actions. I was there to help him see that in a respectful way.

## FIFTY YARDS

In 1975 during Marine Corps boot camp infantry training we had to experience a number of things including crawling about fifty yards through dirt and mud, under barbed wire while small explosions and machine gun fire was flying over our heads.

Now whether the blasts and machine gun fire were actually live rounds I don't know or care. What I do know is that the experience was as real as I can imagine. My adrenaline was sure flowing.

Now keep in mind that back in 1975 the Viet Nam War was just coming to an end.

War was a reality for all Marines like you just don't know. Our Drill Instructors all had been to War and knew the harsh realities of it. Their mission was to prepare us to survive it, and frankly they didn't care much of whether we agreed with their tactics or not.

Discipline and knowledge was a key to survival.

The discipline to except hardships like you never thought you could and work through them.

Not to give up no matter what the odds!

The only way to know if you have what it takes to survive is to have as much thrown at you as humanly possible. The reality is that until you are actually in combat you just won't know, but boot camp was the first step in that preparation.

Knowledge on the other hand must also be a huge part of the preparation as well. Knowing how to make it through the fifty yard course was just as important as the discipline to endure it.

Throughout boot camp both the training and discipline combined together, gave us the confidence to believe that nothing was impossible.

It was a slow and steady process that ended with transforming each of us that made it through into Marines. Again, each one of my Drill Instructors cared about one thing and one thing only. That was to do their very best to give us every advantage possible to make it through combat.

If that meant that some would not make it! Then so be it! They didn't care about our feelings. They didn't care about our physical pain! They didn't care about whether we liked them! They didn't care about whether we were comfortable! They cared about one thing as I stated before. Making sure they did everything possible to help us to survive combat.

I believe the thing that separates Marines from any other foreign fighting force in the world is the combination of discipline and knowledge which equals confidence.

When a Marine hits the beach the enemy knows that it will be up against a force that has one goal in mind. To destroy the enemy! To accomplish its mission! It will do this in either a systematic way or ad hoc. What ever is necessary! They will not stop! They will not quit! They will accomplish their mission!

Before entering the course we had received instruction on how to get through it successfully.

If my memory serves me correctly the course was approximately fifty yards long. About every ten yards or so there was barbed wire that was at ground level forcing you to have to go under it. Around that were small circular shaped rock pits that had blasts going off throwing dirt into the air and the sound waves would rock you a little. Above your heads was machine gun fire.

The dirt was muddy and rough with rocks here and there. The sounds of the small explosions and machine gun fire were very realistic. We were doing the course at night which always makes everything a little more interesting.

The process to cross the obstacles was pretty basic. There were a couple of ways you could move across until you reached the barbed wire.

You would layout on your stomach with your arms out in front of you with one hand grasping the other. Your rifle would lie across your arms where your elbows were. So you would be edging forward dragging your stomach and legs pulling and pushing yourself with your feet, knees and elbows making sure you stayed as low as possible.

Utilizing this method would keep your rifle as clean as possible. Remember your rifle in combat is one of the most important tools you have. So no matter how dirty, cut up, scratched, or hurt you get your rifle must go unharmed. Without it your life may be over anyway.

Keeping it out of the dirt may keep it from jamming. It was drilled into our heads that your rifle was a part of you. You take care of it and it will take care of you.

Everyone has heard people say that they could take apart their rifle and put it back together with their eyes closed. It is true. I knew every part of my rifle. From the firing pin to the stock it was all important. But none of it would matter if it got jammed when you needed it most.

As you crawled across the dirt making your way to the barbed wire it was a slow and steady process. We had full combat gear on including our metal helmets. You kept your head down and turned sideways, occasionally switching sides and glancing forward.

Once at the barbed wire you would roll over to your back placing your rifle with the barrel forward from your helmet to your feet. The barrel of the rifle would be just over the helmet and across your face and over your stomach. This was so that when you went under the barbed wire the rifle would protect your face from being cut up. You needed to make sure that your rifle was on safe and that the barbed wire didn't catch on something and damage it though. The last thing you wanted was for it to catch the trigger and fire off a round potentially injuring one of your own men.

As I inched my way across the course it was gratifying to know where I had started when I got to boot camp to where I was right then. It was somewhere right about now that I realized I was truly becoming a Marine. I was realizing why Marines were so respected by the enemy!

I had entered boot camp right along side men who were from the back streets of Chicago and New York. Most made it, but some did not. Tough can be measured in a number of ways. Mental and physical endurance is just one of them.

Now I knew that the small explosions were not going to hurt me if I remained low. I also knew deep down that the machine gun fire over our heads was not live fire but most likely only blanks. But the fact remains that I was making my way across a dirty muddy patch of ground filled with obstacles that I was able to overcome. It didn't matter if I crawled across bugs, spiders, stickers, rocks, or anything else. I knew I was getting to the other side. Nothing would stop me. Nothing would stop any of us.

I can't imagine being the enemy on the beach of Normandy, or any of the other many battle fields. As they would have thought their positions were safe and sound and that no one would have been able to penetrate them. They had their positions well dug out into the sides of mountains and hill sides. As they fired off rockets, bullets, and cannons, the Marines just kept on coming. The fear that must have over taken the enemy as they believed they were rock solid, but slowly the Marines inched their way forward. As the Marines drew closer and closer to them until it became hand to hand combat. By that time, the enemy was already mentally defeated.

My mental and physical attitude was being transformed into that very person that would not stop! That would not concede! That no longer knew what surrender meant! I now had a confidence that was developed from discipline and knowledge. A confidence whereby I would have gladly and proudly served along side those Marines that stormed the beaches.

I made it to the other side of that course that day over thirty-five years ago. There was no one on the other side congratulating us. There was no one throwing us a party. The Drill Instructors were still the mean Sons of Bitches that they were before! But I am glad they were!

Their job was to save our lives!

Moment by moment!

Hour by Hour!

Day by Day they had did just that! Saved our lives by putting us through literal hell!

I wouldn't trade the experience for a million dollars. Only those that make it can ever know!

# THE GAS CHAMBER

## MARINE CORPS STYLE

Until you have experienced the gas chamber, Marine Corps style, you just can imagine the immediate impact it can have on you.

One of the many difficult experiences I endured during Marine Corps boot camp was the gas chamber.

Certainly prior to going into it I was very apprehensive from stories I had heard prior to ever arriving at boot camp. So when the day came that I knew we were going to be going into it, I was nervous.

You may be asking yourself what the heck is the gas chamber and why does anyone go into on purpose. Now we are not talking about the gas chamber that they used for putting people to death.

So picture in your mind a gray metal Quonset hut in the middle of a wooded area. The roof started at the ground and went up and over to the other side in a half circle so that the roof was also the walls and the ceiling both. This particular Quonset hut was shorter with a door at both sides of the front and back where it was flat. It did not have any windows.

The gas they used was a tear gas designed to make you want to get out of it as soon as humanly possible. A popular time to use it would be in a riot where once deployed the rioters would want to get away quickly. Another time it was often used is for driving out someone barricaded in a building that you wanted out. Once the tear gas was set off inside the building the barricaded individual would want to exit immediately.

Why in the world would the Marine Corps ever want us to experience tear gas?

Was this just another way to drive us to the brink of giving up?

What could possibly be the purpose?

It was just like everything else we did. If you did not experience it how in the world could you possibly know what to expect. It was also a way to understand that our gas masks did work and would provide us with protection if worn properly.

Without putting us through an actual test of using the gas mask, it could not possibly give us the confidence on knowing how effective they are.

The time goal for putting on your gas mask was eight seconds or less. That meant from the time you received the word to put it on, it was on. It was referred to as donning and clearing your mask. Donning only meant to put it on. Clearing meant that you would hold the palms of your hand over the intake filters and blow out. This would help you to determine if it was on tightly and sealed.

Think of the time a bull rider needs to stay on the bull in order to receive a score. Yes eight seconds. If you weren't still on the bull when the buzzer went off after eight seconds, you knew you were not going to win.

You may in fact be scrambling for dear life as the bull is trying it's best to kill you.

Well putting on your gas mask in eight seconds just may in fact save your life, or take it if you are not fast enough. Now there was nothing magical about eight seconds other than the idea was to do it quickly, but correctly.

Bottom line was that even if you had it on in one second, but didn't have it on right. The result would be the same as if it had taken you two months to put it on.

So to put it lightly knowing how to put on your gas mask was as important as knowing how to fire your weapon accurately. The only way to know if you actually could put it on correctly was to test it in a live exercise.

Well we were about to give it the test. Like it or not.

I guess if they would have taken a vote, my vote would have been to pass on the live exercise. For some reason they were not interested in the democratic way that day.

Now I was pretty sure they wouldn't kill any of us on purpose. Although I was beginning to wonder!

So there I was standing with my squad as the squad leader. We unfortunately were not the first ones to go in. We were the fourth squad so in essences we would be the last ones. What this meant was we had to witness them coming out of the gas chamber.

Kind of like riding the next bull after you just saw the rider before get trampled to death by the bull.

As they exited out of the back door of the gas chamber they looked like death warmed over. Their noses were dripping out gobs and gobs of running snot. They were acting as if their eyes were on fire. They were flinging their arms around like mad men. The looks on their faces told you that they were in great misery. If you could draw up a picture of someone that was insane and ghoulish looking this would be the perfect one. Each one of them was a picture of pain and horror without their gas masks on.

As each group came out, the next group had to go in with their gas masks on.

Now I must tell you it was a hard thing to do when they finally called us into the gas chamber. Now as the squad leader I had to lead by example and I didn't want my example to be seen as running for my life trying to get away while they tackled me from behind. So I sucked it up and went into the building showing great courage. All the while I was thinking are you completely insane?

We had our gas masks on as we entered into the building. It was dimly lit and still smoky from the last group that had just finished up. I could immediately tell my gas mask was working since I didn't smell or feel any different yet. We had long sleeve green uniforms on so I didn't feel anything different yet on my skin.

My first impression was the unbelievable heat. We were in a metal building in the middle of summer in Camp Pendleton, California. On top of that they were setting off tear gas in this building. It was hot.

They had us all get into the building and then they closed the door. They then gave us some instructions. They told us when they give us the command to remove our gas masks we are to do so immediately. After removing them we are to take in a deep breath. After that we were to begin calling out our general orders or our rifle serial number.

I was beginning to get nervous but I was going to do this.

They set off another canister of tear gas. The room became very clouded from the tear gas mist in the air.

They then gave us the command to remove our mask and to take a deep breath.

I removed my mask immediately and the impact of the tear gas was over whelming. You almost could not function at all. The snot began running out of my nose. I could not stop from coughing. My eyes began burning. I tried to spit out my rifle serial number but honestly the only thing I could concentrate on was trying to survive.

It seemed like hours but it was only about a minute before they let us out. Just like all the others that exited the building we had the same reactions. I couldn't believe what had just happened. I had gone through the gas chamber and I was still alive, maybe!

I was happy that I was out but the burning and pain continued on for several minutes afterwards. We were allowed to rinse our eyes and face off which was a tremendous relief.

When I think back I still remember the experience.

It was a valuable experience that I hope never to have to do again. But I wouldn't want to change what happened. It did show me that my mask worked and the difference it could make if I had not put it on correctly in a real situation.

That's the way you build confidence. I now had the confidence if I was to ever need to put my mask on in a real situation. That confidence may save my life some day.

It also taught me to face my fears. But more than just face them I learned to conquer them one step at a time.

# **AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COAST RIDE**

## **RAISING A CHILD WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES**

If anyone has every raised a child with mental disabilities they will understand the emotional roller coaster ride that your entire family gets on.

Our twenty year old son, who we love dearly, was diagnosed early in his life with a number of mental disabilities. Just to name a few he is bio-polar, schizophrenic, and ADHD.

We took him into our home at three months old as a foster child. He had been born addicted to cocaine because his mother was a regular user. It took him those first three months to withdraw from his addiction.

People say that drugs are a personal issue and we should let everyone make their own choices as to whether they want to use them or not. Those people that make that claim need to spend just one day in my son's life and just maybe they may have a different opinion.

We adopted our son not too long after his mother and father flaked completely out, which was no surprise of course. The two of them should be locked up for the crime they committed to my son. He is an amazing and intelligent individual that must now fight just to get through each day. Not physically, but mentally.

Society as a general rule struggles to understand the individuals that have a mental disability.

We immediately feel compassion for the disabled person in a wheel chair that can't walk, which we absolutely should.

We recognize and make accommodations for those that can't see or hear which again we absolutely should.

But when it comes to the mentally disabled we want to close our eyes and try to forget about them. Especially, someone with a disability that struggles to be able to handle the normal activities of daily life! Someone that appears on the outside to be normal by society's standards, but is not!

People will accuse him of putting on an act! People will accuse him of being lazy! People will accuse him of acting weird! People will get angry with him for talking or laughing at nothing! They will make fun of him at every opportunity they get! He has no friends that want to be around him! He can't hold a job!

When we ask for help from mental health professionals their advice is to put him out on the street! They tell us that it will help him to realize he needs to be productive.

I suppose we could give the same advice to a quadriplegic. We could tell them that they need to stop sitting around all day and get out of their chair and be productive. Of course we would never do that!

Now I am not advocating that we should just cuddle them and give them everything they want without allowing them to give back in some way.

Our problem with our son is that he needs medication! Serious medication!

I can hear most of you saying now, then give him the medication he needs!

Not quite that easy!

Our society, and rightfully so, has determined that once an individual is over the age of eighteen, they are able to make their own medical decisions.

You see, my wife and I lost our ability to determine our son's medical needs when he turned eighteen. From about the age of eighteen and a half or so, our son decided he did not need his medication any longer.

Since that time he has slid so far down hill that we hardly know who he is anymore.

He needs to be placed into a mental institution and be completely evaluated and placed back on the right medications.

The mental health professionals say that unless he is a danger to himself or others they are not permitted to interfere.

I understand the law and why it is in place, but I will tell you that it is not working in his case.

We come back to the idea that we were told to just kick him out of our house. He will then realize that he needs help!

His mental capacity is not that of a normal twenty year old. He is living in the moment. If he were to be placed out in the street he would not survive. Just as if you placed a 5th or 6th grader out into the street.

God tells us that He will not give us more than we are able to handle. That is the only thing we can hold on to for now.

We have tried tough love. We did kick him out twice and he slept in his wrecked car both nights that sits out in front of our house. We tried dropping him off at our local mission and he walks back home.

He is an amazing young man that we see slipping away day by day. He sees things that are not there. He talks to people that don't exist. He laughs almost constantly at nothing. When his brother asks him, he tells him that he is talking with a ghost.

This is the one thing in my life that I have not been able to figure out!

I know that God is going to deliver the answer to this problem with our son.

We must trust that to be true.

He is currently undergoing treatment in a mental health facility. I will tell the story of how this came about in a future release. It took an unbelievable set of circumstances that I believe came from God to make this happen. It is saving his life.

## FIRE WATCH

Fire watch was a necessary evil not only during Marine Corps boot camp, but even after as well.

During boot camp it meant that my sleep was going to be interrupted. And I must tell you that sleep was the only time you could really truly escape from the realities of boot camp.

So anytime they spoke of me being assigned to fire watch it was always a little bit of a downer. Of course I spent numerous times on fire watch throughout the thirteen weeks I was there.

So you may be asking what in the world is fire watch anyway.

Fire watch was a form of guard duty. When you were assigned to it at night it generally meant you spent two hours roaming through the barracks while everyone else slept. Your main mission was to make sure that if there was a fire or any other danger you were the first line of defense or a human alarm. In combat it meant that you watched for the enemy. You were the difference between life and death while your fellow Marines caught a few hours of sleep!

During boot camp we never carried a live weapon. When I refer to a live weapon I mean one that we were supplied ammunition for.

One of the things I remember most about fire watch was the time I had to think.

When we were at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego the barracks was just a short way from the San Diego Air Port.

This offered a very small amount of entertainment during the night. I loved watching the jets take off and land even though they were limited late in the evening or early morning.

Growing up my dad would take us to McDonald's and then by the Denver International Air Port and watch the planes take off and land. This was during the 60's when a person could park close to the air port without any problems. If you were to do that today they may think that you were a terrorist.

McDonald's was an absolute treat as well as watching the airplanes.

So when I would have time in the middle of the night to watch the planes take off and land it brought just a bit of comfort to me. For a brief moment I was able to travel back to a time when my major responsibility was to be a kid.

I would imagine where the passengers were going on that plane. Were they even aware of people like me and my fellow recruits. If they were aware, did they even care? I suppose not! I wouldn't have.

There were times that I had felt like I had never been anywhere else, nor would I ever be able to leave this place. Although I had never been in prison, I could only imagine that the feeling was about the same.

Because I was only seventeen at the time and still a virgin, my dreams involved things like ice cream and cookies. Not primarily girls! When I left for boot camp I did not have a girl friend. It was better that way. If I would have it would have only distracted me from concentrating on the day to day challenges.

Back to my duties as fire watch!

Some of the other ways I would occupy my time would be to count the number of steps each time I circled around the entire barracks. I would change up and go the other way and count again. I would try to take the same size step each time. It rarely ever equaled the same amount.

I would circle around the inside of the barracks countless times in a two hour period. I knew how many rifles were on each rifle rack. I tugged the paddle lock securing them every time I passed. I probably would have collapsed to the ground in utter fear if I would have ever tugged on it and it came open, especially if I had already been on duty for awhile.

Why because I would have to wake up the Drill Instructor and explain why I had just found it open. The impression they would have been left with is that I had not been doing my job. I did not want to find out what the consequences of that would have been.

Now I know that this was a distraction from what I was really supposed to be doing but, give me a break. Was there any true real clear and present danger? Not!

All I wanted to do was get my two hour shift over with and get back to sleep.

In a real situation, if I was patrolling the area I would never take the same route twice. Neither would I be as side tracked with other thoughts. I would also be aware of the surroundings, and how I would protect myself.

But this was not the case. My biggest fear was that the Drill Instructor would wake up and want something. Thank God that never happened while I was on fire watch.

One Drill Instructor was always assigned to stay the night in the barracks with us. Of course they were in a separate room with better accommodations. No matter

when we saw a Drill Instructor they always looked perfect. Their uniform always looked perfectly pressed. Their campaign cover looked brand new and sat on their head like it was attached. Whether they were wearing boots or shoes they shined like mirrors.

Finally my two hour shift would come to an end and I would be able to crawl back into my bunk and get a couple more hours of sleep. Hoping to have a dream that would take me from this place for just a couple of short hours!

# DELEGATING

My children often tell me that my job is simple because all I have to do is sit around all day and tell people what to do!

To someone that has never been in a leadership role I am sure this is the way they see it.

They also see it as an easy way to make a living. It may not be easy, but it sure can be enjoyable way to make a living. After all I have been doing it for over thirty years and I wouldn't want to do anything else.

Knowing the proper way to delegate any type of work definitely requires leadership skills.

Why?

Because there is a right and wrong way to do it!

I was speaking to a young friend a few years ago that worked for another company about delegation. He was almost bragging to me about how he had his staff on their hands and knees scrubbing the floors. He was proud of the fact he could control them. When he told me I thought to myself what a fool! First of all, this was not delegation. It wasn't too long after that he was out of a job and he deserved it.

Like I said, there is a right and wrong way to delegate work.

One of the first requirements is that you must make sure that the work is something that can be delegated. As a general rule you can not delegate your responsibility. But do not misunderstand that to mean that the person would not be responsible for what they are asked to do. It would just mean that you too, would ultimately be responsible.

As a general example, if you were the CEO of a company, and you delegated the financial reports to your senior accountant and they reported incorrectly you would still be responsible for the results. Now that doesn't mean you wouldn't hold the accountant responsible also, but ultimately you as the CEO would be held accountable.

There may be some exceptions to this, but as a general rule you can not delegate responsibility.

Knowing how to delegate is a skill that I have gotten very good at. Just like any good leader, creating a reason for the person you are delegating a task to is a key part of the process.

I always try my best to help the person completely understand what needs to be accomplished and why. The why is extremely important! I believe the why helps with motivating your employee.

Here is an exaggerated example. A community just experienced a very large earthquake and you are responsible for two teams of rescue workers. You are only able to go with one team and need to send the other team in a different direction, because you have received two extremely important rescue calls. The call you decide to send them on is a collapsed building with people inside. So you delegate the senior person with leading this team.

One way of course is to just give them the basic details and send them along their way.

A better way would be to give them the details that you know and why it is important to get the job done right. So the details might be that the building had a day care center on the first floor with approximately thirty children still trapped in the rubble. It is a six floor office building that works with young teenage parents on life skills. To your knowledge there are an additional eighty people still unaccounted for.

This most likely will increase their motivation, but in addition it helps them understand the urgency of the situation.

Now let talk about some of the details of delegation.

When you are delegating a task to someone make sure you give them the general details of what you want done, and any guidelines that they must stay within. Do not give them step by step instructions! That isn't delegating. That isn't anything more than directing work.

The last thing you want to do is to just give a list of things to do to someone. Again, that is not delegating.

Give general instructions as to what needs to be accomplished, such as, we need to relocate all of the occupants in that building to somewhere else while they are doing renovations. Give them some time tables, the why, general guidelines as to what the employees may need at the temporary site, such as computers and Internet, desks, budget information, etc.

With an assignment like this you can check back in with them for a variety of things. One of which might be to review the plan as they are going along to make sure the time tables are being met. But, don't forget that you have released this to them to accomplish. Do not become involved unless you take it back away from them, or they ask for your input.

If you do take it away from them, it should only be because they are failing. Otherwise you risk damaging the relationship with them.

Do not micro manage this or any project. You pay your employees to do a job. Let them do it! The more comfortable you are at knowing how to delegate the more comfortable you will be with releasing tasks to individuals. After a few times of delegating you will be able to fully release a project to them, with less and less oversight.

So here is an example of how to delegate!

Currently we are experiencing a huge rise in utility costs over the last two months and we need to see if we can pin point any problems with our heating and cooling system. Please analyze the entire system and let me know what course of action you recommend. If you need anything to assist you in the process, such as technical help from a vendor, feel free to contact them and get them involved. Just let me know what that will cost first so that I can budget for it. I would like to see this accomplished within the next thirty days so we can hopefully begin to see a reduction in our utility costs. Let me know by the end of the week what direction you are planning to go in.