

The Josiah Project
Needful Ministries: Reaching Out to the Soldier

We are in the phase of the Josiah Project that is designed to make a difference in a dying society. Just as Josiah mad a difference that delayed the destruction of his nation, so too can we be the salt and light for our generation unto preservation. We as a church must have needful ministries to make a difference not only for the culture outside the church, but also that which is inside the church.

A Simple Fact: There has, is and always will be war on the planet earth. As long as there are nations with people, there will be armies providing defense. There is no getting around this. *Eccl 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.*

Some factors that make a military a good ministry:

1) Soldiers understand submission to authority.

There was a military leader that encountered Jesus one day near the town of small town called Capernaum. He had a paralyzed servant at his residence that needed healing from Jesus. In this account the Centurion mentioned something to Jesus in Matt 8:9 that will be our first point of reference. *"For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does {it} "* He exposes a fact that all military forces everywhere must accept, submission to authority.

The reason I am emphasizing this for a ministry that reaches out to the military is because respect for authority is deeply part of the soldier's life, just like in Christianity.

Christ received all authority following His resurrection:

- Matt 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
- Eph 1:20-21 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly {places} 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

Elders have authority to lead the church family:

- 1 Pet 5:5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders, and submit {to them} for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Younger Christians are to yield to the older more matured.

- Titus 2:3-4 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

The Josiah Project
Needful Ministries: Reaching Out to the Soldier

- 1 Tim 5:1-2 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but {rather} appeal to {him} as a father, {to} the younger men as brothers, 2 the older women as mothers, {and} the younger women as sisters, in all purity.
- Lev 19:32 'You shall rise up before the grayheaded, and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.

Often times it is difficult for a rebellious soul dismissive of authority to desire this type of structure in the church. With soldiers there is typically less of an obstacle to remove concerning this.

2) Soldiers are typically not appreciated for what they go through.

In Matt 28:12-13 we find a revealing scene that was often rehearsed in the ancient cultures. *And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'* The guards that were to keep someone from stealing the body of Jesus were bought off by the Jewish leadership. Why? It was typically because they were not paid well in consideration to their service.

Often the military would use this as a reason to exploit the Empire. It was so common in that day that it invoked the following dialogue with some soldiers and John the baptist. *Luke 3:14 And {some} soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And {what about} us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse {anyone} falsely, and be content with your wages."*

In light of this, how much more receptive do you think they might be if we took the time to let them know of our appreciation of this service? How receptive do you think a military family might appreciate it if we are actively praying for and being a friend to them?

3) Soldiers tend to hold a religious worldview.

The nature of the soldier is danger and because of this there are "No Atheist in Foxholes!" They are more likely facing a deadly situation that exposes them to peril, for that is the title of their job. The fragility of life and the implications thereof are before their hearts and minds sometimes on a daily basis.

- It is with this thought in mind that Paul spoke *2 Tim 2:3 Suffer hardship with {me,} as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*
- It is with the loss of Jonathon that the soldier David sang in *2 Sam 1:25-27 "How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places. 26 "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women. 27 "How have the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"*
- It is with that thought in mind that General Joshua deeply hurt at the loss of life at the battle of Ai. *Josh 7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his*

The Josiah Project
Needful Ministries: Reaching Out to the Soldier

face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, {both} he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

The love of Christ must be able to permeate the front lines of Camp Hill, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, the US, Baghdad and even Afghanistan. It is our calling as a Christian to seek out and find future soldiers of Christ. It is more than likely near or on their mind and we must be willing to move on this.

Cornelius the Centurion (Acts chapters 10 and 11)

There once was a military commander from a city named Caesarea. His name was Cornelius and he was a devout man, one who feared God, gave much and prayed continually. Being of the Italian cohort reveals that he lived a life of discipline and had seen much as a soldier. He had yet to convert to Christianity, being only at best a devout admirer of the Jewish faith. That all changed when a man named Peter reached out to him with the message of salvation as God-ordained. Cornelius did not delay in his response to the message of the gospel and was baptized into Christ, both he and his household.

4) Soldiers generally are of a disciplined nature.

From the moment that they are recruited, through the experience of Basic Training and AIT, on the mission field and sometimes even through the civilian life that follows, the soldier understands discipline better than any other group outside of the church. In fact it was common in the Bible to parallel the discipline of a Christian to that of a soldier.

- 2 Tim 2:4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.
- 1 Pet 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.
- 2 Cor 10:3-4 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

When we are reaching out to the soldier, we are extending ourselves to a person that typically will understand the discipline of Christ with a good respect for what the Bible says.

5) Soldiers are sometimes hurting for fellowship.

The battlefield can be one of the loneliest places on the earth because the people that you love the most are thousands of miles away. A young man fresh out of high school more than not misses his family and friends with a broken heart as the compassion of a drill sergeant is demonstrated in the platoon. Christians and potential future Christians must know that we care about them.

Jesse ministered to his sons on the frontline of the battle with the Philistines.

1 Sam 17:17-19 Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers. 18 "Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of {their} thousand, and look into the

The Josiah Project
Needful Ministries: Reaching Out to the Soldier

welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them. 19 "For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines."

Soldiers are often gone for a very long time and in a strange land. We can do something about it and it will not go unrewarded or unappreciated.

A Five Minute Testimony from Keith Brannon, Adam Hamilton and Chris Lampson

An Example of a Good Ministry to the Military

Many years ago there was a missionary that started a ministry that reached out to the military. It was kind of rough at first, but through consistent teaching and patience, it soon had taken off and there were many new converts of soldiers that filled the congregation. Because they were already appreciative of authority, it was not long until elders were installed and were functioning well as a church family.

These soldiers, including the retired ones with pensions, were very generous givers and absolutely loved the Lord. Many times they would take up special collections for the planting of other congregations in the neighboring areas. There was a time when the same missionary ventured into a foreign work and landed in some legal trouble for spreading the gospel in a hostile country. Can you believe that these converted roughnecks stood firmly by their comrade in Christ? They were so convicted with the gospel that they actually took up a collection and provided for all his needs until the legal issues were resolved. There was so much love showed by this military congregation that the soldiers that guarded the missionary's cell stated to convert and spread the gospel to their ranks.

From then on the missionary called them by endearing military names like "Comrades" and "Fellow-Soldiers" for the cause of Christ. This military mission work became one of the greatest success stories in the churches of Christ.

You can read more about this great work in the Book of Philippians.

Paul was that missionary and Philippi was a colony established for retired military soldiers. He took the gospel to them and they were receptive from the very beginning. As Paul worked his way down the Greek peninsula, the Philippians were more than willing to support his labors. When he was arrested and sent for trial to Rome, they sent Epaphroditus with a love offering that was "more than enough" for his need. While he was chained under house arrest, the gospel became well-known "throughout the whole Praetorian Guard" of Caesar so much so that some of his own house sent their greetings back to the Philippians. This all started with the military ministry that could not be overlooked even from the infancy of the church. Indeed they were "True Comrades" and "Fellow Soldiers" as mentioned.

- 1) Internet-based Worship
- 2) Care packages and cards of encouragement
- 3) Continuous Prayer
- 4) Extension of other ministries for family members left behind.