

BIBLICAL SERVICE

A course of group or individual Bible studies
for military personnel

Leader's Edition

First published - 2012 by MMI

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PREFACE

Leader's Edition

I About this course

A. The Objectives of this course are to:

- i. Affirm faith
- ii. Equip - 2 Tim 3:15-17
- iii. Encourage students by:
 1. Inspiring confidence in their faith even when called to carry arms.
 2. Inspiring service to their commanders and country as they would serve Christ.
- iv. Inspire lives that act as salt and light amongst their peers
- v. Engender an example of Christ's love and mercy to others

B. This course will help students find passages in the Bible that are relevant to their profession. 2 Tim 3:16-17.

C. This course is intended as a starting point for further exploration of Scripture.

II How to complete the course

- A. The course can be completed at the group's chosen pace. The course is divided into two parts. You may wish to do only Part One or both parts. Part Two should not be completed without completing Part One first.
- B. Encourage the students to read the Bible passages prayerfully and seek the Holy Spirit's help in understanding. They should also read the verses before and after the passage - this helps set the passage in its context and aids understanding.
- C. As they read the passages, they should ask the questions - What does the text say? What does the text mean? (Using notes sections to record.) What does this passage require of me? (Using personal response section to record.)
- D. Students should be encouraged to study the module before the group meeting and make notes for discussion, restricting their ideas to the passages in question.
- E. When the group meets together to discuss the results of the study use this Leader's Guide to help if necessary, but encourage the students to share their findings.
- F. Encourage the students to record their responses in the response sections at the end of each module and both parts of the course, noting what they believe God's Word has said to them.
- G. Please use the Course Critique to record your suggestions for further developing this course.

III What books do students need?

- A. A Bible in their own language.
- B. The course anticipates the guidance of the Holy Spirit and fellow Christians or chaplains/local clergy (John 14:26). Some Bibles have cross-reference systems to help understanding.
- C. A concordance will help them find passages in the Bible from the words they remember.
- D. Commentaries sometimes help in understanding difficult passages, but encourage students to use several to explore different interpretations or perspectives.

IV Prayer

Encourage students to:

- A. Pray before they read.
- B. Stop and pray if they hit a problem.
- C. Pray when they finish and ask God to help them obey His Word.

“Heavenly Father, thank You that Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ is Your Word made flesh. Please help me to understand by Your Holy Spirit what You expect of me and to live my life in obedience to Your Word which brings life to me through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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PART ONE

IN CHRIST

The Bible, particularly the prophet Isaiah, the gospels and letters of Paul, talks of an intimate relationship of being 'in' God and 'in' Christ. This module looks at this relationship, how it is lived out in daily life and what is the hope for the future.

1. What kind of relationship can I have with God?

Think about your relationships with your family, friends and military colleagues. How do they differ? Then think about your relationship with God. What is the basis for our relationship with God?

Read:

- a. Luke 11:2
- b. Ps 23:1
- c. 1 John 4:7-12

Notes:

- a. Discuss the relationship described when we call God "Our Father".
- b. Explore the idea conveyed of God as our shepherd, not remote and inaccessible, but approachable, with the possibility of a personal relationship with Him. Explore the rest of the Psalm with this in mind.
- c. How is the word 'love' understood? It is very dominant here, and its meaning is demonstrated in 1 John 4:10-11.

2. How do we enter into a relationship with God?

In other words "What is a Christian?" Some people might believe they are Christian because their father or mother is a Christian, some might believe they are Christian because they were born into a Christian country, area or social group. Look at these Bible references to understand how the Bible explains what it is to have a relationship with God. i.e. to be 'In Christ'.

Read:

- a. John 1:12-13
- b. John 3:3
- c. John 3:14-17
- d. Rom 3:21-24
- e. Acts 19:4-6

Notes:

- a. This passage links belief to the right to become a child of God. Note especially those things that do not make us children of God!
- b. 'New birth' is required to see the Kingdom of God. Discuss what being born again might entail.
- c. It will really help to understand that it is not possible for us to 'earn' a relationship with God. Rather, it is God who reaches down to us with love and forgiveness so that we can be 'in' Him.
- d. Explore the meaning of 'sin' and how it blocks our relationship to God, and that God has dealt with our sin.
- e. Explore the symbolism of washing and cleansing in your culture. How does that help us understand the deep significance of being "baptised 'into' the name of Christ"?

3. How do we live a Christian life?

Our lives tend to be motivated by ambition and achievement. Action and activity look for results and rewards. The relationship with our friends and colleagues is probably in some way based on merit. Is the Christian life similar or different, and how should we live it in this world?

Read:

- a. Eph 2:6-7
- b. Phil 4:4-9
- c. Is 40:28-31
- d. Eph 6:10-18
- e. John 16:33

Notes:

- a. Think how, when we recognise our place sat next to Christ Jesus, we can see all He has done for us. The Christian life starts from the sitting position - Ps 46:10. Is being 'still' an order?
- b. Paul talks about prayer and thinking about the truth. Discuss how prayer and reading God's word might help disciples to be built up in the faith.
- c. Note that it is 'in' God that we draw our strength. Discuss how we can learn to be 'in' God.
- d. Note particularly v10 "be strong 'in' the Lord" and v18 "pray 'in' the Spirit." As military people we have to train to use our physical weapons at any time and place. How should we train to use these spiritual weapons and armour with even greater skill? (Note, there is a further study later in the course on this.)
- e. Our lives can be full of conflict, but there is peace available. What is the value of being 'in' Christ? What does Jesus mean when He says 'I have overcome the world'? How has Jesus Christ's victory on the cross enabled us to overcome the world?

4. What is our relationship to others?

Our relationship with other people is important. What is a sign of the Kingdom of God? In whom is our unity to be found?

Read:

- a. Luke 10:27
- b. John 17:20-23
- c. Gal 3:26-29

Notes:

- a. Explore how Jesus sees the importance of our love for one another. For Jesus the 'other' is any person – even a Samaritan! (The man to whom Jesus was talking, a Jew, regarded the Samaritans as second class citizens, and not worthy of their consideration.)
- b. Jesus' prayer for our unity shows how important it is for Christians to 'be' one. How is this expressed? – in working together? And, when Christians are unified, what is the outcome (v23)?
- c. Paul makes a striking claim about our relationships with other Christians particularly to people of other churches and nationalities. Discuss how important being 'in' Christ is to our unity with other Christians.

5. What is our 'hope' for the future?

Paul claims that 'in' Christ we shall all be made alive. How does this give us hope for the future? Does this hope help us live out our Christian life?

Read :

- a. 1 Cor 15:20-22
- b. Phil 3:10-11

Notes :

- a. 1 Cor 15:14 says that, if Christ was not raised from the dead, our faith is in vain. Talk about the importance of Jesus' resurrection in helping His followers to live out a Christian life.
- b. How was Christ's resurrection helpful to Paul in living out his faith 'in' Christ? What was Paul's hope and expectation?

PRAYER

Prayer is our natural communication, expressing our relationship with, and dependence on, our Heavenly Father. He speaks to us in many ways, but particularly through His Word. We respond through prayer. This module is very basic - there are many books on this subject.

1. How should we pray?

The disciples asked Jesus this very question.

Read :

- a. Eph 3:12
- b. Matt 6:6-15
- c. Rom 8:26, 27
- d. Heb 7:25
- e. John 17:9

Notes :

- a. We approach God in prayer through (because of) the work of Christ in reconciling us to God - i.e. on the basis of Christ's righteousness. (In Isaiah 64:6, our supposed holiness or merit is described as filthy rags!)
- b. In some churches this prayer is said by all in unison. Others regard the prayer as a model on which to base their prayer - i.e. praise and adoration vv9, 10; supplication for others and self v11; confession v12; protection v13. Some use the acronym 'ACTS' (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) to structure their devotion.
- c. Even if we don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede for us.
- d. Jesus is also praying for us.

2. Why do we pray?

Here are just a few verses that each illustrate a particular reason to pray - there are many more you will notice as you study the Bible.

Read :

- a. Luke 22:46
- b. Acts 4:24
- c. Acts 6.6
- d. Acts 7:59
- e. Acts 8:22
- f. Acts 12:5
- g. Col 1:9-14,
Eph 3:14-21
- h. Eph 1:18

Notes :

- a. For strength to obey God
- b. In praise and supplication
- c. For wisdom and guidance
- d. Facing death
- e. For forgiveness
- f. For those in danger
- g. For the spiritual growth of others
- h. For the knowledge and understanding of those we minister to.

3. When do we pray?

These verses illustrate that prayer should be our natural desire and response in any situation.

Read :

- a. Eph 1:14-16
- b. Eph 6:18
- c. Phil 1:3
- d. Jas 5:13-16

Notes :

- a. Constant prayer for the saints (the fellowship of believers).
- b. On ALL occasions with ALL kinds of prayers for ALL the saints.
- c. Every time our brothers and sisters in Christ come to our mind.
- d. Happy or sad, sick or tempted or fallen!

4. Where do we pray?

As before, these are just a few verses to illustrate the circumstances of prayer - there are so many more!

Read :

- a. Eph 3:14
- b. Matt 6:5,6.
- c. Acts 1:14,
Acts 2:42
- d. Neh 2:4

Notes :

- a. On your knees before the Father.
- b. In private.
- c. With the fellowship of believers.
- d. Even in the midst of a conversation!

5. Can we expect answers to prayer?

Does God answer prayer or are we talking to ourselves?

Read :

- a. Exod 32:11-14
- b. Gen 18:32
- c. Ezra 8:23
- d. 2 Cor 1:8-11
- e. Jas 5:15-17

Notes :

- a. Moses pleads for the Israelites and God accepts his plea.
- b. Abram pleads for the righteous of Sodom and God accepts his plea.
- c. God honours Ezra's request for protection after he had stated to the King that God would protect them.
- d. Prayer helped Paul and his companions to survive great hardship and danger.
- e. James testifies to the effectiveness of the prayer of a righteous man.

6. What if God does not seem to hear our prayer?

Sometimes we don't see any clear answer to our prayer.

Read:

- a. Jas 1:6-8
- b. Jas 4:2-4
- c. 1 Pet 3:7
- d. 1 Pet 3:12
- e. Matt 26:39
- f. Luke 18:1-8
- g. 2 Cor 12:7-9

Notes:

- a. One must ask in faith believing.
- b. Our motives must be pure.
- c. Our relationships must be sound.
- d. Our behaviour must be honouring to our Lord.
- e. Facing not only the agony of the crucifixion and the cruelty before it, but also about to experience separation from His Father (Matt 27:46), Jesus prays a very human prayer - but ends by praying that His Father's will should be done. In our prayers this should also be our desire.
- f. We must persist in prayer.
- g. A prayer may be answered in the negative, even after persistence.

7. Conversational prayer

This is a form of corporate (group) prayer.

Read :

- a. Matt 18:19-20
- b. 1 Cor 14:40

Notes :

- a. This passage says that where two or three gather in Christ's name, He will be with them. They need to be in agreement. Note: This promise of our Lord is at the end of a section on personal conflict.
- b. Also in the context of church worship (1 Cor 14), Paul emphasises that everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Conversational group prayer, which is taught at Military Christian Conferences, encourages each group member to pray for the agreed subject and allow others to have opportunity to take part by not monopolising the time.

There is so much more that could be said about prayer and you may know of Scriptural references that speak clearly on the above or other aspects of prayer. Please share these with your friends when you get together to discuss this module. The subject of prayer is infinite as it deals with the unfathomable depth of God's love for us and our relationship with such a loving Father. The last part of this module has just a few examples of prayer including that of our Lord after the last supper and before His crucifixion.

8. Examples of prayer

There are several prayers in Scripture that help us to understand the nature, purpose and need for this vital communication with our Father.

Read :

- a. John 17
- b. Eph 3:14-21
- c. Acts 4:23-31
- d. Ps 139, 140 etc.
- e. Jude 24-25

Notes :

- a. This most wonderful prayer by our Lord, just before he faced injustice, cruelty and an agonising death for us and in our place.
- b. A prayer by Paul, expressing his desire and love towards the church in Ephesus by asking God to fill them to the measure of all the fullness of God.
- c. A prayer of praise and thanksgiving by the believers on the release of Peter and John.
- d. Many Psalms are in the form of prayer and can be used as personal prayers as you get to know which Psalms are addressing situations that you are also dealing with.
- e. A prayer for you!

DUTY AND AUTHORITY

How should you behave towards those in authority over you, and also to those under your authority?

1. How do I behave towards those in authority over me?

Although these passages refer to slaves; they illustrate clearly the 'servant attitude' our Lord teaches us to have in our relations with others, both Christians and non-Christians. John 13:1-17.

Read :

- a. Eph 6:5-8
- b. 1 Tim 6:1-2
- c. 1 Pet 2: 18-23

"Obedience builds a strong organisation"
Anon

Notes :

- a. Some attitude problems – Our attitudes to those in authority should not be either subservient and 'boot licking', or arrogant or surly. It should not be one of doing the minimum to qualify as obedience. Service should not be motivated by fear of punishment but rather by joyful, willing obedience.
- b. This passage clearly applies both to unbelieving and believing masters as v.2 makes special reference to applying these attitudes to believing masters also.
- c. This attitude of service is to be applied to just and unjust leaders alike, especially as this is following the example of our Lord.

2.How do I behave towards those under my authority?

Note to whom we are all responsible, and what this demands of our attitude and conduct towards those under our authority.

Read :

- a. Eph 6:9
- b. Titus 2:9-10

Notes :

- a. Attitudes to those under our authority should not be uncompromising and harsh but have due regard for the particular circumstances. Attempts should not be made to win popularity by being too easy on those we command or being disrespectful and insulting of their person in order to diminish them as we seek to assert ourselves. Note also the reference to favouritism. The best leaders lead by example, are firm and yet compassionate. Their authority is unquestioned and therefore does not need psychological enhancement. These leaders are trusted and are therefore respected and obeyed with peace of mind.
- b. It is also necessary for leaders to teach correct attitudes to those under the authority of others.

3. What should be my attitude to my colleagues?

What would be the effect of putting these verses into practice?

Read:

- a. Rom 12:9 - 21
- b. John 15:12-13

Notes:

a. & b. Others will see that you are loyal and conscientious; that you trust those in command and hold them in high esteem. If your Christian faith is evident, then those around you may regard these attributes as characteristics of your faith, a reflection of Christ - giving Glory to Him. Colleagues will enjoy working alongside you because of the respect and concern you have for them.

4. What is my responsibility to my Country?

The Bible demands acceptance of wider responsibilities than just those amongst your family, friends or colleagues. (Consider also Acts 4:19 and Exodus 1:17)

Read :

- a. Rom 13: 1-7,
1 Pet 2 13-17
- b. Luke 20:20-26,
Exod 1:15-21

Notes :

- a. The governing authorities referred to in Rom 13 were an occupying power! The passage here speaks clearly even though the situation may have offended human standards.
- b. However - Luke 20:20-26 and Exod 1:15-21 illustrate that we are obliged to obey the law of the country unless it conflicts directly with the laws of God.

5. What is my responsibility to God?

God has 'all' authority? Here are some passages that illustrate our responsibility.

Read :

- a. Matt 28:18-20
- b. Eph 1:19-21
- c. Matt 22:37-40
- d. 1 John 4:19-21
- e. Rom 13:1-2

Notes :

- a. All authority in heaven and earth is ultimately given to our Lord Jesus. It is delegated by Him to His followers to allow them to take part in the building of His Kingdom.
- b. Resurrection power to fulfil this great commission!
- c. & d. Fulfilment of our first responsibility depends on obedience to the second commandment!
- e. God establishes governing authorities. Rebelling against them is rebelling against God.

Cultural note:

In New Testament times, slavery was an accepted economic system. It was honoured even though at times it led to abuse. Slaves had no rights to property or inheritance. It is important to understand that in God's sight we are all equal (Gal 3:26-29), with no rights or inheritance because all that we have is given by God. Paul was proud to be a doulos (slave/servant) of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:1 etc). Peter, James, and Jude called themselves doulos in their respective letters. Even Jesus was called the doulos of God (Phil 2:6-7).

So the passages, although referring to behaviour in relations between masters and slaves or servants, illustrate the way we should behave towards those around us in whatever position. Our Lord set this example just before He gave His life for us - John 13:14-17. A clear example of this in practice is Rom 15:8-9.

CONFIDENCE IN BATTLE

“Anyone who says they are not afraid in battle is either a liar or a fool.” (Anon). If we are to succeed in battle we need to have confidence that we can achieve the stated outcome. To have confidence in the worldly battle we must win the spiritual battle, which is much more difficult. In this module we discover how we can win the spiritual battle and thus prepare for the worldly battle so that we can face any challenge with courage.

1. What is your greatest fear in battle?

In physical battle is it your fear of death, killing, failure, pain, capture or something else? What is your greatest fear in the “spiritual” battle?

Read:

a. Matt 10:28

Notes:

a. Although this verse is referring to being bold in witness, it is valid in the context of the battlefield also. It refers to the need to have a fear/reverence of God without whose salvation one is destined for hell!

2.How do we overcome the natural fear of death?

This fear is not only in battle but is held by all who contemplate death without Christ.

Read :

- a. 1 Cor 15:55-57
- b. 1 Cor 15:51-54
- c. Phil 1:21
- d. John 14:2-3

Notes :

- a. Because Christ has overcome death, we who have faith in Him no longer fear death.
- b. Death is a translation from mortality to immortality. We will see Jesus and we will be like Him.
- c. Paul was eager to pass from this world to his heavenly home with Christ.
- d. As in John 17, Jesus longs for us to be with Him too.

3.How do we overcome the fear of failure?

A common fear is that we would be found wanting courage, or let down our colleagues.

Read :

- a. Ps 91
- b. Rom 7:21-25

Notes :

- a. Place your trust in God and He will honour that trust - He will not fail you.
- b. Paul's confession of failure and trust in Christ for victory.

4. Who or what is the spiritual battle against?

Who or what is our real enemy? How does this affect our attitude to our human opponents?

Read :

- a. Rom 8:5-11,
Col 3:5-11
- b. Eph 4:14
- c. Eph 6:10-12,
1 Pet 5:8
- d. 1 John 5:4-5

Notes :

Know your enemy! For the Christian on the battlefield as for the Christian at home the continual enemies are the world, the flesh and the Devil.

- a. Our sinful and earthly nature.
- b. The cunning and craftiness of men.
- c. The spiritual forces of evil. The objective for every Christian is to fight valiantly and to remain strong in the Spirit, despite the horror the world is unleashing. Good preparation in all things can increase one's confidence in the desired outcome.
- d. Whilst the outcome of earthly wars and conflicts is never assured, for the Christian the outcome of spiritual conflict is. Through faith in Christ triumph is assured and His Word provides us with our training manual for victory.

5. How does God help prepare us for battle?

Things to seek and things to avoid.

Read:

- a. John 3:16
- b. Jas 4:4-10
- c. Col 3:5-11
- d. Gal 5:16-26

Notes:

- a. Surprisingly the first step in preparing for battle is surrender, surrendering your ALL to win God's full protection and to receive eternal life.
- b. This is combined with an offensive against evil influences.
- c. In Colossians Paul lists some of the sins against which we must battle and reminds us that as Christians we have put on a new self in the image of Christ. In God's sight there are no favourites; in Christ all are one.
- d. Living by the Spirit.

6. What equipment does God give us for the spiritual battle?

In what ways does this help us in the battle?

Read :

- a. 1 Sam 17:38-47
- b. Rom 13:12-14
- c. Eph 6:12-17
- d. Eph 6:18

Notes :

- a. Saul dressed David in armour to fight Goliath but David was not used to the physical armour and he discarded it in favour of his spiritual armour.
- b. The avoidance of evil.
- c. The armour of the Christian is the knowledge that one walks the way of the Lord. David's armour would not have protected him from the spear of Goliath but in wearing God's armour David had the advantage and had won before Goliath was able to deploy his weapons.
- d. For Christians prayer gives both spiritual support and will involve God's will in the outcome, because we pray in the knowledge that all prayer is answered.

7. Have I faith that God will anoint me with His power?

To whom does God grant His power - and why?

Read :

- a. Rom 8:31
- b. Ps 37
- c. Matt 10:28-31
- d. Heb 10:17-24

Notes :

- a. If God is for us who can be against us? Yet God can only anoint those who place their trust in Him.
- b. When you have properly prepared for the spiritual battle you are assured by God throughout the Bible that you will be saved from your enemies.
- c. As we saw in Question 1, God protects our soul and our spiritual well-being, which is eternal, rather than our physical body which is transient. Why? v31.
- d. Even in failure God still supports you and guides you in recovery; He never deserts you.

8. Where does my confidence come from?

When you know that God is ahead of you already fighting the battle for you then you can have confidence in His support for you and His presence with you.

Read :

- a. Heb 3:12-15
- b. 1 John 5:20
- c. 1 John 3:16-24

Notes :

- a. We can so easily forget God's promise and we must remind ourselves and others of it daily. Military people have to achieve their objectives despite any personal sacrifice involved.
- b. It is important to know whom we serve – the only true God.
- c. We have no finer role model than Jesus and we can believe that He lives in us and we live in Him.

9. How do we advance from here?

Maintain your momentum and do not let the world regain ground you have cleared.

Read :

- a. Rom 12: 9-21
- b. 2 Tim 2:3-13
- c. Rom 8:37-39

Notes :

The summary of this study is that God does not promise to make you bullet-proof but if you put on the full armour of God, and live according to Jesus' guidance, then you will enhance your professionalism in your own performance and in how you inspire those around you. The enemy takes form in how the world tries to prevent you being Christ-like but fortunately there are practical steps you can take to triumph over the world.

- a. In particular, build bridges to other Christians who can support you and whom you can encourage.
- b. Step confidently into the battle knowing that, whatever the physical outcome, God is with you and you will always be with God.
- c. Nothing can keep us from the love of God in Christ, through the power of His Holy Spirit.

Main idea :

The Old Testament gives us many examples of physical battles (e.g. Gideon) but first the Christian in the military has to win the spiritual battle. To succeed in anything one needs to have confidence in God and confidence in oneself. The key to having confidence in battle, both the physical battle and the spiritual battle, is preparation - that is, preparation for battle and for the peace and reconciliation that must be a part of any conflict. If the preparation has been thorough the remaining challenge is to secure the position gained. Christians find security by remaining firm in the belief that God is beside them always and He is the rock that will take them through, regardless of the physical outcome.

CARRYING ARMS AS A CHRISTIAN

It is not wrong to carry arms under a properly constituted authority. This module explores the Scriptures that refer to soldiers.

1. What does the Bible say about soldiers?

Read the passages below and answer the following questions:

- a. How was this man regarded by man and God?
- b. What was this soldier's relationship with God?
- c. What was the result of his obedience?

Read :

- a. Acts 10:1-7
- b. Acts 10:30-35
- c. Acts 10:44-48

Notes :

- a. God used this soldier in His plan to extend the Kingdom of God to the Gentiles. What a great affirmation of this man's faith!
- b. This man's prayers were heard by God, and his deeds to the poor were seen by God. Note his immediate obedience.
- c. Cornelius was born again by the Holy Spirit along with all who had heard the message.

2. What does Jesus say to a believing soldier?

Does Jesus require anything more from this man?

Read :

a. Matt 8:5-10

Notes :

a. Jesus responds to this call for help for the centurion's servant. Here is a man who in practical terms acknowledges God's authority and loves his neighbour as himself. Jesus requires nothing more of him and states, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith".

3. What does Jesus say to the rich young man?

Jesus required something extra of this young man. Why?

Read:

a. Matt 19:16-22

Notes:

a. Compare this passage with what Jesus said to the centurion in Matt 8. Although this man knew the commandments well and thought he had fully obeyed them, his heart was elsewhere.

4. What did John the Baptist say to soldiers?

What was his answer to their question and what does it mean to you?

Read :

a. Luke 3:14

Notes :

- a. Although this is not Jesus speaking, John was commanding Israel to repent and as such these soldiers would be seeking repentance and its requirements. Some might say that a person who becomes a Christian should not carry arms, but here there is no hint of this. They were required not to abuse their authority and to be content with their pay!

5. Serving your country or more?

What is the true purpose of your service?

Read:

a. Rom 13:1-7

Notes:

- a. Clearly here Paul acknowledges the validity and necessity of governing authorities to exercise their authority with the sword. The Law, which commanded against murder, also contained the death penalty. Those who exercise this authority are described as God's servants. Therefore your service in this area is not just to the country, it is ultimately to God Himself.

Additional notes:

There are other instances of God using soldiers for His purposes. The centurion at the cross declared the innocence of Christ! (Matt 27:54, Luke 23:47). See also passages concerning Paul's protection (Acts 22 and Acts 27). There are instances of the New Testament letters using soldiers' equipment and attributes to illustrate how to live the Christian life (Eph 6:10-18. 2 Tim 2:1-4). Scripture also shows that soldiers have acted in ways contrary to how God would have us behave (Matt 27:27-31). We must ensure that we don't!

ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHERS

What is your attitude towards:

- a. People of other races, religions, cultures?
- b. Christians of other denominations, races, tribes or culture and enemies (personal or of your country)?

1. How does God view people?

How does our view of others align with God's view?

Read :

- a. Gen 1:26
- b. John 3:16
- c. Rom 3:22-24
- d. Rom 5:6-11

Notes :

- a. Ultimately we are all made in God's image. Humanity has been marred by the fall but every human being has the potential to be fully restored through Christ to the image of God. This has implications for how we view other people and how we treat them. Every person is unique and Christ died for them, even those we perceive as enemies.
- b. John 3:16 is well known and speaks of the great love God has for all people, so great our Heavenly Father's love that He sent His son to die for us. This verse is sometimes called the "gospel in miniature".
- c. Rom 3:22-24 shows that we are all sinners and equal in God's sight in this respect, so that no one can claim superiority.
- d. Rom 5:6 –11 further sets out that God loves people, even sinners (see v. 8). We were God's enemies (v. 10) and He reconciled us to himself through Christ because He loved us. What implications does this have for how we treat our enemies?

2. How does God require us to live as Christians?

What should our attitude be to others?

Read :

- a. Mic 6:8
- b. Mark 12:28-31
- c. Eph 5:1-2
- d. 1 John 1:5-10

Notes :

- a. In Mic 6:8 we see this powerful reminder that true faith leads to Christ-like attitudes and obedience (see Phil 2:1-9). Faith should also show forth in our actions (Jas 2:17).
- b. Mark 12:28-31 sets out what Jesus said were the most important commandments. These are to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. What implications does this have for how we treat our enemies? You may want to ask if our enemies are our neighbours and to use Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25 - 37) to show what Jesus taught.
- c. Ephesians 5:1-2 tells us we are to be imitators of God and live a life of love. Students should again be reminded that Jesus gave His life for the "enemies" of God, so that we could be reconciled to God and become His children.
- d. 1 John 1:5-10 reminds us that we ultimately depend on the saving work of Christ. Only when we accept that we do sin, confess and turn to Him do we have salvation. We cannot hope to obey God in our own strength; we can only do it because of the sacrifice of Christ and the blood He shed to purify us.

3. What does this mean for our treatment of other people including our enemies?

Include your thoughts on how to treat prisoners of war.

Read :

- a. Lev 19:33
- b. Matt 5:43-48
- c. Matt 7:1
- d. Luke 3:11-14
- e. Rom 12:14-21

Notes :

- a. Lev 19:33. This law is refined in Jesus' teaching in Matt 5:43-48. 7:1-6 and Matt 22:39.

The UN Charter of Human Rights partially reflects scriptural teaching on the dignity and worth of human beings. Military regulations for the treatment of prisoners are to be upheld.

For some, the study of the Old Testament can also throw up difficulties in how we should deal with enemies. The book of Joshua for example can appear to be harsh and can be misused to approve of racial, religious or tribal genocide today. God's instructions to the people of Israel as they entered the Promised Land with regards to the destruction of the Canaanites were specific to them and for very specific circumstances. God was creating a holy nation from which one day would emerge His salvation plan for the world. This plan must not be polluted by the very depraved culture of the Canaanites and required the removal of any possible causes of infection. Gen 15:16 seems to point to the fact that the Israelite invasion was timed to serve the moral purposes of God. It is also a warning that God is holy and does not look on depravity lightly. He is the supreme divine judge on all society.

Continued on the following page...

Notes (continued) :

- b. The verses in Matt 5 are the direct words of Jesus spoken in what is called “the sermon on the mount”. The injunction earlier in the sermon not to resist and to “turn the other cheek also” (Matt 5:39) can be seen as a personal injunction for Christians to endure suffering in the pursuit of good, but are not a prohibition on resisting wrong-doing and preserving order and good government in a country.
- c. Matt 7:12 quotes the Lord Jesus again and corresponds to the practical application to love God and our neighbour quoted in Mark 12. If we thought before we acted and treated others as we wanted to be treated then we would be living in obedience to God.
- d. The instructions to soldiers in Luke 3:14 are clear and are at heart instructions for public servants, including soldiers, to act justly and honestly in their profession in direct contrast to how people often abuse their authority in the world.
- e. The verses in Rom 12 are practical examples of the “law of love” in action. In particular we are to “bless those who persecute” us and not to take vengeance (v 19). For a Christian serving in the armed forces this is an important truth, as is verse 20 and should dictate treatment of enemy prisoners and non-combatants.

PART TWO

PRIORITIES

How do we prioritise our responsibilities to God, family, military service, Church, finances etc?

1. Have you experienced the love of God?

When was that?

Have you experienced His love recently?

How have you experienced the love of God towards you?

What relationship does Jesus want with you?

Read :

- a. John 3:16,17
- b. John 17:24

Notes :

- a. Do you realise that God is your loving Father but not your
 - chastiser,
 - relentless judge or
 - overburdening overseer?
- b. Do you seek the presence of the Lord or are you interested just in His blessings and gifts?

2. How do you respond to the love God has for you?

Do you think your love for God is compromised by your circumstances?
Who is your neighbour?

Read :

- a. Luke 10:27,
1 John 4:20
- b. Lev 19:18

Notes :

- a. One important dimension of loving the Lord is to love those whom He loves.
- b. To love your neighbour includes those who are nearest to you, your family and relatives.

Samaritans:

Luke 10:29-37 - Jesus illustrates His answer with an account of the help given by a Samaritan to someone in need. The account (John 4:4-29) of Jesus at the well with the Samaritan woman illustrates the attitude the Jews had to a people they went out of their way to avoid!

3. How can you share the love of God with your spouse, children and family?

How should the love of parents reflect the love of God?

Read :

- a. Eph 5:21-6:4
- b. 1 Tim 3:4-5

Notes :

- a. Our families are "well managed" only by providing proper and sufficient love to them.
- b. This is especially necessary for leaders in the Church.

4. How do you demonstrate the love of God in your job?

Does your life reflect the love of God?

Read :

a. Eph 6:5-9

Notes :

- a. Your diligence in performing your professional duties reflects and indeed is your service for Christ. This passage applies both to those under authority and those in authority.

5. Who are you serving?

How diligently do you perform your professional duties and does this witness to your Christian belief?

Read :

- a. 1 Tim 4:12,
1 Pet 1:13-16
- b. Jas 3:13-16
- c. Prov 3:9

Notes :

- a. Not everybody is a gifted evangelist, but each disciple of Jesus Christ should live their life as a witness for the Lord.
- b. The contrast here between godly humility and selfish ambition with its consequences is clear.
- c. Our financial priorities should be to the Lord first. The principle is of giving to the Lord first, rather than from what is left over.

If appropriate, mention that what is said in 1 Peter 3:1 regarding wives in relation to their husbands, applies to every situation in which we are in a close community with others, such as in the armed forces.

6. What is your favourite way of serving the Lord?
Do you believe this brings you especially close to Him?

We all tend to serve the Lord in **our way**. Is that serving Him in **His way**?

Read :

- a. Luke 10:38-42
- b. Phil 2:1-11
- c. 1 Cor 12

Notes :

- a. How can we distinguish between the impulse to serve the Lord in **our own way** instead of doing it in **His way**?
- b. Our model of service should be that of our Lord Jesus.
- c. If appropriate, remind the student of the special situations of
 - having a personal calling of the Lord, and
 - having personal spiritual (1 Cor 12) or natural gifts which we should use.

7. What is your motivation to serve the Lord?

Do you have any hidden motives, which you do not like to admit?

Read :

- a. Rom 8:5-17
- b. Eph 6:7

Notes :

- a. Hidden motives are not easy to recognise. Prayerful counselling might help.
- b. This motivation extends to our secular work also.

8. Are you in danger of being overworked?

Are you serving the Lord as the first priority and allowing the Lord to use you as His tool?

Read :

- a. Acts 9:15
- b. Matt 20:28
- c. Gen 2:2-3

Notes :

- a. Realise that serving the Lord is in the first instance allowing the Lord to use us as His tools.
- b. The Lord did not come to be served but to serve.
- c. Rest is an essential part of God's pattern for mankind.

9. What is your personal order of priorities, including finance?

Do you distinguish between your "relationship to the Lord" and "serving Him"? In the light of the passages studied - how do your priorities measure up against the Biblical ones? Is there anything you need to modify or even stop doing?

Notes:

Regarding finance this would also be an opportunity to include a discussion on financial priorities. Verses to consider might be: Mark 12:41-44; 1Cor 16:1-2 and Matt 6:2-4

SHARING FAITH

How can you share your faith with others?

1. Who introduced you to Christ?

Think about your first introduction to the Christian faith. How did it happen, what attracted you, how did you come to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour and what were your circumstances at the time?

Read :

a. Rom 10:13-15

Notes :

a. No-one becomes a Christian by accident. This question lets the student reflect on how they came to their current "position" in Christ. Basically, someone shared their faith with them either verbally or by example or both, and the Holy Spirit touched their life and sparked new life in Christ.

2. What was Jesus teaching here about relationships to others?

The heart of the Christian story is Jesus' sacrificial love. It cost him everything. What does He ask of your behaviour to others? Who is your neighbour?

Read:

- a. Luke 10:25-37
- b. Eph 2:8-10

Notes:

- a. The Good Samaritan sets the bar high and is very realistic . . .
- b. but the Ephesians passage tells the whole story and relates works to faith at the start of our study.

More in later questions.

3. How are we instructed to live?

Our lives are evidence of what is important to us and are lived in full view. What are the consequences of our lifestyle and actions?

Read :

- a. Gal 5:16-26
- b. John 15:1-17
- c. Matt 12:22-34

Notes :

We invest in what is important to us - money if that is what we believe is important; people and relationships if we value them; our relationship with God if we have an eternal perspective. You may have considered some aspects of this when you studied the previous module (Part 2:1) on 'Priorities'. God tells us what is important for us and that what we value will be evident to all. Be sure to give God the first position in your life by:

- a. Living by the Spirit.
- b. Abiding in Christ.
And remember:
- c. Our words reveal our heart.

4. What about talking about our faith?

What guidance can we find in these verses?

Read :

- a. 1 Pet 3:13-16
- b. Acts 17:16-34,
Esp. Acts 17:22-23

Notes :

Both these situations speak of responding to others' questions. We are not all called to go on to the streets and preach the gospel, 1 Cor 12:19-20, but:

- a. We are all called to be able to respond when others ask us about Christ.
- b. We should respond to the deep desire in our hearts to share the good news.

5. What light radiates from your life?

Jesus teaches that our lifestyle is important. How does James put it and what is his emphasis?

Read :

- a. Luke 8:16
- b. Jas 2:14-26
- c. Jas 3:13-18

Notes :

- a. Jesus challenges us about making sure we reflect our Christian beliefs . . .
- b. & c. while James says a lot about the relationship between faith and works.

6. So what now?

What are the key verses that you have heard and responded to? What is the perfect law that gives freedom? Is there anything in your life that you think you need to change to make your witness more effective?
You have a commission to fulfil!

Read :

- a. Jas 1:22-25
- b. Matt 28:18-22

Notes :

- a. Here we have to make a decision about how we live our lives as Christians. Jesus was a minority of one when He spoke the gospel and told people how the Father wanted them to behave. However, his message was that the Father knows we can never meet the standard He requires. The Holy Spirit will help us; and our Lord's sacrificial act of atonement on the cross makes the filthy rags of our lives beautifully clean linen in his sight.
- b. This is Christ's command and commission.

CHURCH OR FELLOWSHIP?

As military people (and families) we will not always be able to choose where we serve and where we live. Civilians may be able to choose a town, a house or flat, and a church, but we often cannot. What should we do when this happens? When we deploy on operations we may be lucky to have a Chaplain with our unit or nearby, but he may belong to a different denomination/confession/Christian tradition. What do we do when this happens?

1. What is 'the Church'?

It is important to understand the true nature of the Church.

Read :

- a. John 17
- b. 1 Pet 2:4-10,
1 Cor 3:16
- c. Eph 1:22-23
- d. Heb 12:22-24

Notes :

- a. Here Jesus declares His oneness with God the Father and with those God has given Him - both then and now!
- b. The Church is a temple made up of living stones. It is not a building or an organisation (the 'you' is plural).
- c. Christ is the head of the Church.
- d. The membership list of the Church is written in heaven.

2.To whom is my allegiance?

Should I always worship and fellowship only with my denomination?

Read :

- a. 1 Cor 1:12-17,
Gal 3:28
- b. 1 John 4:19-21,
Rom 12:18

Notes :

- a. We are all 'one in Christ'. So our allegiance is to Christ rather than any particular denomination.
- b. We should love all who are brothers or sisters in Christ and therefore be able to fellowship with them, even if they are in another denomination.

3. Are there limits to fellowship?

What guide is there for choosing a place to fellowship?

Read :

- a. Gal 1:6-9
- b. 1 Cor 15:3-4, 12-19
- c. Acts 17:11

Notes :

- a. It is essential to stay true to the Gospel of Christ. There are various creeds which differ slightly.
- b. Paul taught Christ crucified, buried and raised from the dead.
- c. In Acts 17 Luke commends the Bereans for their careful examination of the Scriptures regarding what they were taught.

4. What should I look for?

What are the marks of a good fellowship?

Read :

- a. Acts 2:42
- b. 1 Tim 2:1-6
- c. Acts 20:28-31

Notes :

- a. The Word of God should be preached; there should be regular fellowship and communion.
- b. There should be a commitment to prayer.
- c. There should be a caring community whose leaders have a sense of responsibility to the congregation.

5. What if there is no Church or fellowship nearby?

You may be on your own as a Christian or have only one or two colleagues with you who are Christian.

Read :

a. Matt 18:19,20

Notes :

- a. Remember you are never truly alone as a Christian - you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within. If there is one other Christian you can have fellowship with, then that is true fellowship in Christ.

Some practical advice:

If you are going to a new place try and find out about possible churches/ contacts before you go. Ask a Chaplain or local Priest or Minister and if possible check the internet.

When you get to your new place, if you don't have any contacts, check out the local Chaplain or Church.

LIFE

Is your 'Position in Christ' affected by having taken life?

Certain professions may authorise a person to take life. If this possibility exists, please use the following module to share some of the scriptures that address this subject in the next session.

1. What about armed conflict?

Is it legitimate for a Christian to take part in armed conflict?

Read :

- a. Rom 13:3-5
- b. Luke 22:36
- c. Matt 26:52
- d. John 15:13

Notes :

Professions such as military, police or security services carry arms and may be required to use them. The Bible does not forbid this.

2. What if I kill by accident?

What about a genuine road accident, or an accidentally discharged weapon, or 'friendly fire', etc?

Read :

- a. Exod 21:12-13
- b. Num 35:6

Notes :

The Old Testament Law deals with the possibility that life can be taken accidentally and makes provision for those affected. Today's secular law calls this manslaughter with lesser penalties to murder.

3. What if I kill for hatred or revenge?

Is it alright to kill because my friend or colleague has been killed in battle or perhaps to kill in a feud or similar situation?

Read :

- a. Exod 20:13, 21:14, Rom 12:19
- b. Matt 5:21, 22, 43-48

Notes :

- a. Scripture forbids this.
- b. Jesus speaks about the true nature of hatred.

4. What about ethnic cleansing?

Is it justifiable to clear an area of a particular people of different religion or ethnic origin?

Read :

- a. Exod 23:31-33
- b. Lev 18:24-30
- c. Heb 9:15, 10:10
- d. 1 Pet 2:9-12
- e. John 18:36

Notes :

The New Testament teaching is radically development of that in the Old Testament due to the atoning work of Christ.

The Old Testament scriptures speak of driving out the people who lived in the land of Canaan because they had such depraved practices that they were under a specific judgement of God at a specific time in history. This also provided the best conditions for Israel to obey God's law and demonstrate His attributes.

The New Testament situation is different because God's Kingdom is not confined to a land and His people are not under law but under grace - Christ has completed full obedience for His people.

5.Has my behaviour been in obedience to God's Word?

Any sin will bring judgement, which without Christ's atoning work will merit the death penalty and eternal punishment. What hope is there for anyone?

Read :

- a. Eph 2:1-10
- b. Rom 6:23
- c. 1 John 1:8-2:2
- d. Rom 6:1-2

Notes :

Regrettably, it is possible that some reading this may find they have killed through motives other than under Q1 or Q2. These scriptures remind us of the grace of God expressed in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ - we are all sinners, needing to be forgiven and saved by accepting His grace.

ENDURANCE

How can I sustain my Christian faith/walk? Can I do it alone?

1. What is it to be part of the "body of Christ"?

Think about your experiences of belonging to a church and of being on your own while in the military. What has most helped, challenged or hindered your growth in faith?

Consider also your answers to Part 1, Module 1 – In Christ.

Read :

- a. John 15:1-5
- b. John 17: 20-23
- c. 1 Cor 12:12-27
- d. Heb 11:39-12:3

Notes :

- a. Christ told of the unity of all believers through His own body, using the picture of the vine and branches.
- b. Christ prayed for our unity in Him to be visible to the world. We may need to work at how we show our unity!
- c. We are part of Christ's body however we feel, weak or strong, isolated or in a group. We all have gifts given us by God to offer to other believers and to the whole of God's creation.
- d. There is a great "crowd of witnesses" that has gone before us in the faith to encourage us in ours. We are all part of that inheritance, whatever our circumstances.

2. How do we prepare for times when we will be isolated as Christians?

Look in these verses for **practical steps** to take in these verses to help us build our faith when with other Christians and **prepare** for times alone or away from our normal fellowship.

Read :

- a. Prov 13:20
- b. Rom 12: 9-12,
Eph 5:15-21
- c. Heb 10:24-25

Notes :

- a. Be careful who you associate with. Making friends with wise people during times of peace will make sure you get good, godly advice in times of trouble.
- b. Be part of a Christian community that is seeking to live out the values of these verses in Romans and Ephesians. It is good training for times of isolation. Also, learning to praise God for all situations is key to joyful Christian living.
- c. We should take every opportunity to meet together as Christians to encourage one another. In this way we can share Christ's love and grace with each other as the early Christians did.

3. What about when we are alone (isolated)?

More practical steps are given in these verses to help us sustain our faith when we are alone.

Read :

- a. Ps 63:1-8, 119:11 and 139
- b. Rom 12:14-21
- c. Phil 4:4-9
- d. Heb 12:14, Jas 1:19-22

Notes :

- a. Learn to meditate on the Lord's goodness, faithfulness and glory. Spend time with Him "in His temple" in your heart and mind while you are on your own. He knows us intimately, wherever we are, so learn His Word and hide it in your heart.
- b. Practical skills for living with those around you in your unit do not depend on their faith, but on yours. Particularly let the peace of God rule in your heart since God will bring all things to justice.
- c. Know that God is near you in all situations. Praise Him always, pray to Him and allow His peace to rule your life. This will be a good witness to your colleagues and a strength in your life.
- d. Holiness is about being set apart for the Lord's work. These verses makes it clear that holiness is not about separation from the world, but intimate engagement with it by living in God's peace without hatred, anger, malice or bitterness. Know that working on your own mind, body and spirit to live biblically like this is a long term process so don't be discouraged!

4. What can we learn in times of Christian isolation?

It is possible to feel alone and abandoned by God when on deployment. Look for God's encouragement here to draw on in such circumstances.

Read :

- a. John 16:1-4, 13-15
- b. Rom 8:26-39, 12:1-2
- c. Heb 10:32-39, 12:1-12

Notes :

- a. Christ warns us that we need to endure in order to stop us stumbling, but He also sends us the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, whatever our circumstances and wherever we are.
- b. Enduring hard circumstances with the help of the Holy Spirit is part of our journey of faith where we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ. The Holy Spirit helps us pray for what we need. Our part is to trust God and present our whole beings, body, mind and spirit, to Him continually for Him to transform us.
- c. Endurance is part of God's discipline as our heavenly Father; it shows his love! But we can be encouraged by those who have gone before us, knowing that God will never forsake us either.

5. Can we expect to grow in times of difficulty and isolation?

If you have time, consider also 1 Sam 18-30, the responses of King David, a military man who often felt alone, isolated and under pressure.

Read:

- a. Prov 2:1-10, 3:11-12
- b. Heb 12:7-12,
Jas 1:2-4

Notes:

- a. These verses show that growth in godly wisdom is a continuous process that needs our active involvement. It does not depend on our circumstances or situation.
- b. God is in control and allows things necessary for our Christian growth wherever we are because He wants us to become mature and complete in our faith. Being deployed is more likely to give us opportunity for such growth! David grew in statesmanship, military prowess and wisdom through the difficulties he endured while in King Saul's service. His story shows that it is possible to live a righteous life in the military which is a good example to others.

6. What if we fail or fall?

Keep talking with God after reading these verses if you need to!

Read:

- a. Ps 51, 1 John 1:9
- b. Ps 103 and 130

Notes:

- a. There is always forgiveness with God following our repentance.
- b. God will not keep a record of wrongs and will not treat us as we deserve. It is *not* a matter of doing more good than evil during life and being judged on the balance of our deeds at death.

7. Advice from one suffering adversity and isolation.

There is no evidence here that Timothy was being persecuted at this time in the same way as Paul. 2 Timothy was probably Paul's last letter from prison to anyone and is a spiritual Last Will and Testament, full of godly advice for living a Christian life in troubled times.

Read :

- a. 2 Tim 1:2
- b. 2 Tim 1:3-8, 2:1-2, 3:10-15
- c. 2 Tim 2:1-13, 22-26

Notes :

- a. Paul and Timothy were not related by blood but Paul wants to affirm the level of his care for Timothy – they were as close as father and son.
- b. Timothy had been accountable to Paul for his Christian walk while separated from Paul. Accountability is a godly principle worth adopting.
- c. Paul used these examples of godly living, including being a good soldier, to remind Timothy to stay focussed on the things of God even in hard times. Seek out a mature Christian to give you support and encouragement in the same way Paul did for Timothy.

COURSE CRITIQUE

This course has aimed to:

1. Affirm faith
2. Equip - 2 Tim 3:15-17.
3. Encourage soldiers by:
Inspiring confidence in their faith even when called to carry arms.
Inspiring service to their commanders and their country as they would serve Christ.
4. Inspire lives that act as salt and light amongst their peers.
5. Engender an example of Christ's love and mercy to friend and foe alike.

Please email the supplier of this course - headoffice@m-m-i.org.uk - noting your observations and suggestions for its future development.

Below are some suggested areas for comment - please feel free to add more.

Clarity of questions.

Scripture reference relevance.

Usefulness of notes.

Style of the course.

Modules and/or Questions that should be added.

Did this course encourage your candidates in their profession and as Christians?

