



A Devotional Guide for  
Church Security in  
Perilous Times

JIMMY STOUT

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Scripture taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Dedicated to the Duchess of Blackbird,  
may she find her peace.

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# Foreword

I count it a privilege to call Jim Stout my friend, and I was very excited to hear that he had taken on the challenge of writing a book aimed solely at blessing and encouraging those in the body of Christ who are engaged in the calling to church security or who have an interest in what might be involved in getting into such a ministry area.

Events of the past few years remind us all that there is an increasing number of hurting and confused people in the world who in their fogged view of life somehow justify taking violent steps toward the church as well as other organized religious and public groups, and as such, it is now necessary for every local church and organization to take effective steps to help reduce and hopefully help eliminate this current plague on our land.

Not everyone who sets out to write a book does so for truly altruistic reasons, but I am proud to confidently inform readers of this book that Mr. Stout is a very qualified working professional with a lifelong commitment to filling key roles in protecting those around him, and he is able to do so with a true love and concern for people.

This book fits squarely into a real need today. In my own limited experiences in life, volunteering as a fire and police chaplain in my local community, I have met so many like-minded professionals in the fields of public service, especially as first responders and guardians of our country in military and other critical governmental services. Mr. Stout truly stands tall among our most dedicated and selfless citizens.

I am thrilled to introduce you to an outstanding brother in Christ and an awesome personal friend who doesn't just carry out his life

duties (which include chaplaincy, government public service, and being a strong family man and a lead church security officer) but has somehow also managed to take time from his crazy, busy life to provide us with this important view into the biblical and practical aspects of church security. He does so with an easy and smooth manner, giving us the opportunity to absorb the very complex matters involved in twentieth-century public security a manageable bite at a time.

This book is presented as a daily devotional, and it encourages us to participate by responding to each chapter. This is not a how-to manual on security at all, but there is much wisdom and knowledge in these pages. As I have, you will be encouraged to pursue tactical studies.

The six sections and sixty-plus subsections of the book offer us scriptural contexts covering God's mandates for our life challenges and our calling as they pertain to security sprinkled with some humorous looks at Mr. Stout's considerable life experiences and views on life today.

I trust you will be much encouraged and personally challenged by what you read, especially if you are contemplating a call to help your church or other associations better protect ourselves from the growingly perilous times ahead.

David Kersten  
Oro Valley, Arizona

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.  
—1 Peter 5:8 (KJV)

# Prologue

## **Saudi Arabia, Operation Desert Storm, 1991 Somewhere near Wadi Al-Batin**

The tan, turtle-shelled HMMWV (Humvee) gun truck tore through the Arabian Desert with reckless abandon in pursuit of, well, a small, harmless, desert jackal. The poor desert dog was on the run through the vast ocean of brown desert sand for its little life. As if it were trapped in the sands of an hourglass, it survived in the most inhospitable place on earth and was running from some very bored and heavily armed teenage soldiers.

“Contact front, light him up! Light him up!” the passenger mockingly screamed up at me in the gun turret.

“It’s a little dog. Come on, leave it alone,” I screamed down as I choked on the dust leaking through the bandanna that covered my nose and mouth.

“Come on, you ...”

You can imagine what he called me.

There was no way I was shooting that little dog, much less using an M-60 belt-fed machine gun. Knowing that my partners would not calm down until they had seen some shooting, I drew my pistol and, purposely not leading the exhausted animal, fired a round that landed right behind his tail.

I thought he was already running fast, but when that round nearly landed in his trunk, he found a higher gear and ran even faster. I laughed at the sight and nearly fell out of my swing chair. His renewed motivation was impressive. You can always reach down and grab a

little bit more from the reserve tank, and he certainly did. Shame on him in a way. Did he really not believe that he was being pursued by the most dangerous troops on the planet? He should have been giving it his all to escape. So I suppose I kept him honest.

Ironically, he also changed his tactics and began running in a wide circle. He clearly was better adapted to his environment than the homicidal youth who were chasing him that day. The circle led us into our own dust trail. We were rapidly caught up in a giant cloud of dirt and could see nothing. The driver had no choice but to bring the vehicle to a halt as we all choked and coughed. The jackal got away clean. It was a brilliant move that left us all feeling really dumb and me laughing at the insanity of it all.

There are plenty of times where life's pursuits leave people feeling like they are chasing jackals. Performing security operations in a church can be one of those times. If you are not careful, it is easy to end up driving in a circle and choking on your own dust. I hope that this writing can help you avoid that experience.

# Introduction

While church safety and security are certainly not new concepts, traditionally, they have been delegated at least in part to the ushers and other staff during service times. There have rarely been times of active security coverage when formal services were not being conducted. This transition leaves periods of fluctuation between active protection and passive deterrence in securing the church. Of course, it is this time when many with violent criminal intent dare to act. Passive deterrence is suited for scaring away thieves, not preventing harm done by someone who is willing to endure the penalty. Plainly, as the kids say, “Don’t get it twisted”; safety and security can be different things.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s 2018 Uniform Crime Report, violent crimes were actually on the decrease in the overall population with an estimated 1,206,836 occurrences. Yes, that’s right, they said one million, two hundred and six thousand, eight hundred and thirty-six acts of criminal violence, including murder, and that was a decrease. Those numbers actually exclude rapes, as they are counted under sex crimes, so occurrences are actually higher.

The US Census Bureau estimates that we have approximately 330 million people in the United States. So by way of estimate, that leaves a one in three hundred and thirty (1:330) chance that an act of violence occurred to you or someone you knew in 2018. Is your congregation size three hundred people or more? If so, it is likely someone in it is a recent victim of violent crime. In 2018, the estimated number

of murders in the nation was 16,214, which is about 5 murders per 100,000 people.

Not to get too wrapped up in statistics, but allow me to take a different view for a moment. There are approximately 850,000 sworn law enforcement officers in the United States, about one for every thousand people. Out of those 850,000 officers, in 2018, according to the Officer Down Memorial Page, 166 died in the line of duty, 52 by gunfire. Basically, that is a one in sixteen thousand (1:16,000) chance of being shot for someone in law enforcement. Applying assaults on officer statistics to that number would change that number for the worse quite dramatically.

Understandably, our protectors are not much safer than those they protect. They really do stand in front of a wave of violence that seeks to crash into the population. I can attest that they work very hard to maintain the peace that we enjoy and survive the violence themselves.

I should have stated instead that there were approximately 850,000 sworn law enforcement officers in the country and dropping. Predictably, law enforcement recruitment is noticeably dropping unilaterally. The increased politics, liability, civil unrest, and general disrespect for authority coupled with low pay and high risks have led many who would enter the field for ideological reasons to reconsider their motivations. I foresee the profession will see a continuing increase in recruitment problems.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, 2019 set a historical record in the United States with more than 385 mass shootings. These were based on the FBI standards that categorized the incidents as such when four or more people were murdered, regardless of causation. We could go on with the data breakdown and maybe get dragged into a political debate or two, but I think you get the idea—more people, more problems, more danger. It is likely that when the final numbers are in, 2019 will have proven to have seen an upswing in violence and will indicate a paradigm shift in the level of violence in the world overall. We have reached a pivot point in history regarding violence.

Clearly, the violence of our time mandates the need for more

organized teams and strategies in an effort to maintain a safe environment for worship. Those serving in these ministries have a specific call that requires dedication, innovation, and discipline. Their service to the Lord demands an increasingly complicated level of vigilance that cannot be misunderstood. To look at these servants through the same lens as the nightclub bouncer, bank security guard, policeman, or the bodyguard is unfair. We must strive to develop a clearer picture of this ministry. Gaining that clearer picture in accordance with God's Word is the concern of this book.

The first few sections of this writing deal with the call to this ministry. The middle sections move into operational subject matter. The last section deals with the perilous times we are in.

Not every member of a congregation is suited to this ministry. The devotionals are written specifically for those who are called to this special ministry of service and their co-laborers. Some devotionals are brief and offer thought-provoking moments meant to be ingested quickly. Other devotionals are long and more involved and can border on controversial depending on your level of natural contention.

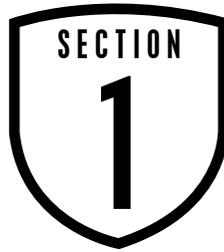
I am writing in the voice of the first person familiar purposely; I hope you feel we're having a conversation. Further, this writing is not intended to be a how-to guide to set up a security or safety ministry in a church. It is meant to guide the individual in maturation into the call to this service. There are numerous resources available to help guide a church in developing this ministry formally, especially on the internet. However, I certainly would help anyone who needed help in that regard.

The devotionals are in six sections. The devotionals open with a Section Verse to set the direction for the section. The sections are titled with the focus of the section and the section number and the devotional number by day overall for your clarity. For example, "1.1 Jonah" means section one, day one, title of Jonah.

References to Bible verses that are successive to the verse in the devotional are referenced with a *v.* signifying "verse" and then the number (e.g., "v. 14").

The War Stories generally exemplify the topic and are there for your enrichment or humor. The Knowledge Questions are meant to be additional learning opportunities that will build your base in a specific area. I pray you are nurtured in your call in the following pages.

This book is intended to help you clarify and answer your call in this area. Additionally, it will give you a wider glimpse into the world of tactical security. It will not train you in the very real and numerous physical techniques needed for the occupation. It is not meant to be a replacement for legitimate use of force or tactical or legal training. I recommend you seek out hands-on training from solid professionals in all those areas.



# We Are Lions!

## The Call to Serve in Church Security and Safety

The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but  
the righteous are bold as a lion.  
—Proverbs 28:1 (KJV)

It is no irony that we are told in Proverbs to be as bold as lions and are then told in 1 Peter 5:8 that the devil roams about like a lion. Christians can truly be in harm's way even in the best of times. It is even more perilous for those whom God has called to be protectors. This section is specifically dedicated to help those called to the ministry of church security and safety understand their specific call. The people who respond to this call are the sentinels of their day. They must be vigilant servants as well as mighty warriors. They must be increasingly sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit so they can help accomplish the mission of the Lord in this period of history.

## 1.1 Jonah

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. (Jonah 1:1–3 KJV)

### Reflection and Application

Normally, people apply this passage to those who are called into pastoral ministry or some other ministerial endeavor that requires the title *reverend*.

Security and safety are not pastoral callings, you say? Well, they are not pulpit ministries, that's true, but there is a calling to this service just the same. You are not the leader of the flock (an important point to remember), but you are a leader in the flock. Just because you have experience in security, public safety, law enforcement, the military, or emergency medicine doesn't mean you are specifically called to this ministry—although very often the Lord does call people with those tools already in place. Your job is to discern your call to this ministry. They say that the Lord calls the qualified and qualifies the called. I must agree that that has also been my experience.

Is this where you are meant to serve? If so, that's great. If not, don't force it, because trying to force a calling can have destructive consequences. Be serious in your contemplation of serving in this area, as it is a critical one. Just know that if the Lord has told you to do something and you run like Jonah—well, I hope you like the smell of fish. Let's get started.

## **Prayer Focus**

Father, through your tender grace and mercy, help me discern your call on my life.

### **1.2 Moses**

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. (Exodus 4:10 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

In Exodus 3–4, Moses gave numerous excuses why he should not have been the one selected for the task of helping free Israel. Some of his excuses were legitimate. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh; he had killed an overseer and fled Egypt. Any kind of information he brought was most likely not going to be well received.

The above was his last excuse before the Lord got annoyed with him and told him to go. Have you gotten the “Just go!” from the Lord as well after making a bunch of excuses? If so, you need to trust that God made you and will equip you for your work ahead.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to answer your call with faith in you.

### **1.3 Gideon’s Reluctance**

And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (Judges 6:14 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

It's amazing who we see being called in the Bible at times. Like Moses, Gideon was more than a little apprehensive about accepting his call. Defending Israel against the Midianites was not on his list of ways to stay alive. He had been threshing grain while hiding in a wine press. God knew that the place he was hiding was not going to survive the invasion of the Midianite army and that Gideon therefore might as well fight.

In this verse, we see the Lord rebuking his reluctance in an interesting way. When the Lord asked, "Have not I sent thee?" He was implying that if He was sending Gideon, He was going to be there to help him succeed. Furthermore, the Lord had told Gideon he could actually pull it off in his might. Gideon already had the tools to defeat the enemy; he wasn't irrational in his thinking. He must have been a trained leader; he just lacked the faith to commit. It's a pretty big request to be asked to go to war much less lead an army into one.

Should you continue reading that passage, you will see that the ways the Lord and Gideon kept proving their faith in each other led to some interesting events. In the end, the Lord was true to His word and supported Gideon in the call. At times, this is something we all need to see just to shore up our faith.

Are you a little apprehensive about answering your call? Perhaps you believe church security is too liable or that you'll get sued into the poorhouse. Perhaps you're afraid your department won't let you because of politics. The excuses can continue to mount, but excuses don't stop the Midianites.

## Prayer Focus

Lord, free me of my fears and order my steps.

## **1.4 The Levites**

But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony. (Numbers 1:53 KJV)

### **Reflection and Application**

The Levites (Moses's tribe) were the priestly tribe of Israel. They were given no tribal lands as an inheritance after crossing into the Promised Land. Their service to their faith was their inheritance. They were charged with the daily operations of Jewish religious services even still today. Ensuring safety and security is part of that ministry service (1 Chronicles 9:21–27). Since the very beginning of organized religious endeavors, there have been those who were called to serve in protection of the congregation. Is that call yours?

### **Knowledge Question**

Why were the Levites selected by God to be the priestly tribe?

### **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me discern Your call in my life.

## **1.5 Dwelling in Safety**

Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. (Leviticus 25:18 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Living in a safe environment is not a guaranteed, or entitled, basic human right, but it is a basic human need. We would like to think of it that way because we are a just people. Everyone should be free, everyone should not be poor, everyone should not be hungry or live under threat, but we know that not true in our world. Especially in our day, people often get that concept of right and need confused. In reality, the world owes us nothing, so how are there basic human rights? There are things that people need to survive, and we are morally bound to assist them. Safety is one of those needs. Without safety, the only things that flourish are violence and war. You are not promised the covering of safety in a world without the presence of God and the adherence to His precepts. It is not promised or guaranteed to a people unless they are willing to keep the Lord's statutes and judgments. We have to follow His rules to live safely. An exception to this, as my editor brought forward, would be the martyrdom of the saints, but that is an entirely different subject matter, which we will not go into in this dialogue.

## **Knowledge Question**

What was the major difference between the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament?

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to follow your rules to help bring safety to others.

## **1.6 The Stranger that Comes Nigh**

But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation

eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. (Numbers 3:38 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death? That hardly seems welcoming or friendly. So much for religious ministry in Moses's day, right? Can you image that being put out in the church greeters' meeting? Well, things were a little different for them in the tabernacle days. First, the faith as it was evolving into Judaism was not remotely evangelical. People outside the tribes of Israel were not dwelling in a covenant with God and had no hope of worshipping Him in that way. Traditional Orthodox Judaism is still very much given over to that idea. You were either born into it or you were not. Scary thought, huh?

Second, the tribes of Israel were traveling through the Sinai desert on their way to the Promised Land after escaping captivity in Egypt. Basically, they were walking through a place that is still one of the most dangerous places on earth. They also had the treasures of Egypt in their possession. They were a big target, so stranger danger was a very real thing to them. Can that be a problem even today? You bet it can. Churches are burglarized frequently in our country even today.

The National Organization for Church Security and Safety Management reviewed data collected by the FBI in its yearly Uniform Crime Reporting regarding churches for 2008 and 2009. They found that more than 23,000 crimes were reported on church properties in America every year. In both years, approximately 5,300 of those were related to burglaries.<sup>1</sup> Church security and safety are very real needs today as they were in Moses's.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nocssm.org/>.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, thank you for reaching to seek and save the lost of all humankind. Lord, please balance in me the spirit of evangelism with the spirit of protection.

## **1.7 Maturity**

From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, everyone that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation. (Numbers 4:47–49 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

A prominent psychiatrist and I were having a discussion regarding the neurological maturity of the male brain. No, it wasn't about mine. Well, I'm pretty sure it wasn't. He mentioned that most auto rental companies didn't like to rent to people under age twenty-five because such drivers take greater chances and get in more accidents, so the companies limit their risk by not renting to that age group. The biology of maturation is something you can't escape. Young people may not have the right level of emotional or behavioral maturity based on a level of biological development they have yet to reach as well as the experience to perform some tasks.

As the Levites were being separated for service in the daily operations of the tabernacle, Moses and Aaron were further commanded to task the sons of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari with specific priestly ministries that directly affected the operations of the tabernacle. They were allowed to work in these ministries between the ages of thirty and fifty. Only twenty years of service were performed even in a time where people lived to be very old.

Even though Paul wrote to Timothy and told him to let none despise him regarding his youth (1 Timothy 4:12), we clearly see

maturity as a serious factor in any ministry regardless of age. It must be evaluated individually and honestly as Paul did for Timothy.

Are you mature enough biologically, emotionally, behaviorally, psychologically, and most important, spiritually to accept this call to ministry? Are you mature enough to be this responsible, or as in my case, are you constantly assessing if you are still physically able to perform the tasks? Do you feel the Lord preparing and educating you in areas where you might be weak for service in this ministry so that you will be prepared?

## **Knowledge Question**

What purpose does the sympathetic nervous system serve in your body?

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, prepare me to serve effectively and appropriately in your ministry and to keep others safe.

## **1.8 Public Servants and Authority**

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.  
(Romans 13:4 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Very few verses are quoted by Christian law enforcement officers as much as the above verse. We enjoy this section of Romans because it endorses our occupation and personalities. However, we often tend

to look beyond the obvious but very important portions of this entire chapter.

Paul opened the chapter explaining the justification of civil authorities but quickly transitioned into loving your fellow man through the greatest commandment. The maintaining of public safety and civility in society is showing love for others by allowing them to live in peace. What we do really is love even though it is rough work at times. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13 KJV).

## **Prayer Focus**

Father, help me to maintain peace for others.

## **1.9 A Healthy Fear, Part 1**

The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name.  
Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea:  
his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. (Exodus 15:3–4 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

One major recurring mistake that people make in the Bible is that they forget God also has a warrior’s personality. In this passage, He destroyed the most powerful army on earth all at one time to protect His children. God had given Pharaoh plenty of chances to do the right thing, but he didn’t.

Yes, we serve a loving, patient, thoughtful, and caring God. But never forget the awesome power that He has over the universe. A healthy, respectful fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

## **Prayer Focus**

Father, may I always respect your precepts and not stray into your wrath.

### **1.10 A Healthy Fear, Part 2**

And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.  
(1 Chronicles 13:9–10 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

It would seem a little excessively punitive for God to strike down someone for trying to keep the Ark of the Covenant upright. However, Uzza knew the parameters of his job, and innocent mistake or not, it still cost him. The ark was considered a holy object because of the things it contained and because its actual structure contained the Mercy Seat of God's presence and redemption. There was no greater sacred object in all Judaism.

Uzza maybe forgot that he wasn't moving his mother's couch, and touching something that sacred cost him. To an extent, things can still work that way in our day. We can become very consumed with our own position and goals and forget we're in God's service. We can take far too much ownership of things that are not ours to do but instead belong to God and are His to address.

There is a fine balance between taking enough ownership that we do a good job in His service and going a bridge too far and attempting to sit in God's chair regarding other aspects of the ministry that are not in our wheelhouse.

## Prayer Focus

Lord, help me to respect the boundaries of my service.

### 1.11 A Spirit of Fear

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

It is unfortunate that a large portion of the church safety movement is basing itself in fear. Spirits of fear are just what Paul wrote them as being—literal spirits. They are not healthy fears based on real knowledge or stimuli; they are the illogical anxieties that earn therapists a very good living. Phobias, panic attacks, anxiety, acute anxiety, depression, OCD—you name it—there is a laundry list of fears based on lack of threat or on past threats being relived. To the people experiencing them, these spirits are very real, and in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 6), they certainly are very real. If a spirit of fear is bothering us or causing health problems, it is imperative that we address it quickly.

It is a foundational tenet of this call particularly not to embrace such spirits. We may not use them to create anxiety in those who are vulnerable to them or use them to manipulate our leadership. Paul told us that instead, we needed to embrace power, love, and a sound mind. Using a sound mind means making informed decisions based on facts and indicators. The use of serious information aka intelligence is a paramount need we have in this profession.

Trying to persuade your church leadership to begin a security or safety ministry based on the liabilities of fear alone will likely fall flat. They are ministers and like us are sworn not to indulge the spirit of fear. They will reject the idea based on the spirit alone. Facts, ideas,

and contingencies based on a sound mind will be the prevailing force in that negotiation.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please grant me your spirit of peace in all life's situations.

### **1.12 Relax—God Has This Covered**

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. (Psalm 127:1 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The humble reality is that we are just human. Our best efforts can be thwarted. Our ideas can be countered. Our skills can be outmaneuvered. Even with all that, we can rest in the shadow of God's favor (Psalm 91:1). If the Lord built our house, we have nothing to fear. If He did not, we have lost already.

## **Prayer Focus**

Father, help us to heed Your direction in building Your house.

### **1.13 The Lord's Anointed**

And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. (1 Samuel 24:6 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

Growing up as a preacher's kid is never an easy thing. It has amazing benefits in the fact that you learn about the Lord while witnessing ministry firsthand. You also witness the levels of resistance, strife, and manipulation and the volume of underhanded things that can happen to those who are in the pastorate. Sometimes, I saw pastors bring these things on themselves out of ego and arrogance, but more often than not, it was someone who had overzealous ownership of the church and toxic control issues causing internal strife. The obvious problem with that is that the pastorate is anointed to do pastoral service by God; they are the Lord's anointed. Just as David would not kill Saul even though he was well justified, he did not because Saul was the Lord's anointed as king of Israel. Ironically, David was also an anointed king of Israel.

We cannot work against the pastorate regardless of our opinion of its direction. It can be difficult when as observers we clearly see a picture unfolding in front of us about a situation. But like David, we must remember that God sees the biggest picture.

This is not to say that if someone does something of an immoral or destructive nature we cannot take action. However, to willfully undermine someone like that in the course of his or her service is to work against the anointed. The job of the temple guard is complicated enough and needs no entanglements with issues of pastoral care more than necessary.

### Prayer Focus

Lord, help me to discern what areas I can best focus my passion for you in serving with the anointed.

### 1.14 The Chief Priest's Captain

And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. (Luke 22:4 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

Jerusalem under Roman rule was certainly not a safe place. It would make sense that the chief priest would have his own personal protection detail drawn from the ranks of the temple guard. Even today, we still do personal protection details for the members of the pastorate for the same reason. This is a legitimate need as the world can be a fallen and crazy place.

However, never forget that it was the captains of that detail who helped arrange the betrayal of Jesus with Judas for the chief priest. Our job is not to get next to the pastor, be his buddy, and do some type of dirty work to garner influence. No one is here to be a henchman. If your goal is to get buddy-buddy with the pastorate by serving on a personal protection detail, you are there for the wrong reasons and will likely get someone hurt in the process.

## Prayer Focus

Father, help me to respond to this call in the right way.

### 1.15 Tier-One Operator

And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? (Joshua 5:14 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

Since the global war on terror began, there has been a descriptive term for its combatants both in the military and in the private sector—operators. Operators are those in any of a number of positions

that all translate as, “This person is one bad-to-the-bone individual who can snap your spine using a kung-fu grip.”

The toughest of the tough in this area are considered the tier-one operators. Of course, in our time, there is also a lot of hyperbole involved with this concept usually heard around trying to sell someone something. However, the above description is the general idea regarding tier-one operators. An important note about operators is that if someone introduces himself to you using that exact term with specificity, he is likely not the genuine article. A real operator generally doesn't have to say it because you know it within about thirty seconds of being around him.

I have always found the story of Joshua's heavenly encounter very moving. Here is Joshua, a leader of Israel but also a mighty warrior in his own right encountering the captain of the heavenly hosts. It was as much a strategy meeting about the impending battle of Jericho as it was an amazing moment of heavenly encounter in Joshua's life. Still, I bet he did not leave that meeting unimpressed by the experience. Joshua had a real encounter with what is my idea of a real tier-one operator.

There are a couple of sentient points to be taken from this story. First, the heavenly hosts have a rank structure that includes captains. If paramilitary rank structures are good enough for them, they're good enough for us to follow as well.

Second, the forces of heaven really are on our side. There really is a bigger battle going on here (Ephesians 6), and we really are a part of it, so we should act accordingly. To be a real tier-one operator, you must be a spiritual warrior and discern the Lord's direction, work on a team, and follow the leadership that is appointed over you.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, teach me to discern your ways.

## 1.16 Spiritual Warfare 1

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12 KJV)

### Reflection and Application

Warning! If you have not done a complete study concerning spiritual warfare as described in Ephesians 6, do so immediately. Meaning stop after this devotional, mark your place, do a study, and come back when you're done. Spiritual warfare is a very real thing. By waking up this morning, you entered the spiritual battlefield. By answering the call of God to serve, you stepped forward in the ranks to make yourself a bigger target.

There are many good studies out there about spiritual warfare as it applies to Ephesians 6. I would be a bad mentor if I didn't make a recommendation: *The Three Battlegrounds* by Francis Frangipane is one of the best studies I've ever read on the subject.

### Prayer Focus

Please, O God, equip me with your armor to contend spiritually.

## 1.17 Spiritual Warfare 2

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (Ephesians 6:16 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

You kept reading, didn't you? Clearly, we need to have a separate devotional regarding taking orders. I say that in jest of course, but bear with me as I pluck one small aspect out of Ephesians 6 for our efforts.

Imagine for a moment a Roman soldier with his shield moving in line with his comrades. It is more than half as tall as he is covering him from his head to below his knees. He has soaked it in water just prior to carrying it into battle, and it is very heavy. The flaming arrow of an enemy archer is snuffed out upon striking it. He has faith that when he holds it correctly with his fellow soldiers shoulder to shoulder that his unit will be victorious as they advance on their enemy.

The shield of the Roman soldier and especially the one carried by the centurion has become an image of authority and protection even in our time. Many law enforcement agencies have chosen the oval shield of the centurion as the badges for their departments. The idea of head-to-toe protection is a resounding concept of comfort.

In what water do you soak your shield of faith? I hope it is in the living water of God's Word. His holy Word will not return void to you. To have faith in what you can't see, you must believe in what the Holy Spirit shows you through digesting His Word.

### **Prayer Focus**

Father, increase my faith with your living water.

### **Knowledge Question**

Can you name one law enforcement agency that uses the centurion shield as its badge?

## War Story: Salvation

The summer revival of 1979 at the First Baptist Church of Utica, Oklahoma, was probably not all that eventful for Pastor Potter. After all, he was from the big church in town and was accustomed to preaching to far larger congregations than the one at the little country church where my dad was the pastor. Regardless of the attendance size, night after night, Pastor Potter thundered away with the crucifixion story of Jesus Christ. In vivid detail, he explained the entire process of how my Lord died and rose again. It didn't matter if he was preaching to a room of ten people or ten thousand. The way of the cross awaited one little preacher's kid. That Thursday night, I walked the aisle into the arms of a waiting Lord. Within days, I was baptized by Pastor Potter as my father and two deacons looked on in witness.

If you have never had this redemption experience—a saving encounter with the risen Lord of the universe—that is where you must start.



# Self-Defense and the Defense of Others

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.  
(Romans 13:4 KJV)

This section deals specifically with the concepts of self-defense and the defense of others. It is meant to help you resolve any unresolved questions you may have concerning the subject from a biblical standpoint. It is not meant to be a replacement for a legitimate use of force or tactical or legal training. I recommend you seek hands-on training from solid professionals in all those areas.

Conceptually speaking, I need you to understand two very important technical ideas as we proceed further. The avoidance of threat is merely self-preservation. However, the true essence of self-defense

is taking back the initiative from an attacker. There are distinct differences in those ideas.

## **2.18 Nonviolence and Self-Defense**

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:28)

### **Reflection and Application**

So how do we justify a position of self-defense or defending others with the principles of turning the other cheek? Jesus's command here is pretty clear, isn't it? If you read on in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, you will see Jesus dispensing knowledge rapidly to the crowd. The basis of this portion of the sermon is not seeking revenge. What we do and how we act must not be in revenge because vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19).

However, defending yourself or others is not an act of revenge but an act of preservation and survival. If you are a person placed in authority (Romans 13:1-7), it is part of your job to use physical force at times to protect others. These things are not revenge in nature but are fulfilling the authority of your position. We must not act or respond out of revenge for numerous reasons, but this verse is the major tenet that binds us in that fashion.

Not acting out of revenge is also tactically and legally important in our day. As a professional law enforcement officer, I know that if I shoot a man who thus stops his threatening behavior but I continue to shoot him, that is considered murder based on revenge. If I shoot him once and he stops his threatening behavior, that was an act of self-defense and within my authority. Things are much the same with physical techniques not involving firearms.

If a person grabs you or pushes you but then stops that but you beat the stuffing out of him and put him in the hospital, that may

be revengeful in nature and result in your being charged with aggravated assault. However, if you respond with the needed techniques to control him and defend yourself, that would not be revengeful.

Not acting out of revenge is the sign of a mature person. Acting out of authority instead of revenge is the hallmark of a truly professional operator in tactically oriented vocations.

## **Prayer Focus**

May the Lord help me not to respond in vengeance but in self-control and wisdom.

## **2.19 The Three Cities of Refuge–Self Defense**

Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it. Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither. (Deuteronomy 19:2–3 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The idea of self-defense was alive in the Old Testament as seen in the example of God ordering the three cities of refuge be established for those who had taken life in defense of themselves or others.

It is a tragic fact that human beings have a great propensity for violence. There are times that this violence may be directed at us, and we have no other choice except to defend ourselves or those around us.

This is the reason the Hebrew translation of the Ten Commandments translates the “kill” in “Thou shalt not kill” (lo tiršah) to a meaning more defined as murder. The meaning of lo tiršah is the premeditated killing of another person not in defense.

Let us be clear here—the killing of another human being is a very serious thing that vexes the soul. The human body, while resilient, is far more fragile than most people perceive. We think of people being killed by firearms, but the truth that the actual harming of someone with your hands can lead to his death is very likely and real. We must train appropriately to properly perform our service.

## **Prayer Focus**

God, help me to train diligently for the service you require of me.

## **2.20 Self-Defense in Protecting the Temple**

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. (John 2:15–17 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The ministry of Jesus Christ on earth during His first dissension is widely known as a nonviolent ministry. Great leaders of nonviolence including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi based part of their efforts in nonviolent civil disobedience and protest on the nonviolent ministry of Jesus Christ. However, all four Gospels record Jesus clearing the temple. It has been suggested that He did that several times. These were the only recorded instances in His ministry where He became violent. His actions here had everything to do with the use and protection of God's house. Let me say that

again for emphasis—His actions here had everything to do with the use and protection of God’s house.

The religious leaders had perverted the worship of God. People were taking out loans to buy the animals they would sacrifice to the Lord. The courts had become a marketplace of revenue, debt, and marketing. This brought out the very righteous indignation of Jesus so much that He made his own whip to drive the traders and lenders out of the temple.

This tells us two things; the temple of the Lord is a serious place, and clearly there are some times where physical violence is authorized in its defense. This includes our own bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to be ready to defend myself and others and keep your temple sacred.

## **2.21 The Cross Was Waiting**

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. (John 18:10 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Good old Peter. You have to give Peter points for being motivated in his followership. He was the only one who was brave enough to try to walk on water to meet Jesus. Then he cut off someone’s ear, an act that could have brought about his death. He was motivated and committed but still didn’t get the point. He saw himself as protecting his High Priest just as was Malchus. Then Jesus stepped in as the Lord of the universe to fix the mistake. Malchus received his ear back, and Jesus went to the cross to complete His mission.

If you were on the detail that was arresting Jesus and you saw him put someone's ear back on, wouldn't you rethink the whole thing? No, that didn't happen, did it? It was His destiny, and it had to happen. The cross was waiting as was our salvation.

We must be sensitive to the mission of the overall ministry as we go about on our own in protecting others because the cross still waits for many.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to stay focused on the big picture.

## **2.22 War in the Spirit**

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) (2 Corinthians 10:3–4 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

So is our warfare physical or spiritual? It is both, but the origins of our struggle are largely spiritual. We must have our spirits motivated and in line with the power of the Holy Spirit to get engaged to do the job.

Good physical fitness is important. It can determine your success or survival. Emotional fitness is important for the same reason. I bet where you work daily has a designated smoking area away from the building or has banned smoking because it has been proven to be unhealthy and a hindrance to productivity. They want their workers healthy enough to serve in the position. Spiritual fitness is even more important because it is the foundation of the other two areas.

Our battles are fought first in the realm of the spirit and our followership of the Lord, and through that discipline, the other aspects are strengthened.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to develop my spirit man first.

## **2.23 Training 1**

Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdued my people under me. (Psalm 144:1–2 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

I was sixteen when for the first time I competed in US Karate Championships. In one bout, my opponent came dashing across the ring and promptly kicked me directly in the throat. He was awarded two points for scoring a head kick even though striking the throat was clearly against the rules. My instructor did not protest the call. Later, when I asked him why he hadn't protested the call, he said something very pivotal that made it worth driving two hours to get kicked in the throat: "Look around," he said gesturing to the tournament as a whole. "These people are here to win at playing a game of tag. It's fun and it's karate, but it's a game just the same. Ultimately, I'm not teaching you to win a game but to survive a real fight. In real fights, clearly, kicks to the throat do count."

How could I argue with that? Training is important. No matter what experiences you have had in life, and they may be many and awesome if you have not secured a church, you have not performed

that task. Bring all your skills to the table but realize that training for this unique call is very specific.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, prepare my hand for service in your call.

## **2.24 Training 2**

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (1 Corinthians 9:26–27 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The moment at the 2004 International Police and Fire Games when those of us sitting in the black belt sparring waiting area realized our fellow competitor from Russia did not speak English and had not understood the restrictions on contact was etched in my memory. When the judge said fight, the Russian glided across the ring like the expert he was and promptly smashed his opponent's nose into pieces. It was very cinematic in nature as blood flew everywhere. I turned to the person sitting next to me and jokingly said, "I don't think he speaks English." As luck had it, I was right, and I was next in line to fight him. It was a war to be sure. However, I grew up fighting full contact, so to me, it was not a big thing, but to others there, it was intimidating.

In the end, I made friends with the Russian team members, all former Olympians, and we had a good time together because I was not intimidated. The other competitors did not get this benefit because they were not prepared to contend at the level that the Russian

team was accustomed to, and that excluded them greatly in forming relationships across the language barrier.

Training matters. How you train. When you train. How often and with whom you train in things of a physical nature matter in the finished product in everything you do.

My brother Paul, in writing to church in Corinth, was explaining in the above verse that training oneself matters because it can advance the cause of Christ in the world. Train with the purposes of the gospel in focus with whatever goal to which you are called. Achieve it, and don't be intimidated by the hard stuff.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please help me stay focused on your purposes and not become a castaway.

## **2.25 Training 3—Wrestling for a Blessing**

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. (Genesis 32:24–26 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

This verse is the earliest known reference regarding what those of us who enjoy the fighting arts called grappling. It is also the way the nation of Israel obtained its name. The important idea here is that Jacob knew he was outclassed in the struggle but didn't give up. He

also was in a bad way in life and needed the Lord's blessing. He wasn't letting go of what he thought God had in store for him even if it cost him his life. Instead, the wrestling match cost him a tendon in his leg.

Isn't it great that in our time we have the salvation of our Lord and need not wrestle for our blessing like Jacob? However, we must consider approaching the blessings of God with the same level of desire.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, thank you for your many blessings.

## **Knowledge Question**

What are the differences between self-defense and assault according to your state's criminal code?

## **War Story: Go Time!**

I grew up the son of a Southern Baptist preacher in rural Oklahoma. To understand this story, think early 1980s with kind of a 1950s taste to the area. When I was about ten, one of the pastors from my father's pastoral association and his deacon were murdered while on a fishing trip. Their vehicle, a small truck, was stolen during the crime. The months afterward were torrential times of rumors and fear for those in the area until the murderers were caught.

One day, a rumor surfaced that the truck had been spotted dumped in a ditch not far from where we lived. Having received this information, my father, who was recovering from hip surgery at the time, loaded me up and drove out to where the truck was rumored to be in a nearby creek.

I will never forget him stepping out of the car on one crutch and slipping into his pocket the Saturday night special he had bought my mother for protection when he had been deployed to Germany. He

sternly said to me, “Stay here.” He then hobbled down to the creek bank to discover it was not the right vehicle.

In adulthood, I have often wondered just what the heck he was thinking that day. A man on a crutch with a small gun was going to hobble down to a creek into a potentially dangerous situation leaving his kid alone in the car and do what? Where was the logic in this task? There wasn't any. It was spiritual warfare gone physical. It was a little area I call go time. As he hobbled down to the creek bank, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Utica, Oklahoma, slipped away and the middle son of a 1930s western Arkansas bootlegger emerged.

The point is that you can't avoid spiritual warfare going physical, especially if you are genuinely acting in the nature of God's Spirit and intent. You must plan for it. As I promise you, it is planning on you (Acts 16:17). It's go time!



# Safety and Security Operations

My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me. (Psalm 144:2 KJV)

This section is specifically dedicated to assist the person called to the ministry of church security and safety in understanding technical operations conducted in this service.

It is a true challenge to provide an environment that is open and welcoming to all while also being secure, controlled, and accountable. The balance can be achieved only with the presence of the Holy Spirit in every area of operations.

## 3.26 When Guard Duty Goes All Wrong

So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. (Matthew 27:66 KJV)

### Reflection and Application

How would you like to have been one of the soldiers charged with guarding the tomb where Jesus lay? How would you have liked to have explained the Resurrection and dealt with the aftermath of the politics involved in covering it up as stated in Matthew 28?

That whole thing had to have been a massive wake-up call for those soldiers. In Matthew 28, it says the angel rolled the stone away and then sat on it. That has to be the moment you realize all your time in the Roman legion adds up to exactly nothing compared to those of the heavenly hosts. Outclassed does not begin to cover that feeling and result. “Oh, you were guarding this tomb? This empty one right here? Yeah? Well, you failed, and now either way you go, you are dead men.”

These guys feared being punished by their own legion for failure or killed by the Sanhedrin so as to be silenced about the Resurrection. They were in a lose-lose situation. They got lucky in the fact that the Sanhedrin just wanted to bribe them instead. What must it have been like to guard the tomb of Christ as He lay the three days? For a Roman soldier, it must have been a scary experience that ended in terror.

The realization that the power of God makes our human efforts pale in comparison is an aspect we cannot afford to overlook. He can safeguard His house and His people all on His own. God chooses to let you and me be part of protecting His church so that we can fulfill our calling.

### Prayer Focus

God, thank you for the opportunity to serve in protecting your house.

### **3.27 The Rule of Thirds**

This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the Sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors. (2 Chronicles 23:4 KJV)

### **Reflection and Application**

After Solomon constructed the temple, things had to be reorganized a bit for the Levites serving on temple duty. They were coming from the mobile tabernacle to a fixed temple of solid construction. A third of the Levites became guards at the king's palace, a third were sent to guard the outer perimeter of the temple, and a third went to guard the actual doors of the temple; they were often called porters.

In the wilderness of the Exodus, the tribes camped in a perimeter around the tabernacle for security's sake. Later, we will see walls being constructed in Jerusalem around the temple of Solomon for better perimeter security.

The tribes would be dispersed in an even greater perimeter as they spread out as a nation to occupy the Promised Land. Still, the core or center of their national perimeter was the temple.

### **Prayer Focus**

Lord, surround the temple core of my life with many perimeters to protect it in your service.

### **3.28 Secure Perimeters**

But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites

shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.  
(Numbers 1:53 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

Let us go back to this foundational verse for the moment for another look. All through the rest of the Old and New Testaments, we see the Levite tribe being placed in charge of the priestly duties of Israel. We also see that their duties were so important that they had to secure the tabernacle by camping in a perimeter around it. The rest of the numbered tribes made up the outer perimeter of the nation with their camps. The Levites were set in the very middle, protecting the tabernacle and later the temple not only from strangers who might go in but also from their fellow countrymen who might try to access the tabernacle at the wrong time or in an unclean way. Their perimeter of protection wasn't just to protect the valuables that were inside but, more importantly, the seat of God's presence with humankind. In those days, God literally physically guided Israel through the desert with the glory of His presence. Approaching God in the wrong way could have meant instant death to a person (Leviticus 10:1-3).

Things aren't all that different today regarding the need for perimeters. Every physical security operation has established perimeters. Every cybersecurity system has firewalls. Perimeters are an orderly way of organizing the security of our lives in every way.

What personal security perimeters are in your life? What behaviors will you not engage in or what places will you not go because they violate the security of your well-being? These are foundational concepts given to us by God Himself. If you are to operate in the calling of church safety and security, you will be attacked spiritually if not also physically at some point in your service. Notice I said "will." Your call is of increasing risk, and you must make greater preparation to serve and survive. You must have strong spiritual perimeters in your life.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me strengthen the boundaries of protection in my life so I may function in your service safely.

## **War Story: Picking Up the Pieces**

It was 2011 when I finally returned to the scene of the Oklahoma City bombing. Fifteen years had gone by since my last visit there, and sixteen since the time I had been there with the 445<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company. I took my wife with me through the museum on the site of the Alfred P. Murrah Building. There in the recreation of the Ryder truck's axle, I pointed out to her the piece I had recovered. I was surprised when I found it so easily. The twisted metal shard wasn't that different than the day I had handed it over to the federal agent who had entered it into evidence. I had found it a block away while doing a perimeter search the morning after the attack.

When lives get blown apart, the pieces go everywhere. I found that piece doing a search of the one-block-out perimeter. Perimeters matter in defending something or someone. Reestablishing boundaries of safety also matters when putting your life back together.

## **3.29 Assessing Risks and Threats**

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power,  
and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

On day six of our study, we considered this verse regarding the spirit of fear. Now let us consider it by looking at the element of a sound mind. Sound minds show discretion in their thinking process (Proverbs 19:11).

Part of our calling is to estimate or assess indicators to determine and differentiate risks from threats to safety and act accordingly. A sound mind calls us as professionals to weigh possible risks (anything can happen) and probable threats (indicators suggest this might happen). When we say that one thing is possible as a risk, we must weigh that thought by contemplating it as a probable threat to see if it balances out. If it does not appear to be something that is on the near horizon, our decision-making might change based on the influences we are considering.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to discern the differences in risk and threat to myself and to others.

### **3.30 Operational Security (OpSec)**

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. (2 Timothy 2:4 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

This verse exemplifies one area that is difficult at times for people, especially when they are passionate about the subject. Basically, never get involved with those outside your area of operations lest you leak something sensitive. Further, if your leader is dealing with an issue socially or politically, you might give the opposition ammunition to use against his or her efforts.

This is one reason many organizations have professional public relations people who speak to the media and other entities. It is their job to assure that proper information is presented and that sensitive information is safeguarded. Nothing alienates the boss quicker than

your going around him or her and providing unchecked information to those who don't need it. No one likes a leaker, and it's a great way to get uninvited to participate in operations. Always remember, loose lips sink ships.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to guard my lips and my heart.

### **3.31 Gossip Is an Inside Threat to Operations**

As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. (Psalm 109:17–18 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

There are many types of gossipers. Many attend church and think their actions are innocent social relations, but gossip can do real damage to operations. As someone privy to sensitive information, you will be targeted by gossipers to solicit information. Do not engage in this for a variety of reasons.

Plenty of verses tell us not to gossip to maintain good relations with each other. The one above actually talks about the Hebrew word *qelalah*, meaning “curse of vilification.” You may have heard someone say gossip is considered witchcraft in the Bible. Well, that is a somewhat accurate opinion. The spreading of rumors, slander, and information intended to influence people, in our day called gaslighting, is a type of curse or *qelalah*. The forces of evil continually nip at the heels of the church and especially the pastorate. Do not let yourself be used for this purpose, and don't release sensitive information to people who have no need to know.

“Need to know” is the cardinal rule of information security. If they don’t need to know, disclose nothing. If you don’t need to know, don’t inquire. If you’re unsure of either, ask someone in charge.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to recognize the approach of the gossiper and rebuke it.

### **3.32 Operational Security (OpSec)— The Eleventh Commandment**

And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. (Judges 16:6 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The Eleventh Commandment for our purposes is “Thou shalt not be a moron,” especially when it comes to OpSec. Our brother Samson walked willingly into his own destruction because he thought he had control of everything and everyone, including the lovely Delilah. He walked into what is called the honey trap. The honey trap is one of the oldest techniques used to conduct information gathering in espionage. A person who is attractive to the target’s nature and normally his sexual nature is selected. She seduces the target to obtain information and/or blackmail him for information or actions. It is still done just this way in our day.

Here, Delilah directly asked him twice and even bound him twice, and he still walked right into his doom. He was a moron, and it cost him his service as a judge of Israel. Sin can bind us like Samson.

Like Delilah, sin can tease you, please you, and then seize you.

Like Samson, we can willingly walk to our doom. Use caution in the risks you take because they directly affect others.

## **Prayer Focus**

May God help me to resist temptations that will seize me.

## **3.33 Intelligence Gathering**

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. (Joshua 2:1 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

More than once, Joshua made use of spies to gather information as he conquered the Promised Land. If you read the next few verses, these spies were discovered the moment they entered Jericho at night, and Rahab had to hide them. The note to self in Joshua's daily log must have read, "Get sneakier spies."

Gathering useful operational information is a good thing. Like Joshua, gathering and collecting isn't used on the people of the church but instead on the promised lands we are here to conquer. Let me say that again—we don't collect information on the people of the church unless some sort of risk or threat is being assessed that is vital to maintain safety.

There are many ways to gather useful and relevant information about an area in which you intend to operate. For example, [www.crimereports.com](http://www.crimereports.com) can tell you a great deal about the type of crime and subsequently the social problems that cause them that are occurring in an area. The internet is a big source of useful information.

However, never overlook the need to actually survey the area for yourself.

## **Prayer Focus**

God, help me learn to gather useful information about the area you have called my church to reach and to keep it safe.

### **3.34 On the Defeating of Giants**

And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:38–40 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

It is no little irony that the two kings anointed by Samuel share the same space in this story. The technical functionality is almost drowned out by the symbolic irony. Shakespeare could not have written this situation better. Saul was giving David his armor to meet the challenge, but in a way, it was also the passing of the mantle of a warrior king. By letting David accept the challenge, Saul was saying he was not willing to do it himself. That message is almost always the death knell of leadership for warriors. Saul's entire army had failed to step up and accept the challenge. It naturally would fall to the leader to accept it.

Saul's armor was made for a full-grown man and designed to be worn by a king. David was accustomed to fighting with what he was trained to use as a shepherd. Bigger and more expensive is not always better, especially when God is already ready to deliver you the win in a situation. It is better to stick with what you know and let God score the big win.

The late Bruce Lee stated, "I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times." This is an accurate statement regarding the level of preparedness it take to defeat giants.

## **Prayer Focus**

May it be, O Lord, that you equip me well for my Goliath.

## **3.35 Punched in the Mouth**

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps. (Proverbs 16:9 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

No plan of operations reaches with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main force.  
—Helmuth von Moltke, commander, Prussian Army, 1880

Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.  
—Mike Tyson, world heavyweight boxing champion

I got off an airplane in Phoenix, Arizona, late one night and went to the baggage claim to claim my luggage. There at the luggage collection area was the champ himself Iron Mike Tyson collecting his luggage. His distinctive facial tattoo left little doubt that it was him,

and I was shocked that I was actually taller, as he had been a giant to me since I first saw him fight.

I was mustering up the nerve to introduce myself as a fan when a pretty woman and several children walked up to greet him, obviously his family. At that time a former champion of the world, he traveled like everyone else. I figured it would be rude to intrude on the reunification of a family after a trip, so I stored my fan moment away and moved on with my evening. My plan to introduce myself was interrupted. Everyone's plans get interrupted.

There is a mode or model of planning for everything in environments that contain people of action charged with the protection of others. God certainly has an orderly mind and does things in a fashion after His own planning. Plans make us successful in life and should be utilized if at all possible. However, always expect that punch in the mouth. We have devised many planning formats, and at great expense, like the National Incident Management System or the many military planning systems. The ability to act and react in response appropriately is very important. Much of this planning is based on the training of our instincts. However, as Christians, we tend to do things a little differently.

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3 KJV). Yes, as followers of the risen Lord, we are constrained to respond to His direction first despite our planning efforts. It's not going with our gut. It's going where we're being led. There is a difference in spiritual discernment and personal intuition. Plan and act logically, but discernment rules the decision-making in the end.

## **Prayer Focus**

Holy Spirit, please lead me in the Lord's direction.

### **3.36 Cardinal Delegation of Zechariah**

And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. All

these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord, namely, the house of the tabernacle, by wards. (1 Chronicles 9:21–23 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

There are several points in this passage. Primarily, we see the instructions for access control of the tabernacle that were previously handed down to the Levites being assigned in a direct manner to Zechariah and 211 other people as part of their ordained porter duties. Security and safety, of which access control is a large part, were included in their duties.

Should you read the next few verses, you will find that access control of the tabernacle perimeter was assigned in the four cardinal directions, as were their living assignments. When in doubt, if you don't have a plan, go in the cardinal directions. They were also assigned safety and control of the sacred items. Many of these things were very literal in nature but are no less important in our time as they were in their day.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please help to serve with good order.

## **War Story: Answer the Call**

*December 25, 1990, Christmas Eve*

My mother's special banquet dinner table was dressed for a Christmas Eve feast. The house was decorated, and family from everywhere had been scurrying about preparing. Children had been

playing. My family had been cooking for days. Everyone had his or her best dish prepared. The Christmas tree, which had seen so many years of our attention, glowed from the lights and ornaments that adorned it. Everyone had found a place around the table, and we were about to begin the dinner.

Rumors of war had been swirling in the news for weeks since the Iraqi army had recently invaded the tiny country of Kuwait to its south. We knew war was going to happen; its cold hand was gripping our nation in a deadly grasp of media frenzy. I hadn't even bothered to enroll for another semester of school, as I was sure I would be deployed.

The telephone in the kitchen rang, and my mother answered it. She looked at me, turned pale, and stated, "It's for you." I took the receiver.

"Hello?"

"This is a grazing herd call," I heard; that was the alert code we had been trained to give over the telephone on legitimate activation calls. "Merry Christmas, Private Turtle. We're going to war," my platoon sergeant Tommy Crone said with a matter-of-fact reluctance, which was his personality. He called me by my nickname given to me for my martial arts talents and its affiliation to the popular Ninja Turtles movie. I was to report for deployment in just a few days. We completed the call, and I went to the dinner table.

Everyone was seated, and we were about to give thanks for the meal. My mother, seated to my father's left at the head of the table, stared at me from across the room. Her gaze demanded me to tell her what was happening. Everyone else was alerting to her as well. Seeing that there was no way of avoiding commenting, I threw the elephant in the room right onto the middle of the dinner table. It would become a dramatic moment in our family history. There was no use hiding the information, as everyone could feel it. "That was my platoon sergeant on the phone. I'm being activated for deployment the day after tomorrow."

Faces fell around the table in a pause of realism. The mood was certainly broken, and then my father, a World War II veteran, prayed

a very serious prayer for dinner. It would be one of many over the next few months.

Accepting the call to service is very much a family affair. Do you have the support of your family while accepting the call to church security and safety?



# The Nehemiah Perspective

Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me. (Psalm 144:1–2 KJV)

This section specifically focuses on the subject of church security and safety through the study of the book of Nehemiah. Many of these studies retrace the trip we have already taken together but are expounded through the eyes of Nehemiah.

The story of Nehemiah has been very impactful on me for many years because of the personal parallels I have with the situation. I can relate greatly to the efforts of Nehemiah. I pray it will be the same for you as well.

## 4.37 Do You Have the Heart for This?

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. (Nehemiah 1:4 KJV)

### Reflection and Application

My grandfather died several days prior to what we now call the Oklahoma City bombing. I had to make a decision. I could go to the funeral or deploy with my National Guard unit to try to rescue the people trapped in the building.

I knew my grandfather well enough to know he would have wanted me to rescue the living. Recusing the living, the surviving, was the heart that Nehemiah had as well. Yes, he longed to restore the majesty and structure of Jerusalem as a city, but he was more concerned for the remnant of people still living in destruction.

He had the heart and intellect to do the Lord's work while facing some amazing odds. Here we see him getting the bad news about the destruction of Jerusalem. However, he had to have already known it was in bad shape. The conquering of Jerusalem was how he came to be in captivity in the first place. So what was the big surprise?

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king of Babylon. Certainly, he was well aware that Jerusalem had been sacked. Nehemiah had a burden for those surviving in Jerusalem. In the verses that follow, we see him taking a very priestly position and interceding for Israel in prayer. This is where his burden was yoked upon him to go on his mission. This is where he took on the mantle to rescue and restore.

Have you had such an impactful moment in surrendering to the call of God? What is your mission?

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to respond well to the yoking of your burden.

### **4.38 The King's Privilege**

And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) for how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. (Nehemiah 2:6 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

It is a significant thing that God opened the king's heart regarding Nehemiah's request to return and rebuild Jerusalem. After all, it was his kingdom that had conquered and destroyed it in the first place.

However, like any executive leader, King Artaxerxes had plenty of questions regarding what Nehemiah wanted to do. Proverbs 25:2 tells us, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter." Here, we see that factor playing out for Nehemiah.

Don't be afraid to approach the leaders in your life with the important requests that support the call you are answering. Have something present for them to search out about the issue. Don't present problems without being ready to present solutions.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me be respectful yet fearless in following your call.

### **4.39 Expect Adversity**

When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly

that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. (Nehemiah 2:10 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

A few years after the September 11, 2001, attacks, I was taking a prominent psychologist, a world-renowned expert in crisis intervention, back to his hotel room after a long day.

Suddenly, this amazing expert and mentor turned to me and asked in almost a childlike tone, “Jim, do you believe there will ever be another terrorist attack on the United States?” I was a little stunned at the straightforward yet naive nature of that question coming from a man I knew had responded to more than one attack including ground zero in New York.

I finally sensed that his thoughts were overwhelming him. He was looking for confirmation that what he was doing with his life was the right thing. What he was really asking me was if he was wasting his time going all over the civilized world teaching people how to deal with the aftermath of such events. How could that possibly be a waste of time?

I stopped the car and for a very brief moment became the teacher and not the pupil. I looked him in the eyes and with my best Dirty Harry voice said, “Yes, Bob I do, but that is what you pay me for. If I did not believe that way, I would be of no use in protecting America.” I think that was the moment he really felt the difference between his life and mine.

There is always a Sanballat the Horonite or a Tobiah the Ammonite waiting out there to start problems. If there were not, why would we need to be called to this service? Expect the enemy to be waiting, and expect him to resist. Be ready to deal with the enemy as you have been led. It’s what we are here to do.

## **Prayer Focus**

God, help me to remain vigilant and prepared.

## 4.40 Nehemiah's Ninja Moment

Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. (Nehemiah 2:15–16 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

Jerusalem was not destroyed as a place to live. There were plenty of people of many creeds still living in the area and among the destroyed ruins. Not unlike today, its walls were down, its infrastructure from antiquity demolished, and a current structure had taken its place. In that absence, Ezra had arrived in a previous time and tried to put things back together spiritually. It was Nehemiah's turn to start building.

Nehemiah had to be cautious in even his initial survey of the situation to not prompt an adversarial position from those still there leading the local community. His information had to be exact and unimpeachable when he did finally approach them. He wasn't going to win the struggle without real facts that couldn't be denied. It also didn't hurt that he had the supplies to do the job.

## Prayer Focus

May I be wise enough to see my Ninja moments.

## 4.41 Setting the Watch in Prayer

Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. (Nehemiah 4:9 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

It is important here to note that prayer was the first move that the group made before taking up arms and standing the watch. Let's not take this verse lightly. It's a very personal thing when someone threatens to kill you. It's even more disconcerting when it's an entire group of people who have committed to your destruction. I will forever have impressed in my mind the image of Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega waving a machete over his head and spouting threats to America in a speech. Of course, his inevitable end arrived swiftly and justly as was fitting.

Conquering our fear is a very real factor in these situations. Bravery that has overcome the condition of fear is the finer point of valor. It is the thread that sews the valiant together. It is also the twig on which the foolhardy snap and are revealed as cowards.

## Prayer Focus

Lord may I always seek you first in prayer.

## 4.42 Strategic Thinking

Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. (Nehemiah 4:13 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

We continually see Nehemiah emerging as a tactical leader as the story unfolds. He had the ability to focus in straight-line thinking like a good manager and the ability to think around corners like a strategic leader. He has come a long way from being the guy who was willing to drink poison for the Babylonian king.

People often focus vaguely on the fact that the workers labored with weapons at the ready. However, we see more than that occurring here, so please don't miss the golden nugget in this passage. Nehemiah had a defensive strategy spiritually as well as physically. In today's world, we would call this asymmetric warfare. It made good sense to Nehemiah to cover all the angles. It still makes sense to operate that way.

## **Prayer Focus**

May the Lord bless me to think in straight lines and around corners.

## **4.43 Sound of the Trumpet**

In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. (Nehemiah 4:20 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

You know that guy who talks too much on the radio because he's insecure?

“Radio check! Radio check!”

“Post 14 Secure.”

Again for the fourteenth time in an hour.

Everyone has that guy on the team. If you haven't been that guy at one point or another, you were clearly a miracle from above. True confession—I've been that guy. Hey! Why do you think I can write so much? There is a simple way to mature people in a way that they do not do that so often. You put them in a position that mandates no matter who responds on the radio, they still have to take care of business first to survive.

Nehemiah's communications were pretty simple. He blows the horn. You coming running. Simple and easy to remember, and it takes care of business.

Communications are vital to everything. Overcommunicating is generally better than undercommunicating, but there are exceptions of course, for instance, the guy who won't be quiet. Still, if you know nothing more than the horn blow, you can prepare yourself to confront just about anything.

Spiritually speaking, where is God's horn blowing in your life? What is holding you back from further growing in your walk with Him? Is the Lord blowing a horn and stomping all over it to get your attention? Eventually, any lack of action on your part regarding it including ignoring Him will still count as a declination on your part.

## **Prayer Focus**

My Lord, help me to be attentive to your communication.

## **4.44 The Guards Who Followed**

So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that everyone put them off for washing. (Nehemiah 4:23 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

It was good that Nehemiah and his security detail had at the very least time to wash their clothes. It is valid to point out that while Nehemiah did leave Babylon on this trip with an escort from the king, we see him using those resources more vigorously.

At first, he was very clandestine in surveying Jerusalem alone. However, when his enemies finally became aroused against him,

he needed more protection. The threat while covert to an extent was increasing. In the previous passage, you will see that the other members of the construction effort were not in a much better place as they were sleeping under guard and in a group inside the city. Things were tense. Espionage, sabotage, and assassination were all very real threats to every one of them.

Many church leaders are far too humble about personal protection. Many see the enthusiasm of their security team and react to it in defiance calling it faith when in truth it is a hubris of humility or false humility. They decline security because they don't want it to be all about them; they want to stay humble and not touch God's glory. This is not an entirely bad way to be. Not touching God's glory is an important aspect of ministry to be sure, but when God's glory is working through and partnering with a ministry, at times, the threats can be very real. There is a fine balance of the issues to weigh, but the bottom-line question to ask is, are there potential threats to that leader? Real talk: if the devil isn't threatening you, you are likely no threat to him.

I think that protecting a leader who has not been threatened can be a step toward the manipulation of persuasive vanity. This is why leaders often rebuff the idea, and that is understandable. However, a real threat must be addressed despite the perceived vanity of the situation for the security mind-set of everyone. Plainly, if a church leader is targeted and that threat is successful, it undermines the sense of security in the congregation.

Can God protect Himself and His people without our help? Of course. He can and does. But as has been said many times before, He often chooses to partner with people. This partnership includes the ministry of church safety and security.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, may I readily recognize the types of threats that I encounter overtly and covertly.

## **4.45 The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same**

That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. (Nehemiah 6:2 KJV)

### **Reflection and Application**

If there is one chapter of the Bible that applies more to the current government, you can have my lunch. Wall building, slander, impeachment, mudslinging—it's all here in Nehemiah 6. He had his own version of the Russia collusion investigation. Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem were putting the finishing touches on the perimeter wall, and their opponents couldn't have been more spun up about it. His enemies were still trying to trap him, slander him, and disrupt the good work. Nehemiah was wise enough not to fall for the traps, and he was made governor of Judah.

Following God's call had led him to some strange places where he had to build walls to maintain security and freedom of the land. The building of the wall forced the bad actors in the environment to rise to the surface of public attention. For everyone to see the security of the people was an obstacle to their enterprise, which is a modern-day comparison if ever there was one.

### **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please reveal the bad actors in our environments

## **4.46 We Won This One**

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came

to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. (Nehemiah 6:15–16 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

“They were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God”; that was Nehemiah’s way of saying, “Take that, bad guys!” Even after the construction was finished, the opposition was still sending letters of slander around about Nehemiah, and his life was still endangered. The leaders whom God uses in a mighty way are certainly a threat to the forces of evil. However, anyone God is using is a threat. If you are not getting pushed back, slandered, and threatened, maybe you’re not in the right battle.

It is no little irony that as I wrote this today, the top story in the news was President Trump visiting the finished border wall prototype in San Diego. I did not plan this that way, nor is it all that coincidental. Strong defenses physically and spiritually are part of God’s plan for our safety.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, I am a warrior by your eternal call. From age to age, you have brought men to your battlefield. Help me to sense the right battles in which to engage, and help me assure that my defenses are sound. May I always be sensitive to your voice.

## **4.47 Walking Worthy**

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. (Ephesians 4:1 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

Here, the apostle Paul gave us a directive that seemingly there was no way to meet. How do you walk worthy of Christ's sacrifice? Nehemiah gave it his all despite the constant aggravating problems that he faced as an administrator of Judah. Much like Moses, he couldn't leave his post for very long before someone would do something that would mess up the process and get them in trouble with God almighty.

At one point, he had this to pray regarding his efforts: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof" (Nehemiah 13:14 KJV).

Yep, I've been there. I feel that way regarding one chaplaincy ministry from which the Lord is transitioning me at the moment. I suppose that is why Nehemiah is one of my favorite books.

God is the only entity in the universe that can judge a person by his or her heart and not by actions only. I am very thankful for that aspect, and I'm sure so was Nehemiah.

## Prayer Focus

Thank you, Lord, for your saving grace.

## War Story: 105 to Yuma

Wouldn't you want to see a good Western entitled *105 to Yuma*? With my air conditioner out of service and the part on order to fix it, I headed to San Diego from Tucson in early summer 2016 to attend the National Church Safety and Security Conference. The temperature in my truck as I drove through Yuma, Arizona, was 105. The Lord and I were deeply discussing things regarding the changing of my call in the church the entire drive. It was more like me complaining actually.

I was not happy about being called to church security because I felt I still had more to give in the chaplaincy ministry I had been led to found in the government over seventeen years earlier. Furthermore, to me as a career law enforcement officer, church security seemed like a step down.

It was torture. I bet I lost ten pounds in water weight even driving in shorts and a tank top. Somewhere west of Yuma, I'm pretty sure I hallucinated at least once.

While I was at the conference, the attack on the Pulse nightclub in Florida occurred, and one of the pastors from my church responded to minister to that community. I read his social media posts while attending classes at the conference, and I figured out what the Lord was telling me in regard to this call. He said, "You wanted to be in law enforcement, and for years, I have helped you answer that call and will continue to do so. But now, I want to make use of what you have learned by using it to protect my people." What could I say to that other than, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."



# Behavioral Detection and the Church

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. (Matthew 10:16 KJV)

The subject of behavior detection in a church setting could be an entire book in its own right. However, any work regarding security and human interaction necessitates some discourse on the subject. Further, it must be a discourse based in legitimate analysis and not hyperbole.

Applying the ideologies of behavioral detection and advanced situational awareness in the environment of a worship service or another religious activity could present serious challenges and may be the most challenging aspect of security in that environment. The church setting certainly presents one of the more complicated dynamics in behavioral detection that I have encountered, as there is often no exact baseline of behavior except with the more liturgical and strict religions.

Some churches have a set service format in which anything out of the ordinary is easily detectable. Then there are my fellow charismatic Pentecostals who throw that baseline behavior thing to the wind. At times, they are truly a behavioral detection nightmare unless you are inherently in touch with the congregation. If you are not in touch with normal behaviors of the church you are securing, you better find some people who are and work out some form of communication with them to alert you if something isn't right. For further reading on this subject, I recommend the book *Left of Bang* by Patrick Van Horne and Jason A. Riley.

## 5.48 The Lord Judges the Heart

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

The above passage from the anointing of David shows us that only God knows and judges a person's heart. Thanks be to God that He can see what's in my heart and not just my actions. We of course do not have that ability. We must remember that no matter how good our behavior analysis is, in the end, it may not accurately tell us what is in a person's heart. However, in this regard and in this position or calling, our knowing a person's heart is not at all our goal. We want to detect indicators that notify us when something bad is about to occur. We have no crystal ball. We may misinterpret or even overlook indicators. The goal is to act on resolving indicators that we perceive to prevent an action that might be unsafe. By that same token, we must be responsible with our observations not to begin conjecture and rumor that might defame someone should

our indicators be based on something that is explainable in the end. Clearly, behavioral detection, behavioral analysis, and behavioral profiling are different things, and we generally want to remain in the first area.

## **Prayer Focus**

Thank you, my God, that you judge my heart and not only my actions.

## **5.49 The Baseline Is Peculiar**

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

God's people are peculiar. There you have it. Our baseline behavior threshold is in some way always going to be peculiar. What the world outside sees as normal, we may not, and vice versa. The behavior of people without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will change when they encounter the living God. Hopefully, this change will be for the better, but there is always a potential for them to reject the encounter. Either way, they will likely exhibit behaviors that differ from their personal norm. The issue is that we might not know what their personal norms are. We have no choice but to look for general divergences from the baseline as indicators. One big indicator or three smaller indicators necessitate our taking some kind of action. Let me say that again—one big indicator or three smaller indicators necessitate our taking some kind of action.

## Prayer Focus

Lord, make me sensitive to actions of others.

### 5.50 Origins of Human Behavior and the Proxemics Relationship

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Genesis 3:11 KJV)

### Reflection and Application

In the fall of man, we see our species on our first misadventure into bad behavior. That is putting it lightly of course, but still, we see some important points here. First, Adam and Eve ate not just from the Tree of Knowledge but from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Obviously, the knowledge or awareness of good and evil affects our behaviors. Their actions cost us all and revealed to them that they were naked. So they hid in the garden from the Lord. This hiding or moving away from someone or something is one of the first examples of a proxemics push that we can note in humankind. Proxemic positioning can result in a proxemics push or pull.

If some newcomer sits in your normal seat at church, you feel a proxemic push to say, "Hey, you're in my spot." Of course, you don't say that out of good manners. So you go sit the next row over next to someone else, who thinks, *Hey ... He normally doesn't sit here*, and who moves over more creating a greater personal space between you and that person. Two examples of proximity pushes.

You will see this kind of proxemic relationship in the constant adjustment of people's personal space and grouping together. Strangers

in groups can easily be detected, as the group will either shift away from them (push) or gravitate toward them in abundance to welcome them (pull). Either way, proxemic relationships matter as an opening or consistent indicator.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help increase in me an awareness of others.

## **5.51 The First Murder and Kinesics**

And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth?  
and why is thy countenance fallen? (Genesis 4:6 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The interesting thing in the Lord asking Cain about his countenance is that He knew the answer to His question. When He asked Adam and Eve who had told them they were naked, He was giving them a chance to confess the wrong things they had done. With no little irony, they tried to talk their way out of the problem. However, the important aspect to note is that even God pays attention to behavioral indicators.

A simple word search of the word *countenance* in the Bible reveals how involved that aspect is in the totality of human behavior, as it is mentioned frequently. Countenance matters to God, and it matters to us. If the person you're assessing has emotional expressions that indicate he or she has a distressing reaction or could be unsafe, such expressions are indicators we should certainly note. Nonverbal cues such as angry expressions, clenched fists or teeth, blading away in position, eyes wide open to take in light, bending knees to prepare for movement, red or flushed faces, odd smiles, or exaggerated gestures can all be preattack indicators. The body language of the person,

also known as kinesics, demonstrates indicators to us constantly. Someone shouting in anger is of course a big indicator, but it is verbal in nature. Kinesics are more concerned with body positioning and nonverbal cues.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help my countenance be that of Your favored servant.

## **5.52 Countenance and Kinesics**

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. (Proverbs 15:13 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Frequently, people attend church because of problems in their lives. They are trying to seek God's favor to resolve their situations. It is logical as stated above in Proverbs that their countenances may be fallen or negative. This doesn't mean they are threats. It just means they are dealing with some serious issues in an appropriate way. Their attendance is part of practicing their faith. It is a normal baseline. As we are told in Exodus 23:3, we are not to make their problems worse.

The point of awareness is to detect indicators being displayed that don't generally match their current behavior. A contradiction in behavior can be an indicator in and of itself. For example, a person who is claiming to be exhausted but is clearly hyperactive might very well be exhausted, but his or her problem is manifest in the hyperactivity. This could indicate drug use or extreme mental dysfunction. Inconsistencies in behaviors are important to note, but unless there is a potential threat forming or being presented, they are likely the business of other church ministries.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, increase my sensitivity to others in order to protect Your flock.

### **5.53 Iconography—It’s Not a Fashion Show**

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (James 2:2–4 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Putting on your Sunday best is never a bad thing if you’re doing it to be reverent in God’s house. However, as my brother James pointed out, if you’re taking part in a socially based fashion show, you’re wrong. This is important for us in behavior detection as well. While we don’t want to overlook the obvious, we don’t want to judge a book by its cover either regarding things involving safety. We certainly don’t want to get caught up in the church fashion show. However, we can’t afford to ignore iconography either. Iconography consists of the symbolic things that people wear or display.

For example, on one occasion, the human resources director of my church encountered a man walking into the front area of our worship center wearing a devil’s mask. This is a great example of the one big indicator I mentioned. He confronted the man and turned him away, as it was clear he was just there to cause trouble. While that’s a very simplistic example, it’s still a very good representation of the idea of symbolism detection involved with iconography—any dude walking into a church with a devil’s mask on is looking to start some problems.

One idea of iconography is to detect a person's likes or personality, and we do this constantly in relationships out of habit. The guy wearing the T-shirt with the name of a rock 'n' roll band probably likes his music loud and electric. Another aspect of iconography concerns what someone has prepared to do prior to attending. For example, the guy wearing flip-flops to church isn't planning on running. He might be a good barefoot runner, but in general, we can conclude he's not anticipating the need to run.

The question is then, who appears dressed with the ability to cause a problem? Remember, ability and intent are two different things. Just because someone shows up in some fashion of military battle dress when clearly he's not in the military doesn't mean he's out to cause a problem. However, it does show us one indicator out of the ordinary and should raise our situational awareness in detection. Certainly, it is worthy of further investigation.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me remember that judgment is yours, but using good judgment is mine.

## **5.54 Verbal Indicators and the OODA Loop**

And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. (1 Samuel 17:42 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Goliath of Gath made the fatal mistake of judging the book of young David before he looked at the pages. He thought David was going to fight a head-on battle with him like so many others had done. He neglected to give credence to David's words. If he had taken those seriously, he might have lived.

If someone has verbally declared his intention to hurt or kill you, you should certainly take that seriously. Always believe the guy who says he's going to try and kill you (vv. 46–47) no matter how unlikely you think that is in reality.

Goliath had a serious problem with hubris and did not have a very good OODA loop in place as a warrior. The OODA loop is a decision-making process quantified by US Air Force Colonel John Boyd. It's an acronym for Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act. Goliath observed David, and in his orientation to the situation, he decided David was no real threat. So he failed to act in saving his own head. This is a common problem in dealing with tactical situations and the reason we as protectors are constantly drilling and training.

Goliath got stuck in making a bad decision in his own poor judgment process.

## **Prayer Focus**

My Lord, help me pay attention and act accordingly.

## **5.55 Preparation and More about the OODA Loop**

And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. (1 Samuel 17:38–39 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The account of David killing Goliath is loaded with warrior monk moments that can teach us much about facing enemies. One of the

most salient moments in this confrontation was David's decision not to use the king's armor. First, what a state Saul must have been in to offer his kingly armor to the shepherd boy. One might think he was off his rocker. Further, David would have gained great face among the troops by wearing the king's armor. Sociopolitically, it said to everyone, "Hey, I'm Saul's guy. I'm his pick, his favored." I am sure there were plenty of other mighty men in the army who would have liked that status.

Military units still have awards, decorations, and badges that show skill and favor to the troops from the command. This wasn't about the favor of King Saul. None of his troops had stepped up to the challenge. God had chosen to lead his people with a shepherd boy, not an army. Let that sink in for a second. Maybe you are not a tier-one, snake-eating, super ninja, but your church body needs you to help secure the environment for those attending. If God wanted SEAL Team 6, He would have sent them.

Saul giving his armor to David must have been an amazing insult to the mightiest of Saul's soldiers. However, David killed Goliath in front of everyone, which forced the Philistines to retreat. In the end, there was nothing anyone could say negative about David. It was an amazing demonstration of God's power. If he had worn Saul's armor, it would have looked as if Saul had been part of the solution.

David made his decision based not on the political or religious aspects of the situation but on his OODA loop. "What? OODA loop indeed?" you ask. David had never used armor before; he "had not proved them" (v. 39). Armor was foreign to him, and he needed to be on his best game to face his enemy. That is why he ditched Saul's armor. He was sticking with what he knew he could use effectively. He was relying on something that he could orient to resolve the situation.

People frequently ask me, "Jim, which gun is the best one for me to get for this or that?" My answer is always the same: "The best one is the one you will frequently use to practice." If handling weapons isn't hardwired into your skill set as David's sling was wired into his, you're asking for mission failure when you cycle through your

own OODA loop. People normally fail in the first two areas of the loop. They fail to observe a threat correctly or at all, or when they do observe it, they don't orient to the situation. They talk themselves out of orienting properly through denial or disbelief. They say, *This isn't happening* over and over in their heads while "this" is actually happening. They never make it to the decide or act areas of the loop. David was orienting to his situation. "I haven't proved them." He decided to act with what weapons and fighting knowledge were in his abilities.

A very good book about this area of decision-making is *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin Debecker. I recommend it for reading homework to those considering defending themselves or others. It talks about how people should listen to that voice of warning they hear in dangerous situations.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, make me sensitive to your voice in these situations.

## **5.56 King David, One of the First CCW Holders**

And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. (1 Samuel 17:49 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

The Bible doesn't tell us if David had concealed his sling in his bag during the verbal exchange with Goliath. It does say that he drew his stone from his bag. I like to think that David was using some deception to his advantage in that regard and probably had concealed the sling initially as well.

This exhibits another failure for Goliath in interpreting kinesics in the area known as furtive movement. Did Goliath see David reach in his bag? Did he even take note of the bag as bags were likely just as common then as they are now? Did he observe David winding up by twirling his weapon? It was a sling after all, and David had to have a clear shot to bring him down. Could it be that Goliath thought his helmet would deflect it? That would be a reasonable conclusion, but in this case, it was the wrong one because David was a good shot.

Goliath missed plenty of possible indicators that could have saved his life. We can take a lesson here first to always look for concealed weapons.

A great many CCW holders today carelessly let themselves print the position of their weapon through their clothes purposely so people will see the imprint and know they are armed. That is a foolish and a false psychological defensive measure to try to avoid confrontation through advertising you are armed. It is a warning sign of the poorly trained that I call “carrying revealed.” These people exhibit their intent as passive self-defense. Passive self-defense can fail to act or can cause more problems than solutions if a real situation manifests. It is different from prevention or threat reduction.

Basically, anything that is for show and really won't work as a deterrent or an effective response is passive self-defense. Case in point—the No Weapons Allowed signs people post on their establishments. Sure, they give the CCW holders notice, but a homicidal maniac who has already thrown the law to the wind will blow right past them. So the moral of the story is that passive self-defense is a pitfall of false hope. We need to pay attention to the people who don't want to be revealed or who blatantly don't care because they are initiating an assault.

People wearing clothing too big for them or unseasonal in nature like a heavy coat in summer are certainly people to whom we pay direct attention. Also, those who are constantly patting themselves down or adjusting their clothing can be carrying hidden items. Extraordinarily large or out-of-place bags for the situation are also indicators of concealment.

The lesson here is to pay attention to indicators both verbal and kinesic in nature that may not fit the baseline of the environment or directly indicate the presence of a weapon. Finally, the real lesson from Goliath is don't be cocky even if you're a giant in your field.

## **Prayer Focus**

God, help me remain focused and not get cocky.

## **War Story: Be Careful Which Hat You Wear**

At age twenty-one, I was going to college, teaching martial arts, working as a security guard on the weekends at a hospital, serving as a reserve police officer, and was in the National Guard all at the same time. I even had time to chase girls. Clearly, this was life before the internet.

One Friday evening during the Christmas season, I was serving in my reserve police officer capacity. I was tasked with directing traffic for the Christmas parade. To be festive and in keeping with the spirit of Christmas, I decided to wear a red Santa Claus hat with my standard-issue blue police uniform. Despite being a serious postwar-trained killer, I was very young in appearance and quite baby faced. Unbeknown to me was the fact that my traffic control post was right in front of the toughest bar in town.

I saw the bar door open as the parade began. A skinny, hairy-faced drunk man who resembled a dirty mop peeked out and smiled widely (kinesics). I knew I was in for it. In a few beers, he made it out the door. In a few more, he made it out to the street (proxemic relationship based on beer). Close to the end of the parade, he and the rest of the bar were in the street. They were watching the parade, and he was heckling me over the Santa hat. There wasn't much I could do about him, as I was committed to making sure the parade made the corner, and he knew it. He danced and strutted and gave me all I needed to arrest him for public intoxication. Then the parade

ended. I smiled at him with that evil little smile I can still wear today and began to walk toward him. He immediately changed from his silliness to a look of fright and ran straight back into the bar with the rest of the crowd.

Decision time. Do I walk into the toughest bar in town far past beer thirty in the evening full of drunks by myself just to arrest one silly drunken weirdo who had made fun of me because of my Santa hat? (iconography and bad officer presence.) You bet I did. My last name is Stout after all. All 185 pounds of me charged in there hot on his heels like Grant taking Richmond. I was within feet of grabbing him when I realized the ramifications of my hasty decision. He made it out the back door to freedom as I ducked a flying bottle of beer. Amazingly, I had the wherewithal to back the rest of the bar down, a feat I would not try today, and I made it out alive.

Later that evening, I had changed uniforms but not hats and was working security at the hospital on the midnight shift. I arrived in the emergency room after having been summoned to give the nursing staff assistance with a drunk man who to my wondering eyes appeared on the gurney as my friend from the bar. I walked in with my same smile and hat and strapped him down like Fort Knox. He was so shocked and befuddled at seeing two guys that night with the same hat that he did not resist me in the least even after putting up a fight for everyone else. I really have lived a charmed life when it comes to this kind of work. The Lord has blessed me to be sure.

The moral of the story is be careful how many hats you wear in life. Equally important is to use caution when you wear them.



# The Last Days

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (Psalm 91:1 KJV)

Eschatology, the study of the last days or end times, has in an odd way become a source of hope for me as a Christian. I feel that way because it is clear that there is truly a better time to come after our time. While filled with rumor, theatrical drama, and other bad information, we cannot deny that the subject of humanity finding a massive apocalyptic changing point has become a major theme in modern thought and entertainment.

Whether you are studying the future of the planet based on religious texts, social ideology, pseudoscience, or military doctrine, one thing is for certain—it can all go very wrong for humanity very quickly.

The Bible has more to say about the last days than we can ever cover in this writing. I won't address most of the major ideas contained in the prophecies of the last days because they are not relevant to the point of this section.

We are in some very turbulent times. I believe we are in the last days that precede the return of the Messiah. That is our focus in this section, and because of this, we must understand that the way we secured things in the past is likely antiquated.

Delegating security issues to only ushers and deacons during services and not addressing the needs at all thereafter is a formula from yesterday and a recipe for failure in our day. It's time for an upgrade.

## **6.57 Perilous Times Are Here**

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (2 Timothy 3:1 KJV)

### **Reflection and Application**

In this chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy, he was giving him some fatherly advice about the future. He listed a litany of problems we clearly see occurring in our day. It is reasonable to state that these things have always been in society by virtue of human nature. However, we live in a day when these things have increased to everyday problems. Further, there are people who will do horrible and murderous things just so they can broadcast their deeds to the world over the internet. The message of their deeds is clear—perilous times have arrived.

Attention deficit disorder was first reclassified in the *Diagnosics and Statistical Manual* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, in which psychological disorders are categorized and are coded for insurance billing since 1980. Following this reclassification, the pharmaceutical industry ramped up with the marketing of stimulant medications the likes of which we had never before seen. Is it any real surprise when our country goes into crisis mode regarding drugs and specifically stimulants such as methamphetamines and analgesics such as opioids after the two generations that have been on stimulant medications begin to age out of their parents' health insurance coverage? They need their controls, and the parents can do little to address that need any longer.

Eventually, they are forced to make those young adults leave the nest out of a need for survival; then, those young adults have to survive on their own with few skills.

We didn't teach our kids to survive and thrive. We let a system teach them to self-medicate. This time was foretold by Christ in Mark 13:12. Now, our children are grown and are teaching us why the Nazis used methamphetamines in World War II to make super soldiers for their *Blitzkrieg* strategy. Perilous times—they have arrived.

## **Prayer Focus**

May your will be done in these perilous times

## **6.58 The Spirit of the Antichrist**

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Let's be clear here. John was saying that the spirit of the Antichrist was already in the world. He didn't say that the physical person of the Antichrist was already in the world but that his spirit was already here and active. The spirit of the Antichrist sounds plenty bad enough to me already though I would not be shocked to learn that the physical version was already roaming around as well. Regardless of that difference, the spirit of the Antichrist often contends with us to thwart the cause of Christ in this world. If that is so, how can we not be persuaded that specific tragedies are targeted for our church body?

If we are told that perilous times will come, that things will worsen, and that the spirit of the Antichrist is in the world, what more

persuasion do we need to assure that we have current and specific safety and security planning in place for our congregations?

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, grant that my maturity may abound in you.

## **6.59 It Will Get Worse and the Spirit of Fear**

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.  
(2 Timothy 3:12–13 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Paul clearly told Timothy, “Hey, buddy, it’s going to get worse before it’s over.” Then he gave him hope by telling him to remain steadfast (v. 14). We must remain the church and be steadfast through our calling. By staying steadfast and not bending to the pressures of the world, we will suffer persecution. If that’s the case, we must upgrade how we approach safety and security in our church environments.

Have you been to a church lately where there were absolutely no male workers in the children’s ministries? It may be that the church doesn’t have males called to that ministry presently. It could also be that the church’s liability insurance underwriter is subtly mandating that females only be allowed to work with children due to the massive claims of child sexual abuse that have burned through many religious denominations like a wildfire.

A hasty generalization fallacy masquerading as risk reduction that is really a politically correct and social-norming lie is accrediting child sexual abuse in church cases to male workers only. This idea is fallacious because female workers have not been immune from such

crimes. However, they are harder to prosecute for a litany of reasons and thus never make the statistical tally in any depth.

So as a quiet manner of risk reduction based on stereotypical information, many male Sunday school teachers in children's ministries are "encouraged" to work other places or asked to drop out entirely simply based on this gender bias. Is giving gender bias based on fear the ability to direct ministry in the church a realistic safety procedure for preventing child sexual abuse? Most important, is this measure genuinely stopping sexual predators from infiltrating the church staff? If you answered no, we clearly need a better plan for child safety.

The high risks of litigation in relation to children's ministries has affected liability underwriting, which has degraded how we minister to our children and is presenting gender bias as an ineffective fail-safe for risk reduction. That is exactly the desired result that the forces of hell had in mind in serving up a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7) to everyone. If our children aren't safe with the church, how can anyone be safe with the church? We are truly in perilous times, and these times call for steadfast and innovative measures.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please give us the called workers and the resources to keep people safe.

## **Knowledge Check**

What is the difference between a background check and a background investigation?

## **6.60 The Yelp**

But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. (Psalm 102:12 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

After my father delivered a sermon that may have stepped on a few more toes than normal, he had a saying that I still find very telling. He would say in true country preacher fashion, “When you throw a rock into a pack of dogs, the one that yelps is the one you hit,” a crude expression that made him few friends but was largely true. If the day fifty-seven devotional stepped on your toes at all, please know I don’t consider you a dog but am entirely unapologetic about your yelp.

The Lord is not mocked by this or any other generation’s decisions. If I stepped on the toes of the church going closet feminist, please read Revelation 2:20. If I stepped on the toes of the business manager church official who is counting the costs of lawsuits over the cost of souls, see Revelation 6:10 and stop the yelping. We have run out of time to do the right thing regarding the protection of our children.

Let me point you back to 2 Timothy 1:7. It states we are not given a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind. It is time to use that sound mind and institute more than a background check from the internet on those working with our children or kicking all the men out of the programs. There are real child protection strategies that are cost effective and can be applied to your ministries. Be willing to seek them out, and let’s get serious about protecting our kids. Plainly, if you are preparing to respond to an active shooter more than you are safeguarding your children’s ministries, that’s a serious problem.

## Prayer Focus

Lord, please encircle and protect our little ones in these perilous times.

## 6.61 The Days of Noah

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:37 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

So what was life like in the days of Noah that God saw that was needed to reset humankind?

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (Genesis 6:13 KJV)

Many things had gone wrong with man since the fall in the Garden of Eden, but the thing that sealed the deal with God in Noah's time was the level of violence that was occurring.

I read a story several days ago about the arrest of a sixteen-year-old girl who was planning a mass attack on a church in Georgia. The plot had been discovered through the school system, social media, and witnesses. Her motive was being attributed to racial hatred, as she was white and the congregation of the church was mostly black.

The article centered on a point of outrage based on the fact that there were no hate-crime laws in that state that they could apply in this case. There was no mention of outrage about how a sixteen-year-old girl became so deranged and full of hate that she was homicidal. Her weapons of choice for this deed? Her knife collection. Just what are we doing with our kids that this level of violence and dysfunction has become so commonplace?

We must prioritize the safety and efficacy of children's ministries or the future certainly will be very bleak. The church is gradually surrendering its status as a refuge for the afflicted and troubled to the secular world. This should not be so in a period of history with the greatest communication tools. To maintain the church as that refuge, our God has chosen to partner with us in many aspects. The safety, security, and well-being of His people are just a few of those very important areas.

## Prayer Focus

Lord, send us your protection in these violent times.

## **6.62 The School Shooter, Active Shooter, and Terrorist Attacks—A Look at the Future**

Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.  
(Mark 13:12 KJV)

### **Reflection and Application**

“And cause them to be put to death.” Yikes. That sounds bleak. These are the words of Jesus Christ speaking of the last days. While I don’t believe we are at this stage yet, I do believe it is rapidly on the way. What do most kids love more than anything else right now? Yep, smartphones. We adults are just as bad in our affinity for the little computers. Technology is changing our behaviors and psychological structure at a rapid rate. It is changing criminal behavior as well.

Several years ago, I attended a portion of the US Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center, Safe Schools Initiative. The Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center used the behavioral profiling system that is used to classify and interdict potential assailants of public figures and evaluated the incarcerated individuals who had been school shooters. That tool basically gave us, with some cultural maladaptation and stereotyping on our part, what we considered standard for the last several years. Stereotypically, a nerdy young male with mental issues, few treatment options, and access to weapons became our picture of the school shooter. The kid gets picked on, becomes more disenfranchised and betrayed, becomes suicidal/homicidal, and away we go with another school shooting.

This is almost a minimizing idea, as the norm in this set of behaviors has been largely obliterated by the increased occurrences of these violent actions and the various actors. School shooters have expanded into the mass or active shooters in the course of two decades, but they

are not exactly the same thing. One is an attack on the people and culture of the school system in comparison to the attacks of active shooters and terrorist attacks that tend to be on normal groups of innocent people. Criminal profiling of all types has always had its theoretical holes, and to say any indicators are completely accurate is a fallacy.

However, we have to be somewhat predictive in assessing our information so we can prepare to protect our people even if things are rapidly changing. Jesus said basically that people who should love one another will turn on each other to the point of death. Clearly, they will depend on something more than their family relationships. We see this playing out in our modern child protection services and foster care services already. The mutual betrayal is certainly present.

What will things be like in a few years when our use of artificial intelligence (AI) is more important for our existence than our personal relationships? To say the least, behavioral predictors will likely be different for us to detect. For example, the last few years have seen the increase of teens wearing hoodies. Some do that for fashion. Others do it in escapism. For others with criminal objectives, it is an instant way to avoid camera identification. The behavioral indicators of criminality are evolving.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please prepare us for what is to come. *Maranatha!*

## **6.63 Knowledge Is Increased and the AI Explosion**

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:4 KJV)

## Reflection and Application

I recall in middle school writing small computer programs on Tandy computers that worked off cassette tapes. We thought we were pretty advanced at that time. Today, my telephone can do more computing than that machine. However, that comparison certainly pales as we look toward artificial intelligence being realized as the five-gigabyte internet comes online. Self-driving cars are just the tip of the iceberg. I have heard it said that by 2030, most jobs will have been replaced by automation in the robotics boom.

Can you imagine the signs outside of churches then? “Come to church to meet God and talk to other humans.” Knowledge is increasing as Daniel was told above. It is estimated that this is only ten years away. The world is about to launch into the most dramatic technological revolution since the invention of the combustion engine. Is your church ready?

Let me ask you some technological security questions and see if you can answer them. What is your church’s course of action or preparation to prevent

- someone hacking the big screen in the sanctuary and running porn on it during services?
- someone hacking your website or social media and doing the same?
- someone hacking your online giving and stealing the tithes and offerings?
- someone making a threat online against your church, its staff, or a member of your church?
- someone kidnapping a member of the above and making a ransom demand on your internet platforms?
- someone hacking any of your computing systems and ransoming the system back to you?

If you answered “I’m not sure” to any of the above questions, you are not prepared for the next ten years.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, please help us prepare for knowledge to increase.

## **6.64 Ending with Jonah**

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. (Jonah 4:5 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

We are ending our time together in a place similar to where we began with Jonah. Here, Jonah had completed his mission. He had been through the storm, had been swallowed and spewed out by the great fish, and had faced the people of Nineveh to deliver God's message. The people of Nineveh have received the message and had turned from their wicked ways to God. It was mission-accomplished time. The job was done, but Jonah wasn't happy. He didn't particularly like the people of Nineveh from the beginning. So he went out on a hill to watch in hopes that Nineveh would actually be destroyed. He sat watching and waiting in his dislike for the people of Nineveh.

If we aren't careful, we can end up like Jonah. Are you expecting a giant reward for protecting the people? Are you harboring ill feelings for those who may have treated you as second rate? The people of the church, especially in the ministry, can get high and mighty at times and treat workers second-handedly. Do you feel you're Jonah waiting on the hill for people's destruction? Are you offended and willing to watch from afar to see if they are destroyed? If so, it's long past time for you to take a break in the action and receive some spiritual nourishment.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, help me to avoid bitterness in my service to others by remembering it is really service to you.

## **Special Addition: Psalms 91 and the COVID 19 Pandemic**

I undertook this addition in Section 6 well after the other sections in this book were submitted for editing. It was not a stop the presses moment, but it was with that sense of urgency. The COVID 19 Pandemic presents some far reaching challenges to us, to say the least. At first, in the early stages, my church still attempted to meet. We were cleaning and decontaminating everything before, after, and between services. Eventually, like most others, when the social distancing protocols began, we shut the doors and went virtual. Still, the security team and I make daily checks of our facilities just to maintain a timeline on the status of physical security. Our Children's Ministries have started childcare for the medical staff at the hospital during the daytime. We are adapting. That is what Christians do, we adapt and carry on with the mission of the gospel.

In so doing, I now share with you a template of response to the pandemic contained in the sixteen verses of the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalms. It is a Psalm of Moses that was written upon the completion and dedication of the Tabernacle during the Exodus from Egypt. Imagine the trouble he and the children of Israel had to endure while wandering through the Sinai Desert. The completion of a place where God could dwell daily with man was a paramount need. It remains a paramount need today. Where is your personal Tabernacle? Where does God dwell with you during this unusually treacherous time?

Lastly, as a warning, these devotionals can get a little spooky as I write largely in the Spirit. I admit I have received a far greater level

of discernment about this event then I will share with you in this section, but that is the nature of discernment.

## **Section Verse**

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (Psalms 91:1 KJV)

## **6.65 The Invitation**

### Scripture Reference

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. (Psalms 91:2 KJV)

## **Reflection and Application**

Dwelling in the shelter of the Most High is your decision at His welcoming. It is accepting an invitation of safety in a time of fear that requires faith in Him to deliver on His promises. If you cannot maintain that faith then there will be no place for Him to dwell.

Sometimes this means abandoning things that are coming between the relationships with God that you want as versus staying in the relationships with Him that you have already. What is getting in the way of your faith in God to work?

## **Prayer Focus**

God, please grant me increased faith during this and the rest of time.

## 6.66 The Fowler's Snare

### Scripture Reference

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.  
(Psalms 91:3-4)

### Reflection and Application

Fewer things are more powerful to see in hunting than watching a trained falconer's bird close in and take its prey. Most of these small prey animals never see their end coming. However, at times the overconfident raptor will call out or its shadow will pass over the prey animal just before the bird starts the dive from high in the sun. When that happens, the animal will kick its panicking run into high gear. If it's close to shelter and makes it under covering then it might survive. If it just takes off at a dead run in a mad attempt to escape it will likely be caught. We must have direction and be close to our shelter of safety. That shelter is located under God's mighty wings. This includes the noisome pestilence. It is no accident that this phrase was include in this verse.. Let me ask you, does the Corona Virus seem like it is making a lot of noise (noisome)? It is a noisome pestilence. God is ready with His feathers to cover you.

### Prayer Focus

Lord we hear the raptors cry, we see the shadow over us. Please be our shelter that we may run to you.

## **6.67 Courage through Threat Recognition**

### Scripture Reference

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. (Psalms 91:5-8)

### **Reflection and Application**

Recognize who you are fighting. Know your enemy. These three verses are directed at the warrior of faith. It's hard to successfully defeat that which you don't recognize because you don't see it coming.

These verses mandate a great amount of faith from us, but that is what is required. Also of interest is the phrase, "pestilence that walketh in darkness". Some things, plagues, are sent by God others are sent by darkness or evil, Satan. For an example of some sent by God then consider the Plagues of Egypt.

From where do you think the Corona Virus comes? Yes, I know China and from bats. I mean spiritually speaking? China has very little to do with it in the end. Is it a plague of punishment that mandates us to correct ourselves? Is it a pestilence of darkness sent from evil? In 15 different languages the word Corona, or its variants, means crown or coronation. The devil wants his crown or more directly he wants yours. Semantics or a hasty generalization you say? I don't believe so at all. Do you recognize your real enemy yet?

### **Prayer Focus**

Lord help us to recognize our real enemy.

## **6.68 Just in Time for Easter**

Scripture Reference: Psalms 91:9-10

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. (Psalms 91: 9-10 KJV)

### **Reflection and Application**

In the above scriptures, we see Moses writing even more under the influence of the Holy Spirit to where you can actually hear His voice. This is where God begins to answer him, and us. These verses bring reference to the first Passover of the Angel of Death in Exodus. The night when the firstborn of Egypt died, during the last of the great plagues against the Pharaoh. The night when lamb's blood adorned doorposts as a mark for the Death Angel to pass by.

Is it an irony that our current pestilence will peak around the time of Passover and Easter? The spiritual mockery presented here is purposeful. My friends, you must discern the spirit of these traumatic times to survive them.

### **Prayer Focus**

Holy Spirit, please help us discern the presence of our enemy.

## **6.69 Expect Angels on the Job**

Scripture Reference

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou

shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. (Psalms 91: 11-13)

## **Reflection and Application**

I always wondered if my angel ever tried to put in for a transfer. Guess I wouldn't blame her as I am rather difficult at times. I am frequently stubborn, run towards danger, and get into mischief that I shouldn't. I do expect her to show up during this whole event. You should be aware that angelic beings are real, they have a job to do that we don't normally get to see, but they are there.

Should I comment further in that regard we will get distracted from the second important part of this verse. Why did Moses write we would tread on the lion and adder and then speak about trampling on the lion and dragon? It seems duplicitous to write this kind of thing twice. The symbolism for each is different. The last lion and dragon are of course the devil and the evil forces which he commands. The first, the lion and adder, count as the natural dangers of this world. It is a comparison and contrast of the natural and the spiritual. It is truly an Ephesians 6 moment in this passage.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, protect us from these treacherous times.

## **6.70 He saves you because He loves you.**

### Scripture Reference

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will

answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation. (Psalms 91:14-16)

## **Reflection and Application**

This portion of the Psalm not only is its ending but maybe the most important portion. This is where Moses directly, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, delivers God's answer to the prior verses. This really is God answering us directly.

This portion makes me so happy. God will hear me, deliver me, and grant me salvation and long life. Why will He do all of this for me? Because I asked Him to do so because I truly love Him because I knew His name. Love is a two way street in this relationship. God knows we are not perfect. He remembers that He made us from clay. He wants us to endure to the end but knows we are not perfect. He still loves us because we don't give up on our love for Him.

## **Prayer Focus**

Lord, I love you, above all, past everything, beyond what I am. I thank you for hearing my voice and loving me in return.

# Epilogue

I introduced our time together with a story of my military police team in the first Gulf War. Again, I pray this writing has not led you in circles of dust so that now your way is murkier than when you began. I hope you can assess your call to this ministry and make an informed decision about it. I sincerely hope you are seeking out training to be equipped for this service. If you are not sure where to start in getting assistance, please feel free to contact me through the provided contact information. I don't care about the size of your church; I promise we can come up with a plan. Last, pray about everything, pray without ceasing, and remain steadfast that the Lord may grant us peace in our day.

I ask that you pray for our military veterans. You see, one of the soldiers in that team chasing the little dog in the desert with me made it home only to die by his own hand a few months later. Veteran suicide is a tragic event that has become all too common. Perilous times are here, my friends. May the Lord bless and keep you.

