

FIRST BAPTIST **ROGERS**

valiantwarrior

VALIANT WARRIOR BOOT CAMP

introduction

TO VALIANT WARRIORS

In the Old Testament, certain groups of men were noted as “valiant warriors” or “men of valor.” These men displayed courage and determination in battle. King David had his “mighty men.” These men proved themselves to be trustworthy in battlefield situations. These brave warriors were not limited to one tribe or people group. They were only limited by their courage and determination.

Valiant means possessing or showing courage or determination. Obviously, a warrior is one who is engaged in a war. A war has been underway since the Garden of Eden. The kingdom of God has been under assault by the kingdom of darkness. Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve that led to their sin resulting in the Fall of all mankind was the declaration of war against God’s kingdom.

Biblical manhood and masculinity was also attacked in the garden on that day. Adam had been created first, given dominion over the earth and even named his wife. Satan did not initially go to Adam but to his wife, Eve with the temptation. It is understood that Adam was most certainly right there while his wife was being tempted. Adam abdicated his leadership responsibility in protecting his wife. He then followed her into the same sin that she had committed. Since then, God’s people have battled against the kingdom of sin and darkness. But also, men have battled for biblical manhood and masculinity.

Men are at their best when they are valiant warriors, battling for the kingdom of God and rescuing the disadvantaged in the name of the King. Robert Lewis subtitled “Men’s Fraternity,” A Quest for Authentic Manhood. Valiant Warriors hopes to be another leg in the race or step in the journey in this quest. David challenged his son, Solomon in 2 Kings 2:2-4, “I am going the way of



all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

We hope to show men how to be men, valiant warriors through this study. We believe that the key to men being transformed is first by the Word of God. Another key is men in small groups for discussion, prayer, accountability and encouragement. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. It is out of that desire and vision that we have embraced the following guidestones.

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Valiant Warrior Mission

To disciple men to follow Christ and to live and lead in their homes, churches, and communities for God’s glory.

Valiant Warrior Vision

To see an army of men devoted to Christ leading their families and this church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

Valiant Warrior Strategy

To disciple men in small groups to lead their families and their church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

Valiant Warrior Promise

Judges 6:12 “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.”

Valiant Warrior Code of Honor

To grow in Christlikeness personally. To be committed to my family and Christ’s church. To intentionally encourage other men in Christlikeness and commitment to the church.

Valiant Warrior Scripture References

2 Chronicles 14:8 "Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors."

Deuteronomy 3:18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.'"

Joshua 1:14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them."

Joshua 8:3 "So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night."

Joshua 10:7 "So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors."

Judges 6:12 "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.'"

Judges 11:1 "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior..."

Judges 18:2 "So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it;"

1 Samuel 10:26 "Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him."

1 Samuel 14:52 "Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff."

1 Samuel 18:17 "Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles.'"

1 Samuel 31:12 "All the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there."

2 Samuel 2:7 "Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

2 Samuel 17:10 "And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men."

1 Chronicles 28:1 "Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds, and the overseers of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, with the officials and the mighty men, even all the valiant men."

2 Chronicles 13:3 "Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men who were valiant warriors."

VALIANT WARRIOR

BOOT CAMP

This Valiant Warrior study is called Valiant Warrior Boot Camp. Our intent is to lay a foundation of the basics of the Christian life. Our spiritual armor study can also be a boot camp experience, but this session will give us a more intentional training program and incorporate spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts, walking in the Spirit to go along with spiritual warfare.

As I look back on my spiritual journey, I recall the basics of the Christian life and doctrinal beliefs as the foundation and the compass for all of life. Those basics were grounded in my teenage years through the influence of Sunday School teachers and summer youth directors. They were also embraced and pursued by me. That early foundation was reinforced through a more formal discipleship process during my college years. I was also encouraged, equipped, and launched in making disciples of others. My personal involvement in disciple making was life changing and galvanized my personal faith in so many ways. This was further reinforced during my early years of marriage after college in participating in and leading MasterLife Groups.

So, my hope in this bootcamp is not to invent anything new, but to reinforce for seasoned Valiant Warriors those basics that undergird every aspect of life and ministry. And for the new and soon to be Valiant Warriors, my hope is that this will help develop a pattern of some basic essentials for your spiritual growth and success in life, marriage, parenting, and leadership. We never graduate from the basics. We build on the basics. But if we do not have the basics or the foundation, we have nothing to build upon.

I believe this study could launch a vibrant leadership foundation for hundreds of young leaders. I pray that would be the case. If it happens, it is by the grace of God's providential blessing.

week one

WEEK ZERO:
UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION
(EPIC STORY)

VALIANT WARRIOR
BOOT CAMP

When you go on a journey or join an organization or a team, it is always good to know where you are going. If you get on a plane, you typically know where it is headed. As some of us begin our Valiant Warrior journey and others continue the Valiant Warrior journey, it is good to know the big picture or be reminded of it.

When joining a branch of the military, week zero is all about processing and reception. For our Valiant Warrior boot camp, it is about understanding our mission. It is about developing a Christian worldview.

Valiant Warriors have a play book, and it is the Bible. Our next lesson will address the doctrine of the Bible along with other key doctrines of the Bible. Our initial bootcamp lesson is understanding the story of the Bible. The Bible is such a big book that we often study just a few verses or a chapter at a time. It is important for us to understand the entire message of the Bible. Embracing the message of the Bible helps us to understand all the Bible better.

This lesson sets the vision for the Valiant Warrior. It helps us understand where we came from and where we are going and what is the point of all of this. You would never start out on a journey without knowing where you are going. We are following Jesus daily wherever He leads and sometimes we may not know where that may end up. But in the big picture of things, we do know where we are ultimately going and how all this ends. Keeping that in view helps us in the day-to-day grind and grief.

Understanding the epic story of the Bible helps to establish a biblical worldview. All people look at the world with either a biblical worldview or a secular worldview. Valiant Warriors embrace a biblical world view. This approach to the world establishes how we see things around us. Worldview is determined by how you answer a few questions. Where did we come from? What is our problem? What is the solution to this problem? How does this end?

Where did we come from? A biblical worldview answers that question with God created the heavens and the earth and people.

What is the problem? A biblical worldview answers that question with the Fall. Adam and Eve sinned and all creation, and all people, fell by and into sin.

What is the solution? A biblical worldview says God sent His Son Jesus into the world to die for our sins and rescue God's people from their sins. We call this salvation.

How does all this end? A biblical worldview says Jesus will return and judge the world and reward His followers and establish His kingdom forever.

That is the worldview discussion in summary.

Teachers and scholars have often summarized the teaching of the entire Bible into a few categories to help understand the events and the direction of the Bible. Those categories are typically Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Valiant Warriors should be able to explain the message of the Bible using these four words. These key words can also be used as an outline for sharing the Gospel with another person.

It all began at Creation when God created everything good. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve sinned and that is the Fall. But God continued to love His people and provided animal skins for Adam and Eve and sacrifices to deal with sin. Prophets were sent to speak of a coming Savior to rescue God's people from

their sins. Jesus Christ came, lived sinlessly, died on the cross, and rose from the dead. All who believe in Him do not perish but have everlasting life. That is Redemption. After dying on the cross and being raised from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven promising to return one day for His people to establish His kingdom. That is Restoration.

Discuss the difference in a secular worldview and a biblical worldview.

Discuss the four major events in history that tell the story of the Bible.

Several years ago, I wrote a tract called Epic Story. After traveling overseas and sharing the gospel with people who did not have a biblical worldview or even a biblical background of creation and the life of Jesus, it was apparent I needed to start those conversations at the very beginning. I also realized that even while sharing the gospel in the United States, this method is a great way to present the life transforming hope the gospel brings.

We will follow the outline of the tract to discuss the story of the Bible.

This story starts at the beginning with God.

In the beginning God...Genesis 1:1

God only is at the beginning. The Bible does not argue for the existence of God, although that argument can be made from several different perspectives. The very first verse in the Bible sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. I have often said if you can believe Genesis 1:1, then the rest of the Bible will be easy for you to believe. The Bible states the pre-existence of God. We look further into the Bible to answer this question.

God created the heavens and the earth. So...

What is God like?

God is not the creation of our minds or our pre-suppositions. God reveals to us through His Word what He is like.

He is eternal.

God has always existed. He never had a beginning nor was He ever created. The word "eternal" speaks of a past eternity as well as a future eternity.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
1 Timothy 1:17 (NASB)

He is great.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised... Psalm 48:1

A lot can fall under the heading that God is great. God is omnipotent meaning He is all-powerful. His unlimited power provides what we call God's sovereignty. That means God rules over all things. There is nothing outside His power. His greatness is also seen in His omniscience meaning He is all knowing. There is nothing God does not know. He knows the past, the present, and the future.

Because God is eternal, He sees the future just like it is the past or present. God is not waiting to see what is going to happen. God is great in His expressions toward mankind. God's love is great. His mercy is

great. His grace is great. And His wrath against wickedness and unrighteousness is great.

He is holy.

Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts Isaiah 6:3

This means God is absolutely unique and pure. It means to be set apart. God is different than mankind and set apart in His holiness. God is not in any way tainted by sin or wickedness. He is pure and perfect in His thoughts, attitudes, actions, and intentions. It is God's holiness that makes Him transcendent which means He is not like us. There is a difference and barrier that separates us from God. Understanding Jesus is God helps us to see although Jesus became a man like us, He never ceased to be God, unlike us. Jesus was not a created being. He is the eternal God the Son and He is holy. We will see we desperately need an eternal, great, good, and holy God to deliver us from the hopeless state we are in.

He is good.

The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; Exodus 34:6 (NASB)

Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above. God is good all the time. There is no time God is not good. God is not subjectively good. He is objectively good. He defines and determines what good is. His goodness carries the idea of worthy of approval. He does good things.

His goodness falls into the category of His communicable attributes along with love, mercy, grace, and patience. God's love shows Him to be relational. Because He loves us, we can love Him. His love makes Him personal and our connection to Him is personal and relational, not just transactional. In this way, God comes close to His people. He is not far away. He is transcendent and unique from humankind, but He has chosen to reveal Himself, to love His people, and to give people the capacity to love and know Him.

Discuss the holiness, greatness, and goodness of God. Consider the significance of each of these attributes.

What did God do? Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 (NASB)

God created everything.

He created the heavens, the earth, the land, the sea, the light, the day, the night, the plants, the animals, and people. Genesis 1:1-25

God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day. This is the clearest and most direct teaching of the Bible. We live in a day where many people do not believe in what some call a "Young Earth." Instead of believing the earth is billions of years or hundreds of millions years old, a young earth proponent would estimate the age of the earth from 6,000-10,000 years old. Some people do not believe the age of the earth is a critical issue. It actually could be a significant issue because of the implications of believing in an old earth versus a youth earth.

Let me clearly state I believe in a young earth. I believe God created the heavens and the earth with age. So, it may look like an old earth, but God created it "in the beginning" which I do not think was millions of years ago. I believe God created everything with age at the very beginning. I believe Adam was an adult and not a baby. I believe the trees were full grown and had rings in them the moment God

created them. I believe the valleys, mountains, rivers, and canyons were created instantly like they had experienced erosion over long periods of time. I also believe the impact of the Flood (Genesis 6) was such a cataclysmic worldwide event that some of these geological formations were greatly impacted by this singular event unlike anything before or after the Flood. This lesson is not a lesson on biblical creation versus evolution. But, I do believe your view of creation has implication on how you read and interpret other parts of the Bible.

I believe God could create everything in six days. I believe He could create everything in six seconds if He so chose to do so. It is also the clearest understanding of the what the Bible says. The word used for "day" in the Hebrew is the same word Moses used in Exodus 20 when instructing the Hebrews about having a "day" of rest. He certainly was talking about a literal day of rest after working six literal days.

The dangerous side of adopting an old earth view is you decide what the words mean if they do not really mean what they say, like the word "day." Some have speculated "day" can mean millions of years. It does not mean that anywhere else in Scripture. The reality is people want to make the Bible fit into their scientific approach to creation. If the word "day" does not mean "day" in Genesis 1, then maybe another more important word is more important does not mean what you think, such as in John 3:16. There is ample evidence God can and did create everything in six literal 24-hour days. He is certainly capable. The Bible certainly says He did also.

Some have espoused a gap theory that provides for millions or billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 where an ancient world existed and was then destroyed. In my opinion, both views depend totally on conjecture and creative thinking. There is no biblical evidence of these positions. While I do appreciate apologists whose desire for the sake of evangelism to not make this issue the main issue. The concern is a secular presupposition that drives the narrative instead of a biblical presupposition that leads to a biblical understanding. This method of interpretation, if applied to other passages, leads to a "well it really does not mean that" approach to Scripture.

We do not have to concede to an old earth view. But, when talking to a lost person, do not get so sidetracked and bogged down at the detail of creation that you cannot get to Jesus. Although, Jesus is the Creator (Colossians 1:16.) If you talk about Creation in a gospel conversation, emphasize that Jesus is the Creator of all things.

Discuss the difference between biblical creation and the evolutionary theory.

What are some collateral implications for Christians who do not hold to a young earth?

God created everything good...and God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:25

Because God is good, what He creates is good.

God created people and said it was very good.

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. Genesis 1:31

God created Adam and then out of Adam He created Eve. He created them male and female. He breathed life into them. He created them in His own image. This speaks of the high value God places on people. It is a higher value than on plants and animals and other created things. People are unique from all other creation as image bearers of God. Because of this value, God gave people dominion over the earth and everything God created.

What does it mean, or what significance does it have, that people were created in the image of God? (Genesis 1:26-27)

What did people do? Fall

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die. Genesis 2:15-17 (NASB)

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked...and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the Garden... therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. Genesis 3:6-8; 23 (NASB)

Adam and Eve (the first man and woman) disobeyed God.

There was one tree in the garden they were prohibited to eat from. Instead of enjoying all they could do, they stumbled over the one thing they could not do.

Adam was not protecting and leading his wife. Eve was not submitting to and following her husband. Eve sinned and led her husband into sin. But Adam sinned by not leading his wife. This is the sin of passivity that plagues so many men today in not leading their wife and their family. This spills over to a lack of male leadership in the church and the community.

Adam and Eve's sin was passed down to all people.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12 (NASB)

Sin was passed down through all generations. Sinners reproduce sinners. We are all sinners by nature and by choice.

Adam and Eve's sin impacts all creation.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Romans 8:20-21

This explains why there are famines, illnesses like cancer, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and hurricanes. God's perfect order fell with the sin of Adam and Eve.

This also explains the attack on biblical manhood and the family. Satan's temptation involved Adam not assuming his role as protector and leader of his wife. It is also involved Eve not following her husband's leadership and listening to Satan instead of God. The initial assault of Satan was upon the family, the home. Not long after that, Cain murdered his brother Abel. This is an assault on another human being who is an image bearer of God. When you think about, once sin entered the world, it became a runaway train. The wickedness that brought on the Flood, the Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the list goes on.

Valiant Warriors must stand for biblical manhood, marriage, the family, life, and biblical morality.

Discuss what happened in Genesis 3.

Discuss the implication of the Fall on people and on creation. Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12

What did God do after people sinned?

God did not abandon His people. He immediately came to Adam and Eve while they were hiding from Him in the Garden. God replaced the fig leaves they had used to cover their nakedness. He used animal skins for their new clothing.

God continued to provide and protect His people. He demonstrated His grace and love repeatedly.

What are the implications of God replacing Adam's attempt of covering himself with fig leaves versus God's provision of animal skins?

God protected Noah and his family from the flood. Genesis 6-10

Sin entered the world and began to spread exponentially. It was a cancer against the Lord, His Word, and His Ways. God destroyed the world He made through the Flood because of the heights of wickedness. Noah found favor in God's eyes. God saved the world by saving Noah's family. Noah's family was saved by the grace of God.

God promised to bless His people through Abraham. Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8-11

Abraham left his home to follow God and his family was to be a blessing to all the nations telling them about God who loved them. They were to believe in God and their obedience proved they believed in God. But the people did not always follow God.

Abraham is the father of Hebrew people. Out of Abraham's seed, Jesus would be born. That is how Abraham will be a blessing to all the nations. Personally, the Bible mentions in the Old Testament and the New Testament that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him righteousness. This is justification by faith which is a foundational truth of biblical salvation.

God promoted Joseph so he could save His brothers.

After many years, a famine came and Jacob's sons had to go to Egypt to find food. Joseph was in charge of the food for famine victims and he rescued his brothers and his father, Jacob. They all came to live in Egypt with Joseph. God's people became slaves in Egypt.

God preserves the seed of Abraham through the famine.

God rescued His people through Moses.

The Law was given to show the people what God was like and what kind of standard He required. The Law could not rescue the people, because they could not keep the Law. The people would understand better the holiness of God and their own sinfulness because of the Law. The Law included a moral law on how they should live, a dietary law on how they should eat, and sacrificial law on how they should deal with their sins. Because they continued to sin, they had to continue to make sacrifices for their sins.

Moses was raised up to lead the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage giving a foreshadowing of how Jesus would rescue His people from their sins.

Discuss the common theme in the Old Testament of God saving His and rescuing His people over and over.

God sent prophets to instruct the people.

The prophets reminded the people of what the Law required. They also told the people that a Messiah was being sent by God to rescue His people from their sins. The people had been led to different places and rescued from Egyptian bondage, but they still had not been rescued from their own personal sin. So, the news of a Messiah coming to save the people from their sins was much anticipated.

How does the idea of the gospel, a Messiah, and substitutionary atonement appear in the Old Testament? What did the prophets speak of?

Discuss how looking at something years and centuries ahead makes it more difficult to see and understand than looking at something up close and recent, or even looking back on something that already occurred.

Then God Himself Came.

God's ultimate demonstration of love was that He sent His Son Jesus Christ for the people.

Jesus Christ, God the Son became a man and lived on earth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1, 14

Jesus became a man. He was fully human without ceasing to be God.

Jesus Christ died on a cross for our sins.

But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Jesus' death on the cross was a fulfillment of what all the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to but could never accomplish. The sacrifices had to be offered over and over again because they could not cleanse. They were acts of faith and obedience, but could not eradicate the sin that was within the hearts of people. Jesus' death on the cross served as the once and for all substitutionary atonement for sin.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. Romans 6:9

Jesus' resurrection defeated death and hades. Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life." The only solution for death is resurrection. Because we have died with Christ, we are also raised with Him. He was literally, physically raised from the dead.

Jesus Christ is supreme over everything.

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on

earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

...so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. Colossians 1:18

Jesus Christ is returning to restore His Kingdom.

And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again... John 14:3

They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up with you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.

Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 19:11-21:6

Discuss the person and work of Jesus Christ from incarnation to return.

Discuss the importance of Jesus' humanity and deity.

What must you do?

What is the appropriate response to this Epic Story?

You must repent of your sins.

God is now declaring to me that all people everywhere should repent. Acts 17:30

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Acts 2:37-38

Repentance means you change. You change your mind about the direction of your life. You change your mind about your sin. You are headed one direction where self is on the throne of your life. Then, you start in a new direction. Some people have tried to eliminate repentance from the human response to God's grace. Some suggest repentance is the equivalence of works. I guess if your view of repentance was doing stuff to make up for your sin, then it would be works. But the Bible repeatably calls people to repent as the verses above indicate. Repentance is a response to the convicting grace of God. Repentance and faith go hand in hand. In the same way God gives faith, He also grants repentance ("*...if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth...*" 2 Timothy 2:25)

You must believe in and receive Jesus Christ alone.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. John 14:6

Faith, believing, and receiving capture the response along with repentance to the grace of God.

As mentioned above, I do not see repentance and faith as happening separately but in tandem. They are not the same thing, but they happen at the same time. They are both gifts from God. I like the description of turning away from sin in repentance and turn to Christ in faith.

You must be willing to follow Christ.

And He (Jesus) said to them, "Follow Me..." Matthew 4:19

A person who is saved by grace through faith willingly follows Christ. We have no examples in Scripture of people who are genuinely born-again who do not follow Christ. This is a modern day Western civilization phenomena of born-again Christians who do not follow Christ in baptism, who are not members of churches, and who do not attend church or live like a biblical Christian.

Are you willing to follow Christ by believing in Jesus Christ, receiving His gift of salvation, and confessing Him only as Lord?

Remember...

- **Salvation is a gift you cannot earn.**
- **Salvation results in a changed life.**
- **Salvation is a relationship you desire.**

Prayer of Salvation: Father, I believe you are great and good and holy. I admit I have sinned against you by breaking Your law. I need forgiveness for my sins. I repent from my sins. I receive your gift of salvation to me right now by trusting in Jesus Christ and Him alone for my salvation. Thank you for saving me and making me your follower.

What's next?

God instructs all His followers to:

Be baptized by immersion after their salvation.

Be a part of a local body of believers—a church.

Begin to grow through Bible reading, prayer, ministry, and worship.

Share God's Epic Story with all their friends and family.

Discuss a biblical response to the gospel. Discuss repentance and biblical faith. Consider how obedience follows faith and verifies our faith as opposed to a works salvation (self-righteousness).

Give a clear opportunity for anyone in the group to personally repent of their sins and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

In summary, the story of the Bible is Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. The main character is God. The redemptive story centers around God the Son, the Promised Messiah, the Savior of the World, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. The mission of God and His followers is to make disciples of all the nations. The chief aim of man is to glorify God. God is glorified in the salvation of His people.

week two

PHASE ONE:
FUNDAMENTALS - EMBRACING THE VALUES
(SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY)

VALIANT WARRIOR
BOOT CAMP

The next lesson in our boot camp, after understanding the big picture of the Bible, is understanding the key doctrines of the Bible. These are the fundamentals of the Christian faith. We are calling them values here to match U. S. military language for bootcamp. What we believe as Christ followers is our core, so it is not a stretch to call our beliefs our values. We greatly value what we believe. What we believe is what identifies who we are.

There are numerous ways you can study theology. There is New Testament Theology and Old Testament Theology which are self-explanatory. A common way of studying theology is systematic theology. This is topical study of certain key topics the Bible speaks about. That will be our approach in this lesson. This will be a very abbreviated systematic theology lesson. Understanding these key doctrines provides a foundation for reading, studying, and understanding the Bible. There are other important doctrinal matters we do not have time to consider in this one lesson. These are key touch stones that should serve as a foundation for all other doctrinal studies.

The Bible

The first topic of study for me is the Bible. If you have a faulty book, then everything else is questionable. We do not worship the Bible, but everything we know about the God we worship and the Savior Who saves us is found in the Bible.

The Bible is inspired by God. God gave His Word to us through human instrumentation. That means the Holy Spirit inspired men to write down exactly what God wanted us to have in His Word.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:15-17

The Bible is unlike any other book in that it is God's Word. The Bible is true in all its assertions (infallible). The Bible is God's truth with no mixture of error (inerrancy).

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-18

The Bible is authoritative in that it is our only infallible rule of faith. We believe in the verbal (words) plenary (all) inspiration of Scripture.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

Jesus often quoted the Scripture affirming its authority. The Bible is also sufficient. It does not need any help. The Bible warns against adding to or taking away from Scripture. That also speaks of its sufficiency. That is one of the many fatal flaws of Mormonism, that is, adding to the Bible with an entire other book.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. Revelation 22:18-19

Many churches and theologians deny the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture. It appears that often times when people dive deep into the academic pursuits, they are duped into thinking it is scholarly to question, doubt, and even deny the authority of Scripture. Nothing could be further from the truth. Unfortunately, higher academics has often led to an arrogance and pride that really never provides better answers, just questions.

Discuss the importance of believing the Bible is true and authoritative. If a person does not believe in the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture, what are the implications of that belief or unbelief?

Theology

The next topic of study is theology or the study of God. Valiant Warriors must know Who God is.

There is only one true God. In the Old Testament, His covenant name is Yahweh. The idea of only one true God was unique in the polytheistic world of the Old Testament. It was also unusual with Greek mythology and Roman Emperor worship of the New Testament. The same is true today. We live in a world that espouses many gods. But there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4).

But in the unity of the Godhead, there are three distinct, co-equal, eternal persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is what is called the Trinity. There is one God who exists in three persons. There are not three Gods. These persons are all God. These persons are in unity in the Godhead. These persons are distinct. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with distinct personal attributes but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God the Father is the Eternal Father, Father of Jesus Christ, and sender of Jesus Christ. Gen. 1:1; 2:7 John 4:24

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

A monotheistic (one God) Trinitarian (three persons) is the orthodox view of Christianity. Arianism was an early heresy denying the deity of Jesus Christ, which is a modern-day Jehovah Witness view. Mormonism also would deny a Trinitarian view of God.

Discuss the Trinity. Consider the importance of specific words like “equal in substance and distinct in subsistence.”

Christology

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Godhead. He is God the Son. The study of Christ is called Christology.

Jesus Christ, eternally God, born of the virgin Mary, became a man without ceasing to be God. He lived a sinless life. He died on the cross as a substitutionary atonement for all sin of all time. He physically bodily resurrected from the dead on the third day after his burial. He appeared to many and then ascended to be with God the Father. He is seated at the right hand of the Father today making intercession for us. He will return one day in power and glory to consummate His redemptive work in His followers and to judge the world. Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:13-20; Hebrews 1:1-3

Many heresies fail at the person and work of Jesus Christ. Mormonism believes Jesus Christ and Satan are spiritual brothers, the first spirit children born to the Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. This totally denies the biblical truth of Jesus being the pre-existent God the Son with no beginning. His physical birth was not His beginning but rather His incarnation becoming a man, thus the title God Man (John 1:1, 14; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Discuss the errant teaching of Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses pertaining to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Pneumatology

The third person of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit. He is fully God. He inspired the writers of the Bible to write exactly what God wanted. He enables people to understand the truth of Scripture. He convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers and is an active participant in the regeneration of believers. He guides, teaches, convicts, and intercedes in prayer. He fills or empowers believers and gives them the fruit of the Spirit. He seals believers until the final day of redemption. He provides the guarantee and assurance of salvation (Acts 5:3; Romans 8:9-11; 1 Timothy 3:16).

Discuss the baptism, indwelling, and filling of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18).

Soteriology

The next topic of study is salvation or soteriology. The Bible teaches man is sinful and separated from God. Man can do nothing to bridge the great gulf between God and man caused by man's sin. Salvation is by grace, God's unmerited favor towards man. Man receives salvation through repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; 10: 9-10, 13).

People who have been saved by God are eternally secure. This is called eternal security. Some people use the phrase "once saved always saved." While I agree with the phrase's meaning, I believe eternal security is a better way to say it. Since salvation did not originate with man, it cannot be lost by man. People are saved by God. God does not lose those He saves. That is why it is called eternal life (John 10:28, Hebrews 13:5, John 3:16).

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

Salvation is by grace through faith and not a result of works. But faith does result in works. But *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26).

In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Regeneration is the causing of the lost sinner to be born again. Justification is the judicial act of God in declaring believers right with God. Sanctification is the process that God uses through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in conforming us to the image of Christ. Adoption is the transaction where believers become the children of God in His family. Glorification is the ultimate completion of salvation where believers are removed from the very presence of sin and are in the presence of the Lord in a resurrected body.

The following is a statement from the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message that explains election in a way that should be acceptable to those who find themselves on slightly varying positions on the doctrines of grace.

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God’s sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39–12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Discuss the necessity and way of salvation as taught in the Bible.

Ecclesiology

Our next topic is the study of the church or ecclesiology. In the independent western culture, the doctrine of the church has been assaulted and minimized. The brevity of this section should not communicate a lack of importance. We sometimes have the question, why should I join the church? We would contend every follower of Christ is baptized into the global expression of the church upon salvation (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). We also contend every follower of Christ should join a local church as an outward expression of their commitment to Christ’s body and bride.

What is the Church? The Church is a group of baptized believers who have covenanted together to love, honor, and serve Jesus Christ as Lord. The church is the family of God, the bride of Christ, and the body of Christ (Matthew 16:15-19; Acts 2:41-47; Colossians 1:18).

The church is not formed by people just gathering. The church is defined in Scripture, built by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 16:18), and described as the bride of Jesus Christ. Scripture highly values the church. The church has a visible and local expression in the regularly gathered and covenanted together people. Most of the New Testament references to the church refer to this local and visible body of believers.

Membership and commitment to the local expression of the church is necessary to fulfill the biblical accountability and mission of the local church. The mission of the local church is carried out by her members. Biblical church leadership can only be carried out in the context of the local church (preaching, watchcare over the souls of the people, administration of the ordinances, church discipline). It is in the context of the local church we practically serve others, partner in ministry and mission, carry out discipleship, and spread the gospel through church planting.

There is an invisible and universal expression of the church made up of all believers in Jesus from all nations and from all times during this church age. This invisible expression unites all believers in Christ with one Spirit and one baptism.

The biblical church has biblical leadership, fulfills Jesus' mission for the church, and administers the ordinances of the church.

The mission of the church is to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.
Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He has chosen leadership and servants under His leadership. Elders or pastors provide spiritual leadership for a local congregation. They serve the congregation through preaching the Word of God and prayer. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture (1 Timothy 2:9-14).

Deacons are the servants of the church serving alongside the pastor/elder in caring for and serving the congregation (1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 3; Acts 6:1-7).

The church is given responsibility for administering the ordinances of the church.

We observe baptism as an ordinance of the church in obedience to the direct command of Jesus Christ in the Great Commission. Jesus Christ was baptized. Baptism is symbolic of death and resurrection. Baptism has no saving power, but is very important as obedience, a testimony, and identification with Christ and other believers. Baptism is considered the "initiating rite" of the church. It is the first step new believers take in following Christ after salvation. Baptism in the New Testament was always closely associated with salvation and Holy Spirit baptism although water baptism is distinct from both. Biblical baptism was clearly by immersion and after salvation.

Jesus commanded His disciples to "do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper proclaims the Lord's death and anticipates the Lord's return. The elements of bread and juice are symbolic of the body and blood of our Savior. Jesus transformed the Passover Meal into the Lord's Supper before His crucifixion.

Eschatology

Our final topic is the study of last things or end times. This is called eschatology. God in His own time

and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord (Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; Rev. 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13).

Discuss what makes a church a church as opposed to a Bible study group or some other gathered group of Christians. Discuss the roles and purposes of para-church organizations. (The prefix para- comes from a Greek preposition that means "alongside," so this would refer to organizations that come alongside the church but are not the church such as missions organization, campus ministries, etc.)

Discuss why being a member of a church is important for doctrinal clarity, fellowship, accountability, ministry and mission opportunities, personal sanctification, discipleship and leadership development.

If you have time, you can discuss some views of eschatology like Pre-millennialism, Pre-Tribulation, etc.

What we believe is what makes us as Christ followers. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. In that faith is also what we believe about God, His Son, salvation, and the Scripture. What we believe determines how we live now and where we will live in eternity. Our belief is our aspirational behavior. What we do is undergirded with what we believe. What we believe about Jesus is connected to what we believe about God, the Trinity, salvation, the resurrection, etc. So, our doctrinal beliefs are intertwined and are not isolated nor disconnected from other such beliefs. While there are some difficult things to understand, there are many things that are clear and essential for us to believe that make us Christian or Christ followers or Jesus' disciples.

week three

PHASE TWO:

SKILL DEVELOPMENT - SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

VALIANT WARRIOR

BOOT CAMP

Now that we know where we are headed (Epic Story) and we know what the Bible teaches about key doctrinal topics, the question is how to apply this knowledge to impact our lives. This is like having a lecture on how to play football then getting the play book for your team on what plays to run. Now it is time to get out on the field and practice and play the game. A lot of us enjoy watching the game, but only a handful of men know what it is like to be on the field and play the game. Those who play the game are who Valiant Warriors want to be.

The Word of God informs us what to do. The Holy Spirit of God empowers us to do it. The Word of God and the Holy Spirit are the two primary instruments for our spiritual growth and exercise.

We will expand our understanding of God's Word through spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines come from the Word of God. We typically do not like the word "discipline." Some people are more naturally disciplined than others. Talent can only take you so far. Discipline will take you further.

As we approach the subject of spiritual disciplines, we need to understand we are not talking about legalism apart from grace and the Holy Spirit's work. We will devote a section on the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, but it is important to understand it is the work of the Spirit in the midst of our exercise of spiritual discipline where spiritual growth occurs.

So, spiritual discipline is not a works-based legalism. Good thing for us because none will be perfect in the exercise of spiritual disciplines. The work of the Holy Spirit will bring about joy in the exercise of spiritual disciplines. Just like an athlete or exerciser enjoys the workout when they are in shape, so it will be when we jump into our spiritual disciplines.

God's Word

The first spiritual discipline we want to consider is reading the Bible. As mentioned earlier, the Bible is our lead. It tells us about God, about ourselves, about sin, about salvation, etc. For us to know what God says, we must read the Bible. Remember the Bible is a living word. It is a powerful word. It is a refreshing word. It is a comforting word. It is an instructive word. You will get to the point that you will look at God's Word more than you do your phone when you are scanning for news, weather, sports, social media, and YouTube how-to videos. God's Word will be a refreshing drink of water for a thirsty man, a guidebook for someone lost in the woods, comfort for a broken heart, and so much more.

Read your Bible regularly. Preferably, that would be every day. I believe the consistency of reading the Bible is better than the amount you read or how long you read. I read through the Bible every year. I find myself sometimes just trying to get the chapters in each day. My comprehension is not always that great. I do value greatly reading through the Bible each year. But I also have found that if I can read about a chapter a day with a pen and highlighter, that one chapter has more impact on my spiritual vibrancy than the four or five chapters I am reading on my plan.

My point is you need to read some. You need to find out what works best for you. You need to read devotionally with understanding and thoughtfulness. George Muller would read the Bible until he came upon a verse, or verses, that spoke deeply to him. He would then think about those verses and pray through them. The purpose of reading the Bible is to hear God speak to you. If you are speed reading (like me sometimes), then you are not listening to what is being said. Focus on quality of understanding over quantity of pages and chapters.

Beyond just the reading of God's Word is the study of it. Read it over and over. Read commentaries. Listen to teaching on that passage. Meditate on that passage and even memorize some verses.

*You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture is inspired by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:15-17*

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." Joshua 1:8

Discuss how you read or study God's Word.

Discuss how your life has been impacted by God's Word.

Prayer

The next spiritual discipline we want to talk about is prayer. Prayer should be guided, informed, and even expressed in conjunction with the Word of God. My prayer time is guided by Scripture. I often pray through John 15 about abiding in Christ, bearing fruit, answered prayer, joy, etc. I often pray through the Prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10) asking God's hand to be upon me and for Him to enlarge my borders and keep me from causing pain to others. Ephesians is loaded with prayers. Sometimes it is easier to do a Bible Study on prayer than to pray.

I really believe prayer is our greatest untapped resource, our greatest secret weapon, our greatest opportunity for doing great things with God, and asking for God to do great things in and through us. We should pray without ceasing meaning all the time. We should pray while we are driving, waiting, going to bed, before we get up, over meals, after meals, before meetings, before speaking, etc. We should also pray planned out and scheduled. Pray on a schedule and pray spontaneously. Pray for your daily needs. Do not take those for granted. Pray for extraordinary things only God could accomplish. Pray for others. Pray about spiritual matters and spiritual growth in you and others. Pray for missionaries and preachers and teachers of the Word.

Pray the prayers of the Bible. Pray by praising God for His greatness, majesty, holiness, power, and glory. Prayer with God's Word is the key to knowing and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Prayer is more about growing close to God than getting things from God.

One aspect of prayer is confession of sin. The Bible says, *"If I regard iniquity in My heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psalm 66:18). So, the first step in our prayer life is that of confession of sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

Another blessing is answered prayer.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."
John 15:7

A great benefit of prayer is the peace of God.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Prayer is for putting on the full armor of God for spiritual battle.

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Prayer is the means of expressing thanksgiving and praise.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. Psalm 100:4

Discuss your practice of prayer that has been meaningful to you.

Discuss how you want to see this area of your life grow. How can you grow in this area?

Fellowship

The next spiritual discipline we want to talk about is fellowship. Fellowship is the outward expression of a believer's love for other believers. We love and serve the same Person, Jesus. That makes us brothers in Christ. We are family.

We need each other for encouragement, accountability, partnership, and help. We learn from each other. Our fellowship with other men causes us to not only think about ourselves.

I think about the four friends who brought the lame man to Jesus. They shared ministry together. They brought their friend to Jesus. It was their shared faith, not the lame man's faith, that Jesus responded to.

Jesus taught that the world will know we are His followers by our love for one another and by our unity together.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. John 17:20-23

Fellowship helps us hold fast to our confession. It stimulates us toward good deeds. As the days get closer to the return of Christ, we need to fellowship and gather more, not less, according to God's Word.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:23-25

All the "one another commandments" like love one another, pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, serve one another, live in harmony with one another, etc. expect that we are in community with one another.

So many of the commands in the New Testament are plural imperative verbs. Paul's letters, except Philemon, were all written to churches and bodies of believers. God never intended for His followers to live alone without other believers. While our salvation is personal, it is not private or isolated from others. We are better together and we are made better together.

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Discuss the importance of fellowship. What are some of the benefits of fellowship?

What happens when we are not in fellowship with other believers?

Service

The next spiritual discipline is service. Valiant Warriors are saved to serve. Jesus said the greatest among you will be your servant (Matthew 23:11). The world values authority. God's kingdom values humility and service. In some circles, the business world has recognized the biblical model of leadership which is servant leadership. The leader serves his team as opposed to the team serving the leader.

Valiant Warriors serve Jesus. Jesus came to serve others. We are not above our King, so we are called to service.

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Heroes are those who lay down their life for their family, their friends, and their country.

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me. Matthew 25:40

Service is the outward expression of love. Service contributes to our previous spiritual discipline of fellowship. Service is often carried out with other believers. It is a time of partnership in the gospel ministry and the meeting of the needs of others.

Service with love leads to another spiritual discipline. That spiritual discipline is witnessing. Often, the context for sharing the gospel with people is service. The gospel is shared many times each week at our food pantry. When people are in need, they are often more open to the gospel especially when they see their need being met in the name of Jesus. Through the years, whether it is local missions, national missions, or international missions, the ground of human need has proven to be most fertile for the gospel. Disaster relief efforts, famines, floods, and war torn areas seem to bear the most responsive fruit to the gospel.

Service provides for real needs, but it also promotes a healthy believer. Those who serve are the most joyful and content in the church. Those who are in the game and participate see the fruit and blessing of service firsthand. Service and witnessing are outward expressions of our faith and love for Jesus.

Discuss some ways you serve and what it means to your spiritual growth.

Discuss opportunities for service that some others in the group might be involved in.

Discuss how service can lead to opportunities for sharing the gospel.

Consider some new ways you or your group can incorporate fellowship and service in the days ahead.

If all a Valiant Warrior does is read his Bible and pray and never serves, witnesses, gives, and goes, then he is not understanding what he is reading. People who just take in are like the Dead Sea that has only water coming in and nothing going out. That is why some small ponds or coves become stagnate. Some believers are stagnate because all they do is sit, soak, and sour.

We do not have the time and space for this Valiant Warrior study to explore all the spiritual disciplines. I will list some others for discussion and future study and exploration. In many ways, spiritual disciplines overlap and are intertwined. They encourage and contribute to each other. There are elements of service, prayer, fellowship, witnessing, and obey God's Word in all of these.

Some other spiritual disciplines include worship, giving, missions, hospitality, and exercising spiritual gifts.

Discuss the importance of some of the spiritual disciplines listed in the paragraph above.

week four

PHASE THREE:

ADVANCED TRAINING - WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

VALIANT WARRIOR

BOOT CAMP

We have learned the Epic Story. We have learned important doctrines. We took a step in lesson three towards practical application of the truth. Today, we take a big step into the practice of the Christian life. Jesus did not teach us how to live just so we could know about it. He taught us how to live so we would live differently.

The idea of walking involves our active participation in what God is doing. Much of our Christian experience is what God has done for us and in us with no help or contribution from us. We are now in the realm of sanctification and walking by faith and by the Spirit and in Christ. This process involves our intentional participation. It requires a human initiative to respond to the divine initiative of God's work in us. I would certainly concede that any initiative on my part is because of God's divine initiative at work in me (Philippians 1:6), but there is a response of faith and obedience in the Valiant Warrior.

So, this lesson is applying the truth to our life. God's plan for the Valiant Warrior is to walk in the truth. It is His plan for you to walk by faith. It is His plan for you to walk by the Holy Spirit. It is His plan for you to walk in Christ. The Word, faith, and the Spirit work in tandem to produce a fruitful life for the Christ-following Valiant Warrior. I do think there are some distinctives in walking in faith, walking in Christ, and walking in the Holy Spirit; but in large measure, this walk is working together. Do you walk with your feet, your ankles, your femur, your tibia, your knee, your hip, your core, etc.? You get the idea. When we talk about walking in Christ, it means walking in the Holy Spirit and by faith.

The Bible speaks of walking in faith.

"for we walk by faith, not by sight" 2 Corinthians 5:7

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

We live and walk by faith not sight. We walk based on the promises of God or the Word of God. There is a unique and powerful relationship between the Word of God and the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God. The Holy Spirit guides Valiant Warriors unto all truth (John 16:13). We are sanctified by truth, and God's Word is truth (John 17:17). So, remember the Holy Spirit and the Word of God work in tandem in sanctification and walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit never leads us to violate God's Word.

The Holy Spirit leads us to walk by faith.

The Bible speaks of us walking in Christ.

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Colossians 2:6

He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify Me (Jesus), for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. John 16:14

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus and makes known the things of Jesus. We understand Jesus Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. So, we have the Holy Spirit with us and in us now. But He points us to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.

Colossians 2:2-10

*"that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, **that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** I*

say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. **Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him**, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. **For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;**

The Christian life is Jesus. We can go deeper in Jesus, but we cannot go deeper than Jesus.

From Colossians 2

All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. 2:3

All fullness of Deity dwells in His body. 2:9

You have been made complete in Him. 2:10

He is head over all. 2:10

The Bible speaks of walking in the Spirit.

But I say, walk by the Spirit... Galatians 5:16

The Holy Spirit is the person who is leading and directing this faith walk and in Christ walk.

“So, also he sends the Holy Spirit to apply that manifold salvation to us personally. This is not one simple and indivisible act. Rather, it involves a series of acts and processes: God’s calling, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. In each case the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ to us personally.” James Montgomery Boice, *Awakening to God: Foundations of the Faith Volume III*, p. 16.

Remember the Holy Spirit is a person and not a power or an influence. He has power. He has influence. But He is personal, not impersonal. He also acts from within the believer and not from the outside of a believer.

The Holy Spirit enables us to walk by faith. He empowers us to walk by faith. He informs us what walking by faith looks like.

Walking by faith means we believe the promises of God. We obey the promises of God repeatedly. A step of faith leads to another step of faith. Multiple steps of faith lead to walking by faith. The faith we walk by is in the object of Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

Discuss walking in Christ, walking by faith, and walking in the Spirit. How are these distinct? How are they similar?

How can you know if you are walking in the Spirit?

Discuss how walking in the Spirit can be consistent. Can it be spontaneous?

The first step of faith is the step of salvation.

*I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live, I **live by faith** in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20*

The crucified life is a life of faith. Christ living in me is by faith. The life that I now live, I live by faith.

Hebrews 11 gives us the Hall of Faith. The people are described by what they did by faith. These people were walking in faith. We know that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). So, the Holy Spirit will move the believer to take steps of faith and to live by faith.

The eighth chapter of Romans is considered by many as the greatest chapter in all the Bible. It certainly is one of my favorite chapters. I, and many others, often focus on the last 11 verses or so. But these first verses are power-packed with the importance of the work and the walk of the Holy Spirit. Read these verses and notice every time the "Spirit" is mentioned. Notice what the passage says about the "Spirit" and what the "Spirit" does.

Romans 8:2-26

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, **who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**. For those who are according to the flesh **set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit**. For the mind set on the flesh is death, **but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace**, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you**. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, **but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,***

A brief accounting of how the Spirit is spoken in Romans 8...

Set Free by Him 2

Walk according to the Spirit 4

Set your mind on the things of the Spirit 5-6

Dwells in and gives life 11

Led by the Spirit 14

Spirit of adoption 15

Bears witness that we are children of God 16

Discuss one or two items from the list above pertaining to what the Holy Spirit does.

Read Galatians 5:16-25

But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

In Galatians 5:16-25, we have four distinct commands.

Walk by the Spirit 16

Be led by the Spirit 18

Bear the fruit of the Spirit 22

Live by the Spirit 25

Verses 19-24 contrast the works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. Valiant Warriors should display the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit is what the Holy Spirit produces in us. We pursue Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and He produces the fruit of the Spirit. We do not produce the fruit. God does. Jesus taught this principle in John 15 by abiding in Him and bearing fruit (John 15:5, 8, 16).

These verses in Galatians and John elevate the connection between walking in the Spirit and abiding in Christ. Both result in fruit-bearing. Walking in the Spirit and abiding in Christ are the keys to a fruitful life that pleases and glorifies God.

Discuss being led by the Spirit and living by the Spirit.

Contrast the fruit of the Spirit with deeds of the flesh.

Steps to Walking by the Spirit

When we talk about walking in the Spirit, I think it is good to consider what it was like when a child learns to walk. We could give the child a lot of do's and don'ts. We could explain coordination and the use of certain muscles. That information is probably better understood and used by a seasoned athlete later in life. Much of walking is learned by observation and instinct. Children parrot what they see. They have instincts about getting up and walking.

Focus on spiritual things.

...be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2

...As a man thinks in his heart so is he. Proverbs 23:7

...fixing your eyes upon Jesus... Hebrews 12:2

...Set your mind on the things above Colossians 3:2

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, Romans 8:5-6

Follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:14

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. John 16:13

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Galatians 5:18

And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." Acts 8:29

...the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13:2

Walking by the Spirit is a series of steps taken led by the Holy Spirit. The initial step is salvation. The next step is baptism and sharing the Lord's Supper. The next steps are spiritual disciplines. The next steps are obedience to the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The next steps are service and ministry. The next steps are missions and evangelism and disciple making. All these are steps that are ongoing in moving a person forward. These steps lead to fruit-bearing.

Fruit-bearing by the Holy Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. John 15:8

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My Name, He may give it to you. John 15:16

I am the vine and you are the branches, whoever abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

Discuss walking in the Spirit and bearing fruit. What does that look like? What does that feel like?

week five

PHASE FOUR:
ADVANCED TRAINING - SPIRITUAL WARFARE

VALIANT WARRIOR
BOOT CAMP

We have come to the lesson that helps us to engage in battle. Much of the previous lessons were devoted to what we would call preparation. Some of this lesson will be devoted to preparation also. As the Apostle Paul closed out his letter to the Ephesians, a letter that exalts the church as the masterpiece of Christ, he instructs these believers in matters of spiritual warfare.

Valiant Warriors are exactly what the two words mean. We should be “valiant,” meaning courageous and noble. We are warriors. We fight the good fight. We should be passionate about the spiritual battle we are called to fight.

The previous lessons help us to understand and be trained and equipped for the battle. This lesson is about the battle. The battle began in the Garden of Eden when Satan, by deception, tempted Eve. He attacked the woman. He assaulted the marriage. He subtly assaulted biblical manhood as Adam drifted into passivity. He attacked the biblical family. Sin entered the world, then death by sin.

It is important to remember Jesus Christ has redeemed what Satan has stolen. Jesus paid the price on the cross for our sins. He rose from the dead overcoming the penalty of sin and providing life for all who will believe in Him. We have died with Him, have been raised with Him, and are seated with Him (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus has won the victory and overcome the enemy. We do not fight for victory. We fight from a position of victory. But we must fight to personally realize the victory.

It is like when Joshua was given the promised land, but he had to go in and claim it. Claiming it required he take it and fight for it. Valiant Warriors must fight for their marriages, their families, and the advancement of God’s kingdom in this world and in the lives of people Satan has deceived and destroyed.

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

There are several commands in these verses: be strong, put on, take up, stand firm, pray, and be on alert. These commands give clear direction to the Valiant Warrior as he enters spiritual battle.

Be Strong

We are reminded of God’s command to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1). The Lord

repeated this command to Joshua. God wants His men to be strong men and courageous men. God is calling all men to be a man.

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Acts 16:13

Valiant Warriors man up! Act like a man! Be strong!

As you anticipate spiritual warfare, be strong. Some men need to get strong, because they are not strong. The previous four lessons should prepare the Valiant Warrior to be strong. Spiritual disciplines, understanding, and walking by faith in the Spirit strengthen the Valiant Warrior.

Men are weak for a variety of reasons. Some men are sick. Some are lazy. We need to heal the sick. We need to kick the lazy in the...(seat of their pants). Men, we need to be strong, for the Lord's sake, for our own sake, for our family's sake, and for the church's sake.

What does a strong biblical man look like? Act like?

What does it mean when Paul writes, "Act like a man?"

Put on the Full Armor of God

This is something the Valiant Warrior must do for himself. God will not dress you, because you can dress yourself. Paul writes in Colossians to put on some things.

Put on the new self. 2:10

Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility... 2:12-13

Put on love. 2:14

It is your responsibility to put on these things.

God has given you the spiritual armor. It is your responsibility to put it on. This requires initiative and intentionality. You will not just wake up one day wearing armor. The armor for the first century warrior was heavy and somewhat cumbersome. It took a strong man to even be able to wear armor.

Do you remember the first time you put on a football helmet? Or when you put a football helmet on your three or four-year-old? The kid falls over face first because the helmet is so heavy. An NFL player does not even notice the weight of the helmet. He has become accustomed to the helmet. You must be a grown man spiritually to wear the spiritual armor.

The armor is put on by faith and in prayer. I make a regular practice of putting on the armor of God in prayer by faith. I would encourage you to put on God's armor every day before you get out of bed or soon thereafter. Get dressed, you are going out. Get dressed, you are going into battle.

We are to put on the full armor of God, not just some of it. Leaving any piece of armor off provides a weakness in us for the enemy to expose. Going into spiritual battle is an all-out surrender and commitment to the battle. Every piece of armor is necessary and important.

Our first Valiant Warrior semester was devoted to putting on the full armor of God. If you have not looked

at that lately, you may want to go back and revisit that study. All the armor is on the front of the warrior. There is no armor protecting the back, because God does not intend for the Valiant Warrior to retreat.

Discuss “putting on” the things God commands in this section of study.

Understanding the Battle and the Enemy

...so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The spiritual battle is not against flesh and blood. The idea is that it is not against people. There is an enemy behind the actions, words, and attitudes of people who oppose God and His kingdom. The enemy has schemes. The enemy has a name and it is the devil, Satan.

We see his schemes in the Garden. He came in the form of a snake. He questioned what God said (3:1). He contradicted what God said (3:4, 2:17). He came to Eve and not Adam. Eve led Adam into sin. Adam did not protect and lead Eve into obedience and safety. This was not a physical attack and forced submission against Adam and Eve. It was deception.

This enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. He wants to steal your joy. He wants to kill you. He wants to destroy your marriage, your family, your peace, and your walk with God. He is the Father of lies, so he will lie to you and about you.

Discuss the schemes and strategies of the devil.

A spiritual battle requires spiritual authority and weaponry. If you are fighting a battle in the water, then you better have a ship, submarine, or something that allows you to thrive in the water. You do not drive a tank into the ocean to prepare for a battle at sea. The tank is made for land battle. Our fight is against spiritual forces of wickedness. So, the weapons we use must be spiritual weapons. Unfortunately, some people fight with worldly wisdom or financial wisdom or financial means or physical strength. These means cannot win a spiritual battle.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

These weapons for spiritual warfare are divinely powerful. That means God's power is in these weapons. God is fighting on our behalf by means of the weapons that He provides. These weapons are designed for the "destruction of fortresses." These are not defensive weapons for blocking an attack. These are offensive weapons for tearing down and destroying.

Notice there is reference to the mind. These spiritual weapons destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. He goes on and declares taking every thought captive. This battle can be going on in the mind. The Bible says that as a man thinks so is he. Romans 12:2 urges us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We fight in the heavenlies. We fight with our minds. Much of

our spiritual warfare is between our ears.

What does it mean by “speculations and every lofty thing?”

What is the importance of “taking every thought captive?”

Satan is a liar. He is an accuser of the brethren. We must understand that and know that Satan attacks us in what and how we think.

1 Peter 5:6-11

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter exhorts Elders in the verses preceding this passage. He then exhorts young men beginning in verse 5. Young men are to be humble under God’s mighty hand. God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Valiant Warriors have courage and confidence in the Lord. But the Valiant Warrior realizes the battle and the victory belong to the Lord.

When anxiety or cares start to overwhelm the Valiant Warrior, he must cast his cares on the Lord understanding that He cares for you. Be serious about the battle. Be on the alert. The devil is your adversary. He is prowling and seeking. He is not passive and asleep. He desires to devour someone. But as a Valiant Warrior, we are hunting him. It is like going on a grizzly bear hunt. Sometimes you wonder who is hunting who. If you have the gun, you have the advantage.

Peter commands to resist the devil, be firm in your faith. James 4:7 says to resist the devil and he will flee from you. The Valiant Warrior does not have to defeat the devil, because Jesus has already defeated him. We just have to resist him, and he will flee from us. So, remember to be serious, be on the alert, and resist the devil.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Ephesians 6:13

Discuss how you should do battle against the devil.

What does it mean and how do you resist the devil?

Stand Firm

Back to Ephesians, after being strong, putting on the full armor of God and understanding the battle, the Valiant Warrior must stand firm.

Stand firm therefore... Ephesians 6:14

Verses 6:11 and 6:13 mention "stand firm." Three times in these four verses, we are commanded to stand firm.

A common biblical exhortation is to stand firm or be steadfast. We have observed it in 1 Corinthians 16:13 and 1 Peter 5:9 along with this Ephesians 6 passage. Standing firm means not giving up ground. It means not losing ground. It means not retreating from previously held positions. It means not staggering or stumbling either.

Valiant Warriors must stand firm in what they believe. We cannot compromise, retreat, or return to the ways of the flesh. When we stand firm in what we believe, then our behavior will follow our beliefs.

Unfortunately, some are caving into the world, the flesh, and the devil.

What are some of the greatest temptations that men are compromising or caving into during these days?

Piercing the Darkness

The spiritual battle is not just personal for the Valiant Warrior. It is for the kingdom of God. If you read Ephesians 6:10-20 carefully, you will notice Paul does not pray for himself as far as his health or comfort. He concludes his prayer asking that he might have the boldness to make known the mystery of the Gospel. His purpose in spiritual warfare was to expand God's kingdom.

One of the subtle ways Satan deceives believers is convincing them the spiritual battle is about something that is not kingdom advance. Satan will overwhelm you with your personal battles so you will not have the time or interest in doing something great for God. When in reality, when we get our eyes off our own problems to serve the kingdom, oftentimes, that is when the peace and the power comes.

In his book, *Spiritual Warfare and Missions: The Battle for God's Glory Among the Nations*, Jerry Rankin points out God's purpose is to be exalted among the nations. We see the Revelation 7:9 vision of all nations and peoples around the throne and before the Lamb for all eternity. Satan opposes God's kingdom and the reaching of the nations with the Gospel.

Satan's strategy is to keep nations closed to the Gospel and keep Christians cold to missions and reaching the nations. Satan convinces believers missions is optional and not important. Satan, as he did in the Garden, casts doubt on the Word of God and what the Word clearly states. The faith of believers is eroded. Many believers shift into survivor mode and retreating into holy huddles of inward focus.

Valiant Warriors must be reminded of God's plan for the nations.

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God. Psalm 86:9-10

The future tense verbs speak of the certainty of the nations coming to worship and glorify the Lord's Name. This is God's plan. How is He going to accomplish this plan?

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus commands His disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations. He describes that process as baptizing and teaching. Jesus promises His presence to those who make disciples.

Discuss God's vision for the nations.

Discuss God's plan for the nations coming to Him.

Mission movements have been fueled by extraordinary prayer, abundant sowing of the gospel, and bold faith.

Valiant Warriors must be men of prayer. We must pray extraordinary prayers, not ordinary.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:12-14

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

Prayer is the greater work and results in greater works.

Discuss how Valiant Warriors should be engaged in spiritual warfare for the advancement of God's kingdom in the world today.

Valiant Warriors must be engaged in abundant sowing of the gospel. Spreading the seed of the gospel is the key to fruitful returns.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." Mark 16:15

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

Jesus described this abundant sowing in the parable of the sower and the seed in Matthew 13.

And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

Jesus gives the explanation of this parable in verses 18-23.

"Hear then the parable of the sower. "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the

man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

God has chosen to save lost people through the proclamation of the gospel. Valiant Warriors must be faithful and consistent in sharing the message of the gospel.

Discuss how Valiant Warriors can be engaged in abundant gospel seed sowing.

Valiant Warriors must demonstrate great faith. Our faith is not in ourselves or faith of itself. Our faith is in Jesus Christ and His Word.

But without faith, it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:6

We must pray in faith. We must sow the seed of the gospel in faith. We must go to the nations in faith. Believing and receiving the power and the promises of God will engage us in the spiritual battle. Appropriating by faith, the unsearchable riches of prayer to call upon the Name of the Lord our God ensures the tearing down of strongholds. Believing God's Word is a step of faith. Obeying God's Word is a step of faith.

How can we demonstrate great faith when it comes to the spiritual battle that is for the advancement of God's kingdom?

The heavenly vision shows us what eternity will be like.

Revelation 7:9

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Discuss how you live differently if you know you are in a war zone. Consider how people in Israel live with frequent sirens going off warning of incoming missiles. Consider how people in London lived during World War 2.

How should we live understanding that we live in a spiritual war zone? What should we be doing differently than we are now?

week six
FINISH WHAT YOU START

VALIANT WARRIOR
BOOT CAMP

The spiritual boot camp concludes with a lesson on finishing well, keeping first things first, passing the baton, and making the transfer. Two of my favorite passages of Scripture are Philippians 3 and 2 Timothy 4. We will use these passages as guidestones for our goal of making a successful handoff.

Knowing Christ As Our Legacy

Philippians is the joy book of the Bible. I highly recommend you read this book often. It is encouraging from beginning to the end. In the heart of this book that Paul wrote from prison, is his passionate pursuit of knowing Jesus.

The greatest legacy you can leave is knowing Jesus. Does your family know that you know Jesus? Do your children and grandchildren know that you know Jesus? Jesus Himself declared, *"this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* John 17:3

Paul contended he would count everything in his life as garbage compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:7-14

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Counting Everything As Loss 7-8

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

Paul reckoned everything as garbage compared to knowing Christ. Any accomplishment or recognition he received meant nothing to him in comparison to knowing Christ. Paul had quite a resume of religious accomplishments. The recognitions of the world and religion meant nothing to him compared to the value of knowing Jesus. There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus. The Valiant Warrior esteems his relationship with Jesus above all things. Is there anything you think you might lose if you go all in to know Jesus? Is there anything you are not willing to count as loss so you can know Christ?

What are some things Valiant Warriors may have to count as loss for the surpassing value of knowing Jesus? (What things in this life are excluded from a Christ-centered life?)

Having a Righteousness Through Faith 9

and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

While Paul was willing to count everything as loss, he understood this act would not result in his salvation or him obtaining righteousness through his self-denial. Paul was looking for a righteousness outside his own grip. It was beyond his accomplishments or denials. It was simply beyond his reach in every way.

What does Paul mean by “may be found in Him?”

Knowing Him 10-11

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and cthe fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

This is Paul’s passionate declaration of his desire to know Christ. The righteousness found in faith makes possible knowing Christ. Paul states two realms in which he desires to know Christ. One was in the power of His resurrection. Paul obviously understands the significance of Christ’s resurrection. Life is the result of the resurrection. Hope is the result of the resurrection. This resurrection was powerful. Paul wanted to know that power.

Paul wanted to also know the fellowship of His sufferings. This is a personal connection with Jesus Himself. Paul had and wanted to further identify with Jesus through suffering. Our suffering is not redemptive for anyone else, but it is affirming to us personally. Suffering together creates an unbreakable bond. God uses suffering in our lives to make us more like Jesus. Jesus Himself learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). If that is true for Jesus, it is even more true for all Valiant Warriors.

Paul concludes with a purpose clause “so that.” He was looking for the resurrection from the dead. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He promised that all who believe in Him even though he dies, he will live. Paul recognized that knowing Jesus was closely connected to the power of Christ’s resurrection and Paul’s own resurrection.

What is the difference in knowing someone and knowing about someone?

Why is it greater to know someone than just know about someone?

What does it mean to know Christ in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings?

Pursuing Him 12-14

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Knowing Christ was not just a moment in time. It was a pursuit of a lifetime. Paul recognized that he had not yet obtained the status for which he longed for. He had a ways to go. Paul uses the

verb “press on” twice in these verses. That could certainly capture the theme of these verses.

Paul was pressing on so he would fulfill his purpose. He wanted to lay hold of what God had in mind when God laid hold of Paul. He wanted to obey God’s will for his life. He wanted his life to accomplish what God intended for his life.

A key for him obtaining his goal was to forget what was behind him. Valiant Warriors must not be paralyzed by our past. That past could be bad and full of sin. Remember the blood of Jesus cleanses from all unrighteousness. If we confess our sins, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). We also need to forget what is behind regarding our accomplishments and successes. Sometimes success can be the greatest inhibitor to future success. We tend to rest in yesterday’s victories and not pursue tomorrow’s opportunities. Past accolades lead to pride and self-satisfaction and entitlement. Valiant Warriors keep pressing ahead and pressing forward.

If you have ever been pursuing something you really wanted, you may have come to a place where the pursuit became rewarding and invigorating. I know hunters who pursue a trophy animal often and enjoy the hunt as much as the kill. Now, gaining Christ ultimately and eternally is the great prize. But I do think through spiritual disciplines, walking in the Spirit, and spiritual battles, we can experience great joy and satisfaction in the journey and the pursuit.

Discuss how the pursuit of Christ can be a rewarding journey.

Proclaiming Christ as Our Legacy

2 Timothy 4:1-8

2 Timothy is the last book Paul wrote, so chapter four is the last chapter he wrote. In this chapter, we see him anticipating his own death and giving his last instructions to his son in the faith, Timothy. So, what are these last words that the battle tested veteran of the gospel would leave for Timothy and for us?

Faithfully Proclaiming the Word

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Timothy was given a serious charge to preach the Word of God. All Valiant Warriors are charged with proclaiming the Word of Christ and Christ of the Word. We are to preach Jesus and Him crucified and raised from the dead.

Preach Jesus in season and out of season. Preach Him when it is easy and when it is hard. Preach Him when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient. Preach Him when it is popular and when it is unpopular. Preach Him when people are listening and when they are not listening. Preach Him when appreciated and when not appreciated. In season and out of season pretty much means all seasons. If you do not do anything else, preach the Word. Nothing is more important and life changing than proclaiming the Word of God.

Understanding the times, people will not endure sound doctrine. People will reject sound doctrine and look for something consistent with their own beliefs neglecting the truth of the Scripture. People will believe myths and reject the truth. That is why we must keep on preaching the Word of God.

Valiant Warrior must believe the Word, but we must also proclaim the Word.

Why is preaching the Word, regardless of the season, so important?

Fulfilling Your Ministry

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Paul gives a rapid fire of imperatives to instruct Timothy of what it will require for him to fulfill his ministry. He must be sober or serious. This is serious business. It is not for the slackard or the goof off. Sober certainly includes not influenced by alcohol, but it is much more than that.

Endure hardships, because hardships are certain to come. Problems are a part of this life in this world. Some hardships come because of our commitment to Jesus. Some hardships are just a part of life. In either case, the Valiant Warrior is to be a rugged faith warrior who endures regardless of the circumstances.

Do the work of an evangelist. Even when you have hardships, keep preaching Jesus, in season and out of season. The work of the evangelist is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is announcing good news wherever you go.

Fulfill your ministry. Christ fills us. The Holy Spirit fills us. So, we can fulfill our ministry assignment. It was Timothy's ministry to fulfill. You have a ministry to fulfill.

How do you plan on finishing what you started?

Finishing Well

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Paul recognized his end was imminent. He compared his impending death as a drink offering being poured out and as a ship departing its port.

Life is being spent and poured out every day. We all spend our lives on something intentionally or unintentionally. A Valiant Warrior pours his life out with intentionality for the sake of Christ and his family and his friends and his church.

The time of departure will be at hand some time. It is appointed unto man once to die then the judgment. Death is a part of life. It is the end of this physical life. What is ahead is more important than what lies behind. But this life does not matter. We have the opportunity to send ahead out of this life for the eternal life that awaits those in Christ. So running well and finishing well does matter.

How have you spent your life? Invested your life? How do you measure what is important to you?

Paul fought the good fight. Valiant Warriors are engaged in the good fight. It is a spiritual battle. It is for our homes, our families, our children, the unborn, our faith, our church, and more. It is the fight of faith. We fight by faith and for our faith (what we believe).

How have you fought the good fight? How would you describe the good fight?

Paul finished the course. He finished what God had for him to do. He ran in his lane. He was the apostle to the Gentiles. What is your course? What lane are you supposed to run in? What responsibility has God called you to? Have you quit before the finish line? Do you need to restart?

Paul kept the faith. That means he did not deny his faith. He did not deny Jesus Christ. He kept believing the truth. He did not waver as he got closer to the end. He endured. He competed and completed.

How is your faith in Christ? Is it stronger or weaker than before? Are there any areas of your faith walk lagging behind where they used to be? Are you a keeper of the faith or a compromiser of the faith?

Paul anticipated the reward of the crown of righteousness. God rewards His faithful servants. A great misunderstanding is all people will be rewarded the same in heaven. The Bible does not teach that anywhere. As a matter of fact, it teaches there will be different rewards in heaven. Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. Here, Paul anticipates one of the five crowns mentioned in Scripture.

Robert Lewis in *Raising a Modern Day Knight* contends that a real man lives for a greater reward. Valiant Warriors live for a future reward that is a greater reward. You have to know there is a greater reward and then you have to know what it is.

Recently, as I was visiting with a family about a funeral for their loved one, I asked what do you want me to say about your loved one? One person said, "They left a legacy." I said, "What kind of legacy did they leave?" This family member had no idea how to answer that question. Without being too hard on that person, because sometimes I cannot give good answers when put on the spot myself, I think a lot of people like the idea of leaving a legacy but really have no idea what that means. I am not so sure our goal as Valiant Warriors and Christian men should be to leave a legacy. Maybe a better goal is just to finish what we started.

Finishing well means knowing Jesus and proclaiming Jesus faithful to the end.

Discuss the greatest lessons learned from these six weeks of spiritual bootcamp.

Discuss some life changes you have made or will make as a result of these six weeks of study.