



First Thoughts



This special edition of *CrossingCurrents* is being published due to ongoing discussions, debate, and controversy regarding the recommended changes to the government's policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". Recent legislative attempts to redefine marriage and the current attempt to further break down barriers for gays in the military indicate that these topics will only get hotter.

Without question, Americans are divided over these issues. That division can also be found among military personnel, although those who oppose the government's new recommended policy may not be as outspoken since the President is Commander-in-Chief. One group with a rather unique perspective are military chaplains who interact with soldiers on a more personal and spiritual level.

Recently, over forty retired chaplains sent a letter to the President expressing their point of view regarding proposed changes to don't ask don't tell. Regardless of one's position on this issue theirs is a voice that should, at least, be considered. You can read some of this letter in the article below or download the entire letter to share with others.

Speaking of Chaplains, Don Malin is still active as a chaplain in the National Guard. This past December, Don completed his second tour of duty in the Middle East. While there many of our readers supported his outreach to our soldiers and to Afghan school children. Be sure and read the touching story that Don shares about his interaction with one of our soldiers. It provides great insight into the price being paid by those who fight for freedom.

If you haven't yet taken our poll on the influence of the Church please provide us with your input at the Crosswinds Blog.

Blessings,

Bob Waldrep

PS: Don't forget, you can now make your donations online.

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A SOLDIER'S STORY

By Don Malin

I'd like to start by thanking everyone for your prayers and the boxes that were sent for our Table of Grace and for the school supplies you sent. They were appreciated greatly by those who used them. What was left over when I departed was used by those still there and the new Chaplain. You had an impact on the lives of the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Air Force and civilians.

I was touched by this support and again thank all who gave. But I was also touched by what I consider the highlight of my time in Afghanistan. Let me share what happened.

On Wednesday evenings we had a Bible Study in the Chapel and were going through the Book of Revelation. One night a young Lieutenant came into the Chapel and sat apart from everyone. He looked anxious yet tried to listen to what was being said. Afterwards he came to talk to me. I had to be somewhere else that night so we agreed he would come in the morning. He was at the Chapel before I got there. He introduced himself to me and said he wanted to talk. We went into my office and he sat down and began to explain what was going on.

He was an infantry officer who was responsible for a platoon. He shared that while out on a convoy his vehicle was hit by an IED. Smoke started to fill the vehicle and he heard screams from his men. He tried to get out but the door was jammed. He said all he could think about was his wife and kids. He had a son and a child due by Christmas.

He said he was anxious and couldn't get that out of his mind. He was worried about his family and not seeing them. He also knew he would have to go out again and needed to get a han-

dle on what he was experiencing. He asked me to share scripture about dealing with anxiety. We talked some more and I shared the following scriptures:

I Pet 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you." Matthew 6:25-33 where Jesus says not to be anxious and finally, Phil 4:6,7, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God, and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."



Don Malin leads worship for Service members in Afghanistan

We then prayed for him, his family, and his unit. As he was leaving he thanked me and asked if he could come back before they went out on a mission and have prayer again. I said, "Sure, any time you want".

A week or two went by before he stopped by again. I asked how he was doing and he said he felt pretty good. He said his unit gave him some time off to get himself together and he talked to other Christians and learned more passages dealing with anxiety and trust. He said they were going on another mission which looked bad. They were heading into an enemy stronghold and he wanted me to pray.

We sat and I prayed for him, his family, his unit and protection from the evil one. I told him I'd see him when he

gets back. We shook hands and away he went to prepare for his mission. That was a Monday. Thursday I got word of some badly wounded soldiers coming into our Forward Operating Base (FOB) which had a Surgical Team. On arrival the team began caring for the wounded. There was also one casualty.

I arrived at the Clinic to see the wounded and saw the flag draped body of the casualty. It was a few hours later that I learned the identity of the one who was killed. As I heard others speaking about him I realized the soldier that died was that young Lieutenant.

Man, the wind was knocked out of me at that time...I'm feeling it now as I type. This young lieutenant, who loved what he was doing, who had a young wife and children, who had faith in the living God, was gone.

His men said he was a hero. They said as they were on patrol the vehicle ahead of them was hit by an IED. The lieutenant got out to check on them and as he looked to the side he saw one of the bad guys fire a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) at a soldier behind him. He yelled, "Look out" and pushed him out of the way and was killed.

The Lt. was a brave man. He gave the ultimate sacrifice to protect another soldier. This man was a family man and a believer. As Paul said, in 2 Cor 5:8 "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." This man went to be with the Lord.

It was my privilege to be one of a line of people he talked and prayed with. In some way I contributed to his being able to trust Christ more. How important it is to have people who know and use the Word of God in these trying times. Afghanistan and Iraq are war zones. Many have died



and are still dying to help others. I believe a Christian who believes God's word and shares it can and will have an impact on soldiers.

Most soldiers come home alive and some go back two, three or four times. They go and are forever changed by what they experience. And, **though they leave the war zone the war zone doesn't leave them.** They may have flashbacks where they think they are back in Iraq or Afghanistan. I was in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 and we were mortared constantly. Each explosion sounded like thunder. The first thunder I heard after returning home took me back to Iraq. It is real.

Some have nightmares and can't sleep. Others may alienate themselves, not wanting anything to do with friends or family. Again in Iraq, I was around people ALL THE TIME. There was no privacy. I like my privacy and when I got home I was more to myself and wasn't motivated to get out and do anything. I am the Chaplain and I had issues!!

They may be very angry about being over there because they lost a year of their life or time with their family. They may have lost some friends over there. Some might feel guilty because they feel like they could have helped their friend who was killed.

The war is still taking casualties though they are home. War changes the human soul. It distorts and crushes man's spirit. In one sense the soldier who died as a Christian is much much better off. He is in the presence of King Jesus. He isn't facing the inner war after coming home which might

have ruined his marriage and friends. His wife and family were deeply hurt and grieving but they can remember him as a hero.

Do you know anyone who returned from Iraq or Afghanistan and is having problems? How are they doing? How's their family? Do you know anyone now in Iraq or Afghanistan? How's their family doing? Are you praying for them? Is your church helping them?

Conflict will continue for who knows how long...but we know from the Vietnam Era that the internal battles veterans go through will be for most of their lives. Churches need to develop a ministry to help the vet. I work for the Vet Center. I tell the vet about the benefits of the Vet Center which is a readjustment counseling center. It does great work helping veterans. The problem is it leaves Christ out. It is the government. Churches need to rise up and serve the vet community teaching and proclaiming Christ as the ultimate answer for all problems we face including war zone related.

I'll write more about this as a new arm of Crosswinds—"Cross-Swords". Again thank you for your prayers and support for me, my family and our troops overseas. Let me hear from you. Contact me on Face Book (search Don Malin Jackson, MS) and let me know you read this article.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We love to hear from our readers. Mail, or email, us your thoughts and opinions on this and other topics of concern in today's culture. Even if it's the same as ours we would appreciate knowing what you think.
Email: info@crosswindsfoundation.org

Military Chaplains Weigh in "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

On April 28, 2010 retired military chaplains sent the following letter to the President and Sec of Defense in response to the President's request that Congress repeal the so-called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" legislation.

Mr. President, on January 27, 2010, you requested repeal of the longstanding policy prohibiting open homosexual behavior in the armed forces, popularly known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."...As chaplains whose cumulative service is measured in centuries, we are deeply concerned that these changes would threaten the religious liberty of chaplains and Service members.

In our role as chaplains, we experienced daily the challenges of serving those within the armed forces. We preached, taught, counseled, consoled, and shared spiritual insights, both with those in our respective faith communities and with any Service member who sought our aid...Put simply, if the government normalizes homosexual behavior in the armed forces, many (if not most) chaplains will confront a profoundly difficult moral choice: whether they are to obey God or to obey men.

This forced choice must be faced, since orthodox Christianity – which represents a significant percentage of religious belief in the armed forces – does not affirm homosexual behavior. [This will] seem to have two likely and undesirable – results.

First, chaplains might be pressured by adverse discipline and collapsed careers into watering down their teachings...

To read the rest of this letter go to:
<http://crosswindsfoundation.org/articles/Chaplains%20DADTLetter.pdf>



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