



Whether you've seen it or not, I'll bet you're aware of the recent film, *American Sniper*, the true story of Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle. In a similar way, you're probably aware of the made-for-TV series about a famous group of soldiers in World War II, known as the *Band of Brothers*.

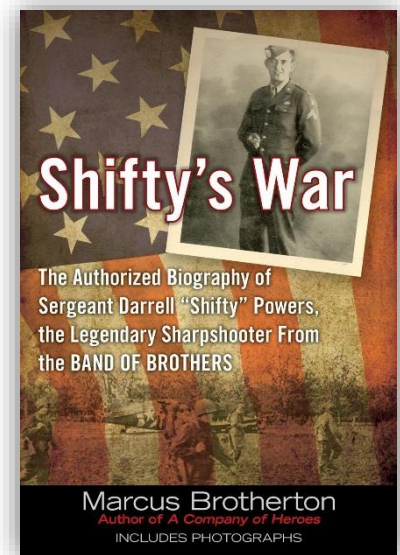
You may even have heard of the sniper in the *Band of Brothers*, whose name was Darrell "Shifty" Powers. Shifty was from the coal mining town of Clincho, Virginia, and it was my privilege to perform the wedding of his grandson while we lived in Bristol. I even have an autographed copy of his biography, *Shifty's War*.

Although my own military service spanned the years from and including Viet Nam and *Desert Storm*, I was never actually in combat, nor was it necessary for me to ever kill anyone in the line of duty. As best I can tell, it is only a minority of soldiers, sailors, Marines, or airmen who actually do have to kill in the line of duty . . . and who know they did.

For many who do, taking human life, even in the most justifiable of circumstances, is an experience from which they never completely recover. Not so very long ago, in another city, a friend who had served in Korea "made confession" to me that he had had to kill a Korean soldier in that conflict, an experience that had haunted his heart for sixty years.

The emotional, spiritual, and psychological toll that the trauma of war takes on the human spirit has long been known, at least to some extent, but current research suggests that it has also been largely misunderstood. General George Patton's slapping of a "shell-shocked" soldier during World War II has been frequently held up as an example of that misunderstanding.

These days, the most commonly-researched dimension of such trauma is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. PTSD is not limited to combat situations, but is an identifiable experience of many (most?) persons who are subjected to horrific experiences of any sort.



A fairly recent awareness, though, is that the most significant trauma that many combat veterans experience is more accurately called “moral injury.”¹ One of the most obvious markers of a war-torn soul is suicide, and the statistics are grim. Veterans commit 20% of all the suicides in the United States today—8,000 a year—which is very nearly one suicide every hour of every day. In 2012, we lost more active-duty soldiers to suicide than we did to combat. And one of the best-selling t-shirts in the vicinity of Fort Bragg, North Carolina is a heavy black shirt that simply says, “GUILTY.”

Here’s the kind of thing I’m talking about: As Marine Rob Sarra manned a gun in a Humvee in Iraq, he saw a burqa-clad woman carrying a big bag approach another vehicle full of Marines. They gestured and shouted for her to stop, but she continued her approach. Having been warned about suicide bombers, Sarra had only seconds to decide whether to shoot the woman or to risk seeing his buddies blown up. He pulled the trigger. As the woman hit the ground, she pulled out what had been in her bag—a white flag. Sarra began to weep hysterically. Such decisions have to be made in areas of conflict all day long, every day.



It doesn’t really matter how “justified” the war may be.² For those “on the ground,” the horrors are the same. As one 18 year-old wrote after Viet Nam, “It was all evil. All evil. I look back, even today, and I’m horrified at what I turned into. What I was. What I did.”

Army psychiatrist Warren Kinghorn noted that “My patients didn’t talk primarily about fear. They talked about right and wrong.” Veteran Michael Yandell noted that, “For me, moral injury describes my disillusionment, the erosion of my sense of place in the world. The spiritual and emotional foundations of the world disappeared and made it impossible for me to sleep the sleep of the just. Even though I was part of a war that was much bigger than I, I still feel personally responsible for its consequences. I have a feeling of intense betrayal, and the betrayer and the betrayed are the same person: my very self.”
Feeling better yet?

Happily, there is good news as well. There is good news in war as well as bad. One of the goods is the camaraderie and solidarity soldiers experience with each other. Their willingness to sacrifice for the mission and for each other, to suffer, to persevere, and to die in the service of a cause greater than themselves is something we can all learn from. That’s what “Band of Brothers” was all about.

And the even better news is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about brokenness, redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, and new creation. Louis Zamperini, the subject of the book and the movie, *Unbroken* (both of which are worth your time), suffered terribly at the hands of his Japanese captors during World War II. He, too, experienced PTSD and alcoholism after the war was over; but he and his wife were both converted in Billy Graham’s famous Los Angeles Crusade in 1949, and he later returned to Japan to forgive his captors.

¹ Much of what follows is derived from Annalaura Montgomery Chuang, “War Torn: PTSD is not just trauma of the MIND but trauma of the SOUL,” in *Christianity Today*, June 2015.

² See the attachments on “War & Peace.”

The wonderful reality is that, no matter how dark our Sin, God’s grace is more than sufficient to set us free and to give our lives new purpose and power. It is with this in mind that Chaplain (COL) Sean Lee of the Maryland National Guard founded “Partners in Care” ten years ago in order to connect Maryland soldiers with local congregations.

For soldiers who request it, congregations offer support of various kinds, free of charge and without regard to the recipient’s religious affiliation. Examples of such support and care include friendship and community, child care and sick child support, basic household and automotive repairs, counseling for individuals and families, and emergency food, clothing, and housing. This sounds like something we can do right here at CBF to “push back the Darkness.” What do you think?

Dave



A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON WAR & PEACE

A. Peace cannot be bought at the price of righteousness and justice.

1. Deuteronomy 7:1-6, 16-26, 9:1-6; Amos 5:21-24
2. Despite our yearning for a world in which all may live in peace, the sad fact is that, throughout history, communities unwilling to defend themselves have not survived.
3. William Inge: "There is not much use in the sheep passing resolutions in favor of vegetarianism while there are still wolves who like mutton."
4. My laying down my life is very different from my laying down your life.

B. The unpleasant truth is that we live in a unregenerate world.

1. It is a world of sinners (Romans 3:10, 23).
2. It is a world where selfishness and greed abound (Romans 1:28-32).
3. It is a world in which human greed and self-interest lead to conflict (James 4:1-3).
4. It is a world which often rejects peace and chooses war (Psalm 120:6-7).

C. We probably cannot all agree on the route to peace. But we do all know the One who is the Prince of Peace. He is our Master. And there are some things we can do.

1. We can accept our responsibility to be peacemakers (not peace *lovers*; Matthew 5:9; 43-45).
 - How often do we pray for our enemies?
 - People have always left home, left jobs, left economic security, left loved ones, left their normal lives, and endured hardships, discomfort, danger, risking their very lives, all to make war. Can the cause of peace cost us any less?¹
 - Trust in weapons of war is idolatry (Psalm 20:7; 127:1).
2. We can become informed about the issues of war and peace.
 - We can communicate often with our representatives in government.
 - We can become politically involved.
3. We can wage spiritual warfare, enlarging our support of MISSIONS (Ephesians 6:10-18). Only God can change the human heart.
4. We can pray without ceasing (Matthew 19:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

¹Jim Wallis, "Christian Disciples Waging Peace," *Light*, (July-August 1983), 11.

A MORAL CODE FOR INITIATING ARMED CONFLICT

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
--Edmund Burke

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signals in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."
--President Eisenhower

The idea of a "Just War" goes back to Saint Augustine (A.D. 354-430) and St. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274), with many other interpreters across the centuries.² I have found no definitive list of principles. The shortest lists include "Just Cause," "Legitimate Authority," "Reasonable Probability of Success," and "Proportionality." Other lists include all of the principles included below. One consideration that seems new to the equation is the specter of apocalyptic terrorism in a post-911 world.

It's interesting to note that most ethicists view the morally defensible choice as between some form of "just war" and thoroughgoing pacifism, especially Christian pacifism. Classical Christian pacifists understood and affirmed the need for states to wage "just war," but they understood Jesus' teachings as forbidding such activity by Christians. Thus, for classical pacifists, the real issue was that Christians should not hold public office, thereby avoiding being in a position of "legitimate authority."

1. **Just Cause.** A war can be started only for just reasons. The basic premise of "just cause" is self-defense or the defense of others, such as: vindication of justice, restoring a just and stable international order, protecting innocent life and restoration of human rights. The central question is whether or not the soberly-perceived justice of one's own cause is greater than that of one's adversary. Motivations such as vengeance or national "glory" or face-saving do not meet this criterion.
2. **Legitimate Authority.** War can be initiated only by those with responsibility for public order and legitimate authority for engaging the nation in war. Most Just War theorists argue that a formal declaration of war must precede armed conflict between nations.
3. **Right Intention.** A just war is only a means to gain peace and reconciliation—not humiliation and punishment. Destruction, conquest, or exploitation of one's adversary are unworthy goals for war. The question is whether or not the peace that will be established through conflict is actually preferable to the peace that would have prevailed without intervention. In addition, armed conflict must always be initiated with an attitude of regret.
4. **Last Resort.** All other means to the morally just solution of a conflict must be exhausted before resort to arms can be regarded as legitimate.
5. **Reasonable Probability of Success.** This principle argues that if there is not a reasonable probability of a successful outcome, it is wrong to sacrifice lives no matter how just the cause. Others would argue that some situations present a moral requirement of engagement whether or not success can be expected. England's initial resistance to Nazi aggression was of this sort, as indeed was the Allied effort through most of World War II.
6. **Proportionality of Projected Results.** The good expected from war must be greater than all the foreseen costs. There must be reasonable expectation that the good results anticipated

¹ David C. Stancil, Ph.D., January 29, 2003.

²Resources for this "Just War" information include: George H. W. Bush, cited in *U.S. News & World Report*, February 4, 1991, pp. 52-53; David Augsburger in *When Enough is Enough: Discovering True Hope When All Seems Lost* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1984), p. 171; "A Fact Sheet on Just War Theory," BreakPoint Online (www.breakpoint.org, January 29, 2003); Alex Moseley, Ph.D. "Just War Theory," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (www.utm.edu); and Richard Falk, "Defining a Just War" (*The Nation*, October 11, 2001, www.thenation.com).

will exceed the evils involved in their attainment. In addition, deadly force should be used only in the proportion needed to achieve a just objective.

7. **Discrimination:** Non-combatants, especially the aged, women, and children, can never be targets for injury in a just war. While it is recognized there “collateral damage” (a rather sterile euphemism for death!) is sometimes unavoidable, there can be no intention to harm innocent civilians.
8. **Good Faith:** Adversaries who come under one’s control, such as prisoners of war, should be treated with as much dignity and respect as possible. No cause justifies evil means such as abuse or execution of prisoners or desecration of holy places.