

## **New Identity**

### **Lesson 3**

## **Soldiers**

### **Reflections from Lesson 2**

- 1 – How has God deepened your understanding of your position as a saint?
- 2 – How did your experience of journaling and writing your prayers over the past days help you communicate and express your heart to God?

### ***The Big Picture***

At the Sunday School in which I grew up, the song “Onward Christian Soldier” was always one of the top ten requested music numbers. I can still hear the tune and the words ringing in my ears, “Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before,” verse after erse. I didn’t have the faintest idea what guerilla warfare had to do with Christianity or Sunday school, but oh, how we loved to sing that song. We would stomp our feet and stab each other with pencils.

Now, years later, I’m beginning to appreciate the theme of that song more and more. You see, this song says that Christians should think of themselves as soldiers in God’s army, marching together, moving together, fighting in unison, to defeat satanic forces. It suggests that there’s a spiritual war going on between God and the Evil One. When we become Christians, we become sons and daughters, and we become saints, but there is another important identity we take on ourselves. We are automatically enlisted into God’s army and we begin a lifelong term of service under God’s command.

The Bible teaches that part of our real identity as Christians is that of being a soldier. We are to be trained, equipped, fit, courageous, confident, Spirit-energized soldiers in the army of God. Not soldiers who are simply defending against the attacks of Satan, but soldiers who are strategizing ways to capture enemy territory. Soldiers who have their hearts set on overcoming the enemy, no matter what the cost.

### ***A Wide Angle View***

- 1) What are some of the responsibilities of a soldier in the military?

*What qualities would you look for in a good soldier?*

### ***A Biblical Portrait***

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

- 2) How is a Christian like a soldier?

*What is some of the military language used in the Bible and by followers of Christ?*

### ***Sharpening the Focus***

Read Snapshot “Weekend Warriors”

### **Weekend Warriors**

God calls us to be ready for battle. Ephesians 6:10-18 reminds us of the need to be prepared for the spiritual battles that will face every follower of Christ. We need to wear our defensive armor as well as know the weapons we can use to fight battles against Satan and his demonic works. We are called to be ever on our guard and always ready for battle.

However, some of God's soldiers see their call as a weekend warrior diversion. They put on their uniform once a week and play soldier for Sunday morning. I call these people "weekend warriors." They don't mind spending a little time once a week for the cause, but they don't want their faith to get in the way of their other weekly activities. These people don't want to pay the price to become fully devoted followers of Jesus. They're content to play soldier for a few hours a week and leave the real battles to others.

3) How do weekend warriors affect the life of the church?

*What impact do they have on the world around them?*

4) Why would anyone choose to be a weekend warrior?

*What can we do to move weekend warriors back into the battlefield where Jesus wants them to be?*

### **Read Snapshot "Soldiers Gone AWOL"**

#### **Soldiers Gone AWOL**

If you tell weak, half-hearted believers that hardships will cause heartache, and hassles, you may see many go AWOL. However, Paul takes his chances. He says, "Let's just let the truth be known. Soldiers will face suffering. This is war. The stakes are sky high. We're fighting over the destiny of human beings who matter to God."

Jesus, our leader, willingly bled to death to gain the ultimate victory over the Enemy, and He expects us to pay a price for the victories that we gain over the Evil One as well. Because the battle is real, many soldiers have gone AWOL. They have fun for the hills, tucked their tails and turned from the battle. While the battle rages, they sit back in safe territory and avoid any conflict or confrontations. While the ministries of the church suffer, they sit at home and make sure they can keep up with their favorite TV show. While people are dying and going to hell, they are content to stay in their comfort zone and protect their own back. The fact is, there are too many AWOL soldiers in God's army.

5) Why are there so many AWOL soldiers in the church?

*Were you ever AWOL as a Christian? If so, what caused you to run from the battle?*

6) How do you feel when you see AWOL Christian soldiers?

*What can we do to get these soldiers back on the front lines?*

**Read Snapshot “‘Just Say the Word’ Soldiers”**

**“Just Say the Word” Soldiers**

One exercise that I work through when I’m taking spiritual inventory of my life is to ask myself what kind of soldier I really am. I ask myself whether I am a weekend warrior or if I’ve gone AWOL in any way. I try to be brutally honest with myself and God. I encourage you to do the same.

My heart’s desire is to be a “Just Say the Word” soldier. I want to be ready to battle at any moment. I want my life to be completely submitted to the Commander-in-Chief of my soul. It is interesting to note that in the days of Jesus, the word for “Sir” and “Lord” were identical. When we say, “Yes Sir” to Jesus, we are really saying, “Yes Lord.” We are acknowledging our submission to our Commander. He says “jump” and we say, “How high?” He says, “Move,” and we move. That’s what I mean to be a “Just Say the Word” soldier. We follow no matter what the cost.

I want to tell you, God honors “Just Say the Word” soldiers. God uses them. He blesses them. God does miracles in their lives. But God won’t honor or use or bless unsubmitted soldiers. And it’s tough to build an army that’s a threat to anybody if it’s made up of weekend warriors and AWOL soldiers.

7) Who are a few “Just Say the Word” soldiers you have known?

*What kinds of characteristics have marked their lives?*

8) What are some of the rewards of being a “Just Say the Word” soldier?

*What are some of the costs?*

9) Find a partner and discuss what you can do to be more effective as a “Just Say the Word” soldier.

10) What are some of the battles you are fighting right now:

- As a church
- In your family or home

- In the marketplace
- In your community

*What can other soldiers around you do to help you win these battles?*

## ***Putting Yourself in the Picture***

### **Honest Evaluation**

Take time this week to honestly reflect on what kind of soldier you are. Think about the three kinds of soldiers presented in this study. Honestly identify where you might have characteristics and practices of each in your life.

### **For the Bold and Courageous**

After you have identified characteristics and practices of each kind of soldier in your life, thank God for the areas you are a “Just Say the Word” soldier. Thank Him for the strength and victory you are experiencing, and pray for continued power to march forward as a committed soldier in the Lord’s army.

Second, in the areas you see yourself as a weekend warrior or an AWOL soldier, confess these to the Commander and Chief of your soul. Ask Jesus to forgive you and to give you strength to submit these areas of your life to Him. Surrender each area to Gd’s control.

Third, if you have allowed a friend to help you in his evaluation process, have them pray for you, support you, and keep you accountable as you seek to live as a “Just Say the Word” Christian every day.