

The Overcoming Soldier



**DEVOTIONAL
STUDY**

By Military Christian Fellowship Singapore

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Printed in Singapore.

Military Christian Fellowship Singapore

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CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Before National Service	3
During National Service	12
Moving Forward	84
Contact Us	85
Acknowledgements	86
References	87

INTRODUCTION

We are passionate about seeing Christians entering National Service (NS) emerge stronger in their faith when they complete the two years of NS. Our prayer for you, dear reader, is that you will excel in your duties, be blessed and inspired to fellowship with others in the SAF to encourage one another and build each other up. We also pray that you will come through NS knowing our Lord Jesus better through the various tests and trials that you will face, using each challenge as an opportunity to OVERCOME through God's wisdom, strength, power and love. Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6

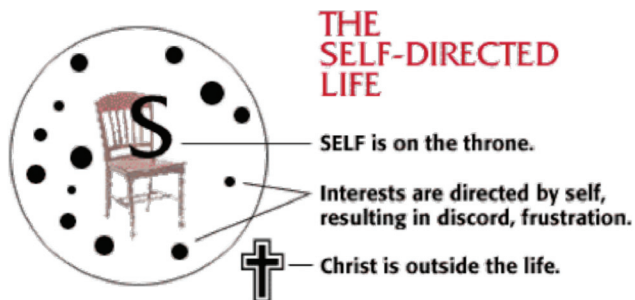
BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

Some enter National Service grudgingly whilst others try to avoid it. A common question for National Servicemen is “When is your ORD?” Some reply to the nearest hour! For them, National Service is an unnecessary interruption to their lives. We want to instead encourage you to look upon NS from the perspective of God’s plan for you and how you can emerge as an Overcoming Soldier. NS differs from your time as a student in several aspects. It is physically more demanding, you will be in a more regulated and regimental environment, and you will encounter fellow soldiers from all walks of life. This section provides some tips to help you prepare yourself before NS.

#1. START WELL WITH GOD

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. . . I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit.” John 15:5, 16

We believe that the most important preparation is to first take time to evaluate your walk with our Lord. To be an Overcoming Soldier, we must get started by recognising the difference between the **SELF-DIRECTED SOLDIER** and the **CHRIST-DIRECTED SOLDIER**. In the Self-Directed Soldier, our self is on the throne and interests are directed by self, resulting in discord and frustration. Christ may even be in our life, but we refuse to listen or obey. See below illustration, adapted from the Four Spiritual Laws by CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ).



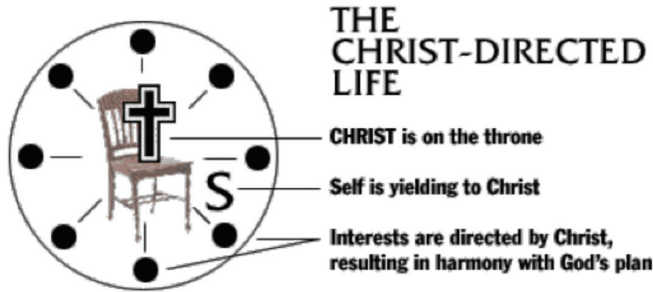
¹ <http://4laws.com/laws/englishkgp/default.htm>

BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

Self-directed Soldiers will however **S-T-A-R-T** on the wrong footing and be:

- Self-serving
- Trusting in own strength
- Accountable to self only
- Running a selfish race
- Thankful only in the good times

The solution is to live the Christ-Directed life whereby we can have Christ take the rightful place on the throne of our lives, our self is yielded to Christ and our interests can be directed by Christ, resulting in harmony with God's plan. NS will then be an opportunity and where you can bear fruit for Him and be a testimony to others. See below illustration.



When we face challenges, we will be able to solve them by seeking Christ's love and wisdom to:

1. Identify the problems
2. Intercede for those in need
3. Intervene and do what we can to bring about the solution for which we earnestly pray

The Christ-directed life enables us to **'S-T-A-R-T'** well in NS by:

- **S**erving unto The Lord
- **T**rusting in The Lord
- **A**pplying God's truths
- **R**eady to overcome challenges with the Lord
- **T**hankful in all circumstances

So get ready and be expectant for God to use you as His vessel! God will release FAITH in your prayers and actions to love and encourage others as well – right at the START of National Service!

BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

#2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

What would you do before you applied for a University or a job? That's right, do your homework! It's the same for NS; we need to read up about it and/or speak to your seniors in church who have gone through it to prepare ourselves mentally on what to expect. Today, the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the SAF have produced a number of resources which are available online.

You can refer to the Recruits Handbook published by MINDEF and the CMPB website to find out more about preparing for NS. There are common challenges covered such as:

- a) Regimentation
- b) Physical Demands
- c) Communal Living
- d) Dealing with Diversity
- e) Home-Sickness
- f) Financial Needs

To visualise how life in BMT is like, you can download the reality TV series “Every Singaporean Son” which featured the lives of recruits in BMTC.

² http://www.mindef.gov.sg/dam/publications/eBooks/More_eBooks/RecruitsHandbookApr12.pdf

³ <https://www.cmpb.gov.sg/life-in-ns/saf/>

⁴ <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/everysingaporeanson/>

BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

#3. BRING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE AND PERSPECTIVE.

"I can do all things through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13

Bring a **positively determined attitude** towards National Service knowing that the grace of God is sufficient to see you through all things.



Put your best foot forward in whatever you do - it isn't that hard, it just requires a little more effort and a never-say-die spirit. It's about your own spirit of excellence and how you would portray yourself as a person. It is for yourself and the people around you. Your positive energy can rub off others and make NS life purposeful and meaningful!

BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

The NS experience can become a journey towards a route of self-discovery. If you find value in the tough training as something to improve your well-being, you will enjoy every aching moment of it. So keep an open mind of things in NS. Learn to try everything and anything that is offered to you; there are many things that you will do in NS which you would never get to do in your lifetime (like shooting a rifle, throwing a hand grenade).

Many who have completed NS agree that NS has prepared them for future work. For example, if you are appointed as a Platoon I/C in BMT, you already start to learn to take charge of your fellow recruits and coordinate efforts to accomplish a task. At the same time, interacting and working closely with your NS mates from the different social and educational backgrounds sharpens your social skills.

Furthermore, learning to first go under authority in NS prepares you to command authority in future. In the process, we get to discern right practices from the wrong ones, and make the decision for ourselves as to what kind of person we want to be.

It is your choice as to how you want to kick-start your NS life. Begin NS with a touch of lightness and humour! **It's all about your perspective** – be *positively determined to emerge an Overcoming Soldier!*

- Be a **pacesetter** in **setting a high standard of personal discipline**, e.g. – punctuality, cleaned boots, ironed uniform, clean barrack rooms, etc.
- Avoid **currying favour** with instructors and trying to achieve popularity by compromising.
- Don't avoid **responsibilities**; carry out your work even if instructors are not around.
- **Volunteer** yourself for secondary responsibilities, e.g. games and committee work.
- Be **helpful**, cheerful and humorous. It will be of great encouragement to your platoon mates.

Recall the story of Cornelius the Centurion recorded in Acts 10:1-23, he was:

- God-fearing
- Generous to the poor
- Man of prayer
- Good reputation

And Peter had a vision about him! So can a soldier be a Christian? Of course!

BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

#4. WIN THROUGH COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK.

*“Each of you should look not only to your own interests
but also to the interests of others.”*

Philippians 2:4

Another important lesson you will learn in NS is **cooperation**. For Christians, this is also an opportunity to learn servant leadership and demonstrate Christ-likeness when we think of others before ourselves. Instead of waiting for others to help you, get ready to be a help to those also new around you!

BEFORE NATIONAL SERVICE

Here is a sharing by a soldier who did:

“I am the sort of guy who breaks down easily when I am tired, and you may be able relate to this - getting frustrated with my friends’ little mistakes; refusing to help them when they are struggling to put on their battle vest etc. Yet I knew that I had to change, and it had to start from within me – small things even like offering to fill my bunkmate’s water bottle, or simply getting a drink for him at the cookhouse. As a Christian, it made sense only to look towards Jesus. Thus, I made it a habit to pray and ask God to give me the strength - that small of bit of strength - to be caring towards my peers and to love. It may become hard to cultivate this habit of helping your peers when they do not do the same. But think about it - if we all start doing the same, wouldn't NS be a much more fun and pleasurable experience? It takes a small effort to make someone else's day better, so why not!”

At times we may feel misunderstood or alienated by our peers, but taking the first step to tangibly express care for someone else is pivotal. Rather than wait for the people around you to change, it makes more sense to first be the change. Be the change you want to see!

Just because it's a community of guys doesn't mean you can't show care! Remember they are your first buddies in your NS life! Team up to win!

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life”

Philippians 2:12-16

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Matthew 5:13-16 (New Living Translation)

This next section provides devotional readings for the first ten weeks of your NS. This devotion is by no means a substitute for your own Bible readings. Allow it to be a useful devotional material and companion through the new phase of your life. After every 5 days, there will also be 1 day of ‘Sabbath reflections’, whereby you are encouraged to pen down your thoughts and reflections over the week, as a personal prayer journal. The devotions are prepared by your brothers who have gone through their season in the SAF, in hopes that sharing their personal experiences and exhortations may encourage you to honour God through serving your country and doing your best to excel as an ***Overcoming Soldier***.

May the Lord bless you and use you as His Salt and Light in the SAF!

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 1 - The First Day

Verse of the Day

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

– Proverbs 3:5-6

Devotion

Today is the first in your life as a National Serviceman. You took the SAF pledge, after which you bade farewell to your loved ones and began a new life in NS. Perhaps you're feeling uneasy as the life of a soldier is a world away from your previous one as a student. However, you have Christ in you. Many brothers have gone through NS and become better men through the hardship experienced. They endured verbal abuse, ill treatment and tough training. But most importantly, they stood sure and steadfast and anchored their faith in God. Their faith in the midst of godlessness is something that should be emulated.

For the first Bible scripture, we have chosen Proverbs 3:5-6 because it is important to trust in God with all your heart. You have to have faith that He is there with you in the SAF. You have to have faith that He is there to protect you. In the process of trusting you will also have to obey Him.

Obeying Him may be difficult (e.g. keeping your quiet time) but you must have the discipline to do so. But where we are weak, He is strong; He will give you the strength to obey Him. If you are afraid that you are unable to obey Him, pray for strength, and God will definitely provide.

On your first day, take your bible out during breaks or in the night, and read it. Treasure your quiet time, because you love God. It is the right thing to do. It will get increasingly hard to commit time to God each day, but continue to have faith and rely on His strength to guide you through.

Trusting in Him and acknowledging Him will keep your paths straight. Keep trusting in Him and resolve to be an effective witness of the Most High God.

Prayer

Father God, this is my first day in the SAF. I thank you for this season of my life, where I will be tested. May I trust in You, trust in Your grace and strength that will help me pull through this season. May I meet new friends that I will be able to encourage and be encouraged by. Lord in all my ways, I want to acknowledge You and may You keep my path straight. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 2 God's House

Verse of the Day

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city the watchmen stand guard in vain.

– Psalms 127:1

Devotion

An old song runs through my mind as I write today's devotion, "Let's take time to wait upon the Lord, let's take time to listen to His voice. Unless the Lord builds His house, we labour in vain, so let's take time to wait upon the Lord."

In the midst of the rush of getting all your supplies, knowing your bunk mates and buddy, and soaking into the culture of the SAF, let's take time to wait upon the Lord. It may be while you are marching to the cookhouse or waiting for your Platoon Commander's Interview. Take time to meditate on God and His word, whether it is giving thanks to Him, singing praise or worship songs silently.

In anything you do, unless He builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Allow God to build His Holy temple in you, as you continue to meditate on Him. If He is with you, no hardship will be too great for you.

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with you, as you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. (James 4:8).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may I take time in the midst of my busy schedule to listen to your voice. Even when I'm marching or waiting, may you remind me to have continual fellowship with you. Lord, I love you and may I like David yearn for a clean heart, a heart that hungers for You. Lord, may You lead me to someone that I can share Jesus to, that You may touch the person's life. In Jesus' most precious name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 3 Band of Brothers

Verse of the Day

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

— Hebrews 3:13

Devotion

By now, you would have been acquainted with some of your platoon mates. You may know some of them; they could be your school friends and church mates. In your first few days as an NSF, look for and gather like-minded Christians to hold a short session of worship and reading of the word of God. It will be a time of encouragement for all of you.

As you gather for fellowship, you will gain strength. When the devil hurls his weapons and tempts you, you can encourage one another to stand fast in Jesus Christ and resist the devil and his devices “so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness”.

The relationships that you make may last for a long time. You will treasure the people who encourage you and likewise they will remember you who encourage them. Gentlemen, your days in the SAF may be dark, but your friends are like blazing beacons of light.

Prayer

Lord, lead me to my fellow brothers in Christ. Let us encourage each other as long as it is called today, so that we will not be hardened by life’s deceitfulness. May You reveal to me the needs of my fellow brothers so that I will be able to pray for them. Lord, strengthen me with Your grace and mercy. As I embark on this journey in the SAF, lead me to my fellow Christian brothers, so that we may stand together to resist the temptations of this world. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 4 What is your Vision?

Verse of the Day

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

– Luke 4:18-19

Devotion

Jesus went to a synagogue and read those words above. It was God's vision for Him and throughout His ministry Jesus was true to this vision. What then is your vision in the SAF? Could it be similar to Jesus?

As a believer of God, you have the Spirit of the Lord. It will be helpful to ask God what His plans are for you. With that in mind, meditate on it such that you can understand and apply it to your life. God may be leading you to share the good news to someone who needs to hear it. God may give you the opportunity to pray for someone who is depressed or sick. And when God answers the prayers, it will be a time of thanksgiving .

May the Lord be with you today, and be encouraged by the fact that the Spirit of the Lord is with you.

Prayer

Lord I believe that You have anointed with the Spirit of the Lord for a purpose. You have imparted a vision for me and may You confirm it through the reading of your word. Give me courage to share the good news and pray for those who are in need, whether physically or spiritually. Lord, the end purpose is for Your name to be glorified. May You use me for this purpose, in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 5 God or Chariots?

Verse of the Day

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

– Psalms 20:7

Devotion

The capabilities of an armed force are often measured by its possession of the most lethal weaponry and machinery. It was the same in King David's time. The king's armies were measured in the number of chariots, horses and men. But King David chose to trust in the name of his God. His faith in the Lord had protected him since youth. With a mere stone and sling, he defeated the heavily armoured giant Goliath.

Sometimes, you may feel like you are in a battle where the pressure on you seems to be mounting with every second. Something may have gone wrong and you may get into trouble. Under such circumstances, put your trust in God. We must not give in to Satan and solve our problems through morally questionable ways. David could even trust God in major crises that threatened his kingdom. Resist the devil with God's words and he will flee from you. God will give you the strength to get through anything.

Trust in the Lord our God!

Prayer

Dearest Heavenly Father, I put my trust in You. Some may trust in chariots and some may trust in horses but I trust in your name that delivers me. In every circumstance that I face in the SAE, may I put my trust in Your word. Let your word be hidden in my heart so that I will not sin. Lord let my trust and faith in You increase. Even in this desert, You will find an oasis to refresh me and those around me. Give me the strength to trust and obey Your words, in Jesus name I pray. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 6 God Seeks

Verse of the Day

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

— Psalms 24:3-6

Devotion

Who is the generation that seeks God, those that will seek his face? Even in the darkest of times in Israel, God is always seeking those who have clean hands a pure heart, who do not lift up their souls to idols or swear by what is false. Great examples of these were Elijah and Queen Esther. God is continually seeking them even now. Even if you feel that you have fallen short of God's righteousness, do not despair for the Lord strengthens those He loves. Ask forgiveness from God and repent and receive the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Seek Him wholeheartedly and be counted as one who will stand in His holy place. Discipline your flesh and be holy as Christ is holy and you will receive blessings and vindication from God. Exhort your Christian brothers in your platoon to be the generation that seeks God's heart. To make a Godly difference in the platoon, to be set apart for the service of God.

Prayer

Lord, I am weak and You are strong. It is by Your grace that I am saved and not through works. Lord, I want to have a closer relationship with You, increase my passion in You and a love for your word. I pray for Your grace and mercy to work in my life. Help me to make a conscious decision to be set apart as a generation that seeks Your heart and face. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 7 King of Glory

Verse of the Day

Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in.

– Psalms 24:7-9

Devotion

The ancient cities were guarded by strong fortifications, gates that served as an entry point for travellers and protection against enemies. Imagine, God in His splendour comes to the gates, and the gates are commanded to be lifted up. Such is the commanding presence that God has!

Our hearts can be a gate too. Its strong doors hide bitterness, pain and rebellion within. God calls us to open our hearts to Him, that the strong and mighty King of Glory may enter and battle against our sinful nature. Under His reign, our sorrow and frustration will be turned to peace and joy.

Allow the Lord to reign in your life by opening your heart to Him fully.

Prayer

Lord, sometimes I'm astounded by Your glory as the King. That is Your true nature. And I want You to reign in my heart. Lord my heart may be hiding hurt and sin; may I release them to You. May You wage the warfare and heal my emotional wounds, that I may exclaim that, "The Lord Almighty is the King of Glory." In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 8 The Lord is My Shepherd

Verse of the Day

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

– Psalms 23:1-3

Devotion

Do meditate on the verses for a while. The Lord is your shepherd. Look back unto the days of your enlistment, and take stock. Did not the Lord look after you? Was He not the shepherd?

Even during times of extreme stress we should be still and know that He is God. His promises in this psalm are that we will not be in want and that we will not be deprived. He knows of our needs and takes care of them by bringing us to green pastures and quiet waters.

When we rest in the Lord, He will restore us. He heals our bruises and strengthens us for the days ahead. Put your hope and trust in Him.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, be the shepherd of my soul. Guide me O Lord along the paths of righteousness. Let me rest in You, so that I may be restored by Your Holy Spirit. Grant me physical and spiritual healing, that I may be made whole. Increase my faith and trust in You, may I continue to hope in You, my Shepherd. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 9 Valley of Death

Verse of the Day

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me and your rod and staff they comfort me.

— Psalms 23:4

Devotion

Everyone has gone through many trials in his journey through life. My uncle passed away a week before I wrote this devotion. It was definitely a trial for my aunty and her children to lose someone they love. Although they are not yet believers, I pray that God will be their Shepherd whose rod and staff comforts them.

Even for you as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God will be with you. You may be going through bouts of depression, going through the long marches with full-battle order, Remember that God is ALWAYS with you.

May you fear no evil, His rod and His staff will comfort you. He will never leave nor forsake you.

Prayer

Father in heaven, thank You for being with me in the darkest as well as the best times in my life. Thank you for comforting me in my time of need. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, You are with me. Your rod and your staff, guide me. Lord, may I continue to depend on You, believing that God, You will pull me through all circumstances with your strength. Let my hope continue to be in You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 10 Praise God!

Verse of the Day

May those who say to me, "Aba! Aba!" be appalled at their own shame. But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The LORD be exalted!" Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.

– Psalms 40:15-17

Devotion

I have a habit of reading a Psalm before worshipping God. At times I shout praises, like I would imagine the Psalmist would, "The Lord be exalted!"!! But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The Lord be exalted!"

Even in camp, it is good to spend time just praising God. Praise Him for His creation, praise God for your salvation, praise Him forever and ever more. Praise releases the joy in our hearts. The outpouring of our adoration to God sets out heart and mind toward Him. There is no greater joy than being with Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, I praise You. Let my innermost being praise the Father in Heaven. Let my life be a sacrifice to You and let my tongue not stop worshipping You, O Lord Most High. Let today be a day in which I will rejoice and be glad in. You are a wonderful God and I offer my praises to You, even when I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer, O my God, do not delay. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

SABBATH REFLECTION FOR WEEK 2

Keep focused on the Great Commission

¹⁻³ Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. Hebrews

Hebrews 12:1-2 (The Message)

Even being recently posted to the new school/unit, the countdown to our book-out day starts. Our mind becomes so consumed with the passing of time and barely surviving each day with minimal punishment. We fixate our gaze on what is yet to come, and overlook the preciousness of the present moment. Take a moment to remind yourself of your convictions. Pray and ask God to refresh you. Don't do things out of obligation/guilt or not knowing why you are doing it, but do it as unto the Lord. Finish each week well. Be strong and overcome! God is with you, He will never forsake you!

My thoughts:

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 11 A Humble Man Stands Tall

Verse of the Day

It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes.

– Psalms 119:71

Devotion

Humility is a virtue. Sometimes we need to be humbled like the Psalmist was in order to learn something, which in this case were the statutes or law of God. The opposite of humility is pride. I guess by now, you would have seen pride in action amongst certain camp regulars. But what is important is to see whether we have pride in ourselves. Let's look at the example of the psalmist; he was self-reflective and he appreciated that he was humbled.

He had insight because he was humbled, and could learn the Lord's statutes. Conversely, if we have pride in our lives and refuse to be humble, we could miss out on many important lessons in our lives.

Today let us reflect upon ourselves. Do we possess the deadly seed of pride? If God highlights to you an area in your life that needs to be humbled, know that the Lord has a wonderful purpose in it.

Prayer

Lord, I want to surrender my pride to You. I know that it may not be easy but I desire to be humble. Give me Your grace through Your discipline. Reveal Your ways to me that I may learn them. Lord, it says in Your Word that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Mould me into the man that You desire. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 12 Prayer

Verse of the Day

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying.

— Ephesians 6:18

Devotion

Prayer is something very important in our Christian walk. Prayer is communicating with God. Communication with God is in all aspects, telling Him that we love him, telling Him that we are hurt or disappointed and asking God for requests. It is all part of prayer as what Apostle Paul stated.

Praying in the Spirit is to be conscious of the Holy Spirit enabling, teaching and leading you to pray. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions. During my NS stint, I had a fruitful time praying softly or in my mind while I went about my daily monotonous routine. Paul encouraged us to pray to God with all kinds of prayers and requests. God may lead you to pray for something unusual, such as your sergeants. You may never know the outcome of your prayers, but God knows.

Be Prayerful.

Prayer

Father Lord, teach me to pray. Let Your Holy Spirit guide me. Teach me to be disciplined enough to pray to You frequently, and give me the strength to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. I pray for all this in Jesus' name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 13 The Word Became Flesh

Verse of the Day

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

— John 1:1-5

Devotion

John 1 is one of the most amazing chapters from the book of John. It emphasizes on the Word, and how the Word is represented by Jesus. John's introduction is interesting. He does not give a historical or narrative background of Jesus, but examines the deity of Jesus.

Jesus is the eternal Word. Jesus role in creation is crucial; without him there will be no creation. Jesus is also the light but unfortunately not everyone understood Him and his message of salvation.

You are also a light in the darkness. Just as Christ is a representative of God, you too are a representative of Christ.

Therefore shine for the Lord's glory in the SAF, and may many see your light and be led to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Dear Lord, let my time in the SAF be made fruitful through the study of Your word. His words that are true, and life unto me. Lord, may You strengthen me, and may I be a light in the SAF. May you use me to bring many into the kingdom of heaven. Give me the wisdom to do so. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 14 Joy In the Midst of Pain

Verse of the Day

Paul wrote “I have learnt to be content whatever the circumstances.

– Philippians 4:11

Devotion

The apostle Paul suffered imprisonment and many other trials. However, God worked through Paul in the midst of his prolonged and extreme suffering. The letters he wrote to the early churches centuries ago still encourage us today.

Sometimes we may identify with Paul when we feel imprisoned by circumstances. We may allow guilt to enslave us or feel that health problems, a difficult family situation, or persecution by others has clipped our wings.

Because of these limitations, we are not always able to act freely. Yet this may lead us to become more open to seeking and submitting to God’s will. Our attitude and response to life and to God are choices. We can choose to be content within our unchangeable circumstances and to serve God with joy.

By doing this, we will grow in wisdom and stature.

Prayer

Father in heaven, let me be content with my circumstances. No matter how trying the situation may be, let me be thankful for the opportunity to be there, for I know that there is a lesson for me to learn. Let my heart rest in You. Let my joy and strength be from You. Let my mind continue to meditate on Your goodness, and my heart be filled with thanksgiving. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 15 God Works for our Good

Verse of the Day

And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

– Job 1:21

Devotion

Job seemed to have a deep understanding of the verse we often quote in times of trial; “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who live Him” (Romans 8:28). But at the same time, Job struggled with understanding why God would allow these things to happen.

Our trials often cause similar concerns. We find ourselves asking where God has gone and why He is allowing such hardship? Even though we may believe God is “working all things for our good,” we often search in vain to find something positive in our situation. And when we fail to see any possible good, we become frustrated and assume God has forgotten us, abandoned us in our time of need. But there are times when our trust must take comfort in accepting a difficult answer. Often, in the middle of our trials, we must continue to simply believe His Word is true.

Though we may not understand, we must desperately cling to His promises and know He will never leave us nor forsake us! Let’s be at total peace and restore our hope by always remembering that He is God.

Adapted from <http://www.gdwm.org>

Prayer

Dear Lord, you give and take away, but blessed be your name. Let me continue to trust in You. Trust in You during the hard times, trust in You during the good times. Trust in You in the SAF, believing that there is a purpose for me to serve in the SAF at this point of my life. Lord, wherever you led me, I’ll follow, in whatever circumstances and trials, I will follow, for great is Your kingdom and glory forever, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

SABBATH REFLECTION FOR WEEK 3

To Seek to Influence

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

Soon some of you may be tasked to take on appointments of section IC or platoon IC. Even without an official leadership position, we all have spheres of influence which we are placed in to impact the lives around us. There will come a time when we receive our postings and be assigned to our various units. Some go on to command school to receive the tough training which God promised that we will only be given what we are able to bear. But in essence, we will all be separated to be placed in different groups of people to shine for God. In some churches in China, they welcome new believers by saying "Jesus now has given you? a new pair of eyes to see with, new ears to listen with, new hands to help with, and a new heart to love others with." Let's steward our influence well for Jesus!

My thoughts:

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 16 Only God Truly Satisfies

Verse of the Day

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

— Psalms 63:1-4

Devotion

Although it may be difficult to maintain this level of passion every moment of the day, this is the relationship to which we have been called. This is worship! We must realize that this world is a “dry and weary land” when compared to walking in His presence. We must long for God’s love more than life itself and seek to glorify Him in all we do. If this type of relationship sounds foreign – maybe even a little radical – then I invite you to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalms 34:8). He will pour out His blessings on those who step out in faith and truly give Him their heart. If you already understand this relationship but realize the passion has faded, then I boldly exhort you to return.

Return to what you know will truly satisfy – to what you know is eternal, imperishable. Let’s all return to the place of true worship. Let’s all draw near and worship with a heart full of passion.

Adapted from <http://www.gdwm.org>

Prayer

O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen You in the sanctuary and behold Your power and Your glory. Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 17 Vision

Verse of the Day

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

– Proverbs 29:18

Devotion

Vision is the inspiration that motivates us. It's what gives a sense of purpose to our work and sacrifice at the end of a long day, a long deployment, or a long career. For the Christian, a godly vision is the compass which sets a career and a command on course, and keeps it pointed fair when heavy winds and seas buffet. The short hallway in the Pentagon which leads from the Office of the Secretary of Defense into the National Military Command Centre (NMCC) is special to me.

Every day for over three years encompassing the Persian Gulf war and numerous other crises, I walked down that passageway to meet with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and often, the Secretary of Defense to discuss the serious military issues of the day. Just outside the NMCC is a quotation emblazoned on the wall in gold letters. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" – Proverbs 29:18.

There are few professions for which that passage is more literally true than for the military. It is true at all levels of leadership, from the National Command Authority to the platoon leader. A leader without vision has a command without a vision. And a command without a vision is rudderless.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Dear Lord, instil a vision in me for NS. Guide me along, as I want to learn from Your leadership. Let my vision be defined by your calling for me. Empower me with Your Holy Spirit and confirm Your vision to me with the word of God, in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 18 Excellence

Verse of the Day

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

— Colossians 3:23

Devotion

Excellence is doing it right. It is trite but true-in warfare there is no prize for second place and the winners write the history books. Colossians 3:23 sets the standard: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”

But it is not enough just to do the thing right. We are also called to do it in the right way. The end does not justify the means. We do not intend harm to innocent civilians, for instance. And we do not seek personal success at the expense of our subordinates.

Finally there is a third test, probably the toughest of all. Not only are we to do the thing right in the right way, we are to do it for the right reason. In 1 Samuel 16:7, the Lord instructs Samuel: “. . . The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” God is interested in our motivation-the right reason-for doing the thing right and in the right way.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Father Lord, guide me along to do things with the right motivation. I pray for an excellent spirit, whether it be doing well for the weapons test, or shooting in the range. Let me do it with all my heart as I'm working for the Lord, not for men. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 19 Character

Verse of the Day

Deacons, likewise are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine or not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

– 1 Timothy 3:8-10

Devotion

The connection between leadership and character is a continuing theme throughout the scriptures. Proverbs 29:2 notes: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.” 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:5-9 set out some very specific qualifications for leadership in the church. I believe they are equally good guidelines for those of us in authority in the military. Leadership begins with personal example which is driven by character. Someone put it this way:

Your Image is who you want people to believe you are.

Your Reputation is what people believe and say about you. Your Character is who you really are.

Former Secretary of the Navy Dalton put character into perspective: “The question of military character and ethics is not an abstract topic for discussion. It is a readiness issue. It is a readiness issue because without ethical leadership in our armed forces, there can be no trust by subordinates in the orders of their superiors.” Character is who you are when only God is looking.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Father, continue to guide me to be a leader after God’s own heart. Instil in me godly character, that I may be able to win some for Your cause. Continue to work on my character and reveal to me my weakness. May I be open to people’s advice as I continue to serve You in the SAF. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 20 Teamwork

Verse of the Day

Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a house divided against itself will not stand.

– Luke 11:17

Devotion

Teamwork is the bread and butter of everyday leadership-fostering unity in a diverse group of individuals. Unity is essential. In the words of Luke 11:17: “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a house divided against itself will not stand.” A command which is permeated by jealousy, backbiting or dissension is in deep trouble.

The “how to’s” of building teamwork are critically important, but there is an overriding value which must guide the leader in building a team – the attitude of a servant’s heart.

Christ, speaking in Matthew 20:26, says that unlike rulers of the gentiles who lord their position over their subordinates, “whosoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant. . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve.” A wise leader will daily ask himself: “How can I use my position to help those entrusted to my leadership?” An important corollary relates to one of the biggest pitfalls a leader faces. That pitfall is pride. The biblical view of pride is clear throughout the Bible, and is summarized in Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Remember, you do not have all the answers. Proverbs 20:18 applies: “Every purpose is established by counsel, and with good advice make war.” Subordinates must be comfortable approaching you with both good and bad news.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Lord, teach me how to be humble, teach me how to work with others. Teach me when to lead, and when to follow and when to serve. I pray for a spirit of unity amongst the Christian brothers, and even among the platoon, that we may be united. Lord, even when the prebelievers see us as a united body, may they see Christ in us, in Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 21 – Respect

Verse of the Day

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

– Romans 13:1-4

Devotion

In a republic, it is fashionable from time to time to tear down institutions and to denigrate people in positions of authority. It's fashionable. . . but it's also wrong. Respect is the glue which binds people and organizations together. It's what makes fighting units successful in combat.

If you become an Officer or a Sergeant, you become adept at quickly taking the temperature of command. Good commands all have one thing in common-a healthy atmosphere of respect for authority. You can sense it. Romans 13:1-7 carries a profound lesson both for our society and military.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Lord, teach me how to respect and be respected. Teach me to be submissive to the authorities that You have put above me. Be it the SAF, my family or my pastors. Lord most importantly, teach me to be submissive to the leading and conviction of the Holy Spirit and the word of God, in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 22 Mighty Warrior

Verse of the Day

When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” “But Sir,” Gideon replied, “if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said ‘Did the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.”

– Judges 6:12-13

Devotion

Wouldn't it be surprising if one day the Lord comes to you and proclaims that you are a mighty warrior? Probably shell shocked like Gideon. I got news for you, as an SAF soldier now, you are now a Warrior! As a Christian warrior, as in the case of Gideon, “The Lord is with you. . .”. In your daily regimen in camp, the Lord is with you, regardless of how your day went. Be it that the authorities were unreasonable, and therefore you are feeling down or whether you perform well for the weapon tests and you feel good, “The Lord is with you, Mighty Warrior!”.

In Judges 6, Israel was facing a crisis; the Midianites were oppressing and impoverishing them, so much so that the Israelites cried unto the Lord. God answered their prayers through Gideon. In camp now, the situation may be similar. Maybe the Lord is calling you to stand up for his cause, to pray, to comfort and to encourage your fellow brothers in green. You may be feeling inadequate, as in the case of Gideon. But take heart, for the Lord's reply for him in verse 16 was “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.” The Lord will be with you and your endeavours.

Prayer

Lord I take comfort that you are with me, even when I'm feeling down and out. You are ever faithful in my life. Let me continue to stand firm in my belief in You, and be focused on You, my Lord and my strength. May Your presence be real to me as I go ahead with today's activities. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 23 Serve Others (Part 1)

Verse of the Day

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

— Mark 10:43-44

Devotion

Serving others may sound like an odd way to lead. If we're appointed as leaders, people are supposed to obey our orders and follow us. Servant leadership is not new to this age, but can be traced back to first-century Judea. In Mark's gospel account, Jesus redefined leadership for his disciples.

This redefinition came on the heels of a request by James and John to be seated on the right and left of Jesus in Heaven. Upon hearing of the brothers' request, the other disciples became upset and began to quarrel. Jesus gathered them and said, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." (Mark 10:44)

Serve others if you want to lead. This new concept was hard to swallow then and still is today, because of the self-focused tendency of human nature.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Lord, teach me to serve the people around me. Be it my platoon mates, my parents or the people in my Church. May You continue to teach me humility and wisdom as I follow Christ's teachings of servant-leadership. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 24 Serve Others (Part 2)

Verse of the Day

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

—John 13:3-5

Devotion

The key to serving others is to have a humble heart. Jesus provides the example of a humble heart and servant leadership at the Last Supper.

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciple’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him” (John 13:3-5)

Jesus’ humility came from the facts that He knew who He was, where He was going, and what He needed to do. He did not “put on airs” or flaunt the fact that He was the Son of God. He told His disciples earlier, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). By the power of the Holy Spirit and through prayer, we too can have a humble heart and serve others, as Christ would have us do.

Adapted from <http://ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Prayer

Dear Father, even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. May You lead me to someone that I may serve today. May you teach me to serve in the difficult circumstances in the SAF, or even difficult people. I need Your grace and wisdom to do so. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 25 Seek the Father's Will

Verse of the Day

He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

— Matthew 26:42

Devotion

It is important to have the perspective that God has equipped us to be overcomers in Him.

All the promises of God are to those who overcome the flesh, the world and the devil. Quitters will not inherit the promises of God. God has an eternal purpose in each trial we come into and He will not let any of these trials go to waste, whether before, during or after NS. Treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places are given, with precious fruits of the Spirit produced when we are overcomers.

Remember that Jesus is the pattern for the believer. John writes, "As he is, so are we in this world" (John 4:17). Moreover, Christ was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15).

To know the Lord intimately, we can come into the experiences of what He experienced, and this includes sufferings. He was chastised that we may come into that place of peace with God. When we experience sufferings, it is not for the sins of men because Jesus had already made redemption for their sins. However it could be because of the sins of men. Holding on to the truths of God will purify and renew our minds and life to a place of no compromise as an Overcoming Soldier in Christ Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, in the trials that I face, help me keep my eyes on the Lord. Use the trials to wean me from the world, and cause me to set my affections on things above. Keep me humble and dependent on the Lord as I overcome as He did. Help me overcome the tests in my life so that I will be a vessel fit for the Master's use. Develop in me enduring strength for greater usefulness and effectiveness in all that I do - during and beyond NS. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

SABBATH REFLECTION FOR WEEK 5

Moral Courage

¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”

John 2:15-16

In John 2, Jesus found men exchanging money in a part of the temple where they should not be. These men were obviously making excessive profits for themselves and desecrating the house of God! But our Lord did not care what people would think or paid heed to the slightest risk that He may be assaulted. He was completely unbound by the customs and public opinion of those days. We too, need to have this moral courage. Many people wished that they have this quality, but make no mistake; a wish-bone can never take the place of a backbone! The service of God is a man’s job; any fool can serve the devil. Let’s not be hesitant in standing up for what is biblical and right. Let’s uphold the Word of God in our lives without compromise! Talk about being brave for the Kingdom, a man’s moral courage is definitely to be admired. Remember it’s always for Jesus!

My thoughts:

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 26 Do Your Best

Verse of the Day

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

– Matthew 5:16

Devotion

As a Christian, you can and should integrate your faith with your profession. You must allow your relationship with Jesus Christ to influence every facet of your life, including the daily duties of your military profession. To do otherwise is to deny your faith. Secondly, it means that you can throw yourself into your military profession with the full confidence that you are involved in an endeavor which is entirely consistent with your Christian faith. IN fact, to fail to perform your military duties to the very best of your capabilities is a denial of your faith.

Our ultimate purpose is to be like Him, to be conformed to His image, to think like He thought, to respond like He responded, to reflect His character before the world. We are to emulate His attitude of humility, selfless service, and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others. We are to become like He was: a giving person, and not a getting person; a person who seeks to contribute to society, and not suck the sweet juices out of society for selfish pleasure. We are to look at every situation, every assignment and every personal relationship, with an attitude which says, “What can I give, not what can I get; how can I contribute, not what’s in it for me.”

Prayer

Heavenly Father, let me be steadfast in my faith in You. Let my faith to be a strong testimony of Your love. In difficult times, may I look to You for strength. Even in the SAF, let me shine. Lord, when I am weak lend me Your strength. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 27 Divine Revelation

Verse of the Day

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert.

– Luke 4:1

Devotion

Jesus “walked humbly and faithfully” with God. He loved prayer. He loved to be alone with God. He carried out His mission in life faithfully. He never wavered or questioned. He walked humbly with God, and he was faithful to others also, including His family, the disciples and the multitudes. He kept His promises, and could be relied on. If He told you something, you could believe it.

And so, as Christians, in every facet of our lives, we should reflect the character of Jesus Christ.

We should be just, we should love mercy, and we should walk humbly and faithfully with God. As we serve in the military forces of our nation, we should do what is fair and just and right. We should do what is merciful and compassionate. We should do what is faithful and humble before God. There is no other way. As Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, as believers, we must live our lives on a higher plane. We must always take the higher road and do the harder right rather than the easier wrong. And we must lead. We must lead our soldiers, our peers, and by example, our superiors to higher ground, leading them to faith, hope, purpose and commitment. By faith we lead them to do justly to love mercy, to walk faithfully and humbly with God.

Prayer

Father Lord, let me walk with You constantly as how Jesus walked with You. AS I walk, run or march in Camp, may I continue to meditate on the character of Christ. May the Light of God be seen through my actions and words. Continue to mould me to be more like you. As John the Baptist said, “Let Him increase and I decrease”, let Christ increase in me and let my sinful nature decrease. All these Lord I humbly pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 28 Give Thanks!

Verse of the Day

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

– Psalms 100:1-5

Devotion

The Bible instructs us to “give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5:18). It is easy to bless his name when all goes well. But when painful circumstances arise, expressing gratitude can become difficult. It’s interesting to note that this instruction to thank the Lord in all things was written by Paul – the apostle whose loyalty to Christ earned him severe persecution. While many situations weren’t to his liking, Paul knew that His riches in Christ Jesus far outweighed any earthly discomfort.

Consider the blessings he so valued, which are available to all believers. First of all, we are invited to have a personal relationship with the one true God – the sovereign, omniscient, and omnipresent Lord of all creation. Second, our Creator loves us with an everlasting and unconditional love. Third, He sent His Son to die as payment for our sin-debt so that we could spend eternity with Him. As a result, when we place trust in Jesus, we are freed from the fear of death. And the list of blessings keeps going: God adopts believers as His children and seals them with His Spirit (Eph 4:30). He has a plan for every life - and bestows special gifts and empowerment to make it happen. He also promises to meet every need through His limitless resources (Phil 4:19) and provides His Word and indwelling Spirit to guide us. No wonder Paul was grateful!

In our time in the SAF, tough painful situations may arise. Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23). Take time to meditate on God’s love for us in the morning at 0500 hours as you begin the day and 2200 hours when you end your day.

Prayer

God teach me to meditate on your love and grace for me. Even though I may have been maligned or treated cruelly today, God I know that your love will sustain me. Lord nothing, neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers can separate me from your love. Lord I pray that your joy will be my strength. Lord it’s because you live I can face tomorrow. I ask for You to go before me and for Your glory to be my rear guard. Be ever so real in my life at this point in time. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 29 Soar Like the Eagle

Verse of the Day

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

— Isaiah 40:28-31

Devotion

Did you know that an eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks? The eagle will fly high and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, the eagles is soaring above it. The eagle does not escape the storm. It simply uses the storm to fly higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm. When the storms of life come upon us – and all of us will experience them – we can rise above them by setting our minds and our belief toward God. The storms do not have to overcome us. We can allow God's power to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the storm that bring sickness, tragedy, failure and disappointment in our lives. We can soar above the storm.

Remember it is NOT the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is our handling of them.

Thinking back to the day, it may have been grueling or tough. Your platoon may have just been assigned toilet cleaning. You may even be too tired to read this properly. But like the prophet Isaiah said, “The Lord is the everlasting God, He will Never grow tired or weary. God is the defender of the weak and to those who tired he gives strength and grace.

As eagles who soar, take time to see that after the clouds of doubt and weariness, come the beautiful scenery. Let's remember that even in weakness, God's grace prevails.

Prayer

Lord show me your Majesty. Teach me to soar like an eagle over the difficulties that come my way. Though I may be tired, sick and feeling really uncomfortable, when I hope and wait upon you, Lord You will renew my strength, and You will make my paths straight. Help me continue to draw close to You in SAF, never to stray away from Your ways. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart bless Your name forever Jesus. Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 30 Freedom

Verse of the Day

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free, stand firm, hence and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

– Galatians 5:1

Devotion

By now, I don't know if you have come to realize the great irony about Pulau Tekong.

When I was there, I used to sit at the basketball courts during all sorts of activities, and watch the planes fly by. It was quite a depressing activity for me: being in the knowledge that I was stuck on the island for two weeks and yet having to watch people fly off to other destinations. The sudden lack of freedom in national service made me wish I had made more of the time I had as a boy. The bitter irony about national service is the concept of freedom. We were taught since young the importance of national service to safeguard our country's freedom. Yet from the day we trade in our pink ICs, we already long for the day we can shout 'ORD loh!'

Despite your circumstances in Tekong, I pray that you remember the great freedom that you have – that which Jesus has claimed for us on the cross. So give thanks, beyond your circumstances, for this freedom.

Prayer

Father Lord, even under these circumstances in which I feel that I have lost my freedom, let me be reminded of the freedom that Christ has given me. The freedom from sin and death. Lord, if the opportunity arises, may I share the memory scripture for today to those who may be feeling dry and weary of their circumstances. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 31 Do Not Lose Heart

Verse of the Day

Therefore do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

– 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

– Romans 8:18

Devotion

It has been a few weeks into NS, and by now you would already have realised that a military lifestyle is so vastly different from the student lifestyle. It is a lifestyle that many find hard to adjust to. At times, you might wish that time could turn back to when you were a student instead, Yet God's word also says that He has allowed for this to happen, and we should seek to submit to His will, and to look beyond our physical circumstances and work towards a greater glory.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may I not lose heart, but may my mind be continually renewed by Your promises to me. You will never leave me nor forsake me. I know that all the training will prepare me for greater work for the kingdom of God. May the joy of the Lord be my strength. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 32 Right Attitude Towards Authority

Verse of the Day

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

– Romans 13:1-3

Devotion

Nobody likes to be told what to do. Nobody likes to be shouted at. The tendency to develop feelings of resentment towards those who suppress our freedom and restrict our actions is indeed natural.

Yet a community or organization without coordination or leadership is a dysfunctional one and one that is doomed to failure, thus explaining the need for government. We may not like the authority that is currently placed over us, but let us remain mindful of the fact that all leadership on earth is divinely appointed.

Let us also not forget that soon, it will be our turn to be leaders in the SAF. Will our presence as leaders be resented? Or will we be shining examples of the good work that God has done in our lives?

Prayer

Father, forgive me if I have a negative attitude toward my Sergeants and Officers. Give me the strength to last through the training that is to come. Continue to guard my words, actions and thoughts as I interact with others. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 33 The Armor of God

Verse of the Day

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

— Ephesians 6:10-18

Devotion

If an SAF is to be efficient, it must be equipped and trained in all its arms and departments. The same applies in Christian warfare. Satan is opposed to God and to those who put their trust in Him. Note that the armour is chiefly to the front; a Christian must not turn his back. Of all the six pieces mentioned, all are for defensive action only except the “Sword of the Spirit”, which is both for offensive and defensive use. The armour is a spiritual armour for you to face the spiritual realities/dangers of the world, especially with the constant “flaming arrows of the evil one”.

Do spend some time studying the various pieces of the armour, as you stand grounded in the faith, righteousness, salvation, truth, peace and the word of God. So that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground.

Prayer

Lord, in heavenly armour, I will enter the land, and be ready for the daily battles that I face. Lord, let Ephesians 6:10-18 be grounded in my mind and heart. Lord, not only am I a soldier serving my nation, but I'm also a Christian soldier serving the Lord God Almighty. Lord You are the General in my battle, may I take instructions from You from the word of God daily for the battle I face constantly. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 34 Christ's Ambassador

Verse of the Day

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

– Matthew 5:16

Devotion

A common topic of discussion in military circles lately is how military Christians can demonstrate their faith. Senior officers in particular wonder if they have the right any longer to identify themselves as Christians. In fact, some critics argue that they may not. I think it is possible to do so without creating any coercion or appearance of coercion. I followed the same script of identifying myself as a Christian as part of my introduction. I also made it a habit to let my actions demonstrate my faith rather than preach with words. Occasionally I deemed it appropriate to be more vocal.

I had a civilian employee who was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumour. When we found out, I went to his office and closed the door for a private conversation. We discussed his treatment and prognosis. He had some questions about his benefits, some of which I could answer and some of which I had to promise to find out for him. At the end, I asked for his permission to pray for him. I said, "I know you are not a Christian and as a Christian I would like to pray for you." He happily agreed and we shared a wonderful time of prayer at the foot of the cross in his office. We both cried.

Using common sense and sensitivity, it is possible to be an ambassador for Christ in uniform.

Adapted from http://www.ocfusa.org/pubs/hougnon_coercion.php

Prayer

Lord, let me stand firm on my belief in You in front of others. Let me continue to acknowledge Christ to others around me, even if it is a struggle. As Paul was an ambassador in chains, let me be an ambassador for Christ for You even in the SAF uniform. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 35 Christian Soldier

Verse of the Day

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – He wants to please his commanding officer.

– 2 Timothy 2:3-4

Devotion

Soldiers willingly follow men who are natural leaders who are willing to risk their lives for the soldiers they lead. Men who demonstrate acts of self-sacrifice in the most harrowing of circumstances. How much more should we, as Christians, follow the One who endured suffering and death to rescue us from the most terrifying fate of all, an eternity in hell?

That was the idea that entered Paul's mind when, at the end of his own ministry, having been imprisoned by the emperor Nero, he wrote to encourage the young pastor Timothy. Timothy was facing severe conflict in his ministry at Ephesus, and the relentless opposition from heretics, apostates, and persecutors was weakening him. And just like any Christian who experiences difficulty because of following Christ, he needed to be reminded again of his task – to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of daily life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier". A good soldier is one who does not simply do minimum duty for his Lord, but rather is one who serves Him with everything he is and has. As a Christian, that's what you are called to. Paul's words to Timothy are your marching orders, too, as you strive to be a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, let me be a soldier of Jesus Christ, let me serve you with everything I have. Even as I go through trials of suffering, I know that my roles as a soldier also entails suffering. Let me please You as a soldier, and also realise that it is Your will for me to go through the regimentation of the SAF. Lord, may I continue to be strong for you in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

SABBATH REFLECTION FOR WEEK 7

Prayer Works

⁷ “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:7-11

Do you ever wonder if prayer really works? You're praying about something and Satan whispers to you, "This is a waste of time. Forget it! Who do you think you are? What do you think you're doing? God is not listening. Don't waste your time." Prayer works because God is in control. The basis of all miracles is God's sovereignty. Why does He do one and not another? Remember that God is in control. We have to trust His wisdom and His goodness. Prayer can do whatever God can do. His resources are available to you. Twenty times in the New Testament it says, "Ask." It's encouraging to know that things that are out of my control are not out of God's. I may not be able to change a situation but I can pray and God can change it. He can. And more than changing the immediate circumstances, He changes our hearts. Jesus prayed like this in Luke 22:42: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." To pray like He did is to have an attitude that God knows what's best for us and we don't! Press and pray on with Jesus!

My thoughts:

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 36 God's plan for me in the SAF

Verse of the Day

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

– Luke 22:41-42

Devotion

In his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren asked a simple but valid question: "What on Earth am I here for?" For many of who serve in the SAF, maybe the question: "What on Earth am I here in the SAF for?" has crept into our minds. Does God really have a plan for me in the SAF?

I had always wanted to serve as an officer in the SAF. Thus, I worked very hard during NS, hoping that I would become an Officer Cadet. I thought that was with my abilities, entering Officer Cadet School (OCS) would be easy. However, I was shocked to learn that I was to become a medic. I remember that I could not sleep that night, as I kept thinking how the next two years of SAF career would be spent as a medic. Nevertheless, I decided to do my best in the medic course. By God's grace, I did well and was selected to be a medic instructor. Unfortunately, I was re-posted to OCS on the first day of my Medic Course. I tried my best to stay a medic, but my efforts were to no avail.

As I reflected on the whole episode, I felt the Lord gently rebuking me and showing me my own pride. I had wanted so badly to enter OCS when I was in NS but now, when given the opportunity, I wanted to avoid it as much as possible. By His grace, the Lord led me to become a medic first so as to humble me. I believe that God's purpose for us in the SAF is not so that we can become an officer, a sergeant, a medic etc. His desire is that we would grow in godliness and grace during the SAF period. Our purpose therefore is to worship Him and to become like Jesus. Just as he exposed my pride and taught me an important lesson on humility, I believe that God desires to mould and train us to be godly soldiers for Him. God has many lessons to teach us during our time in the SAF. You may be facing difficulties in the SAF, and praying that God will take these difficulties away. Just like Jesus, you could be praying that the "cup" be taken away. However, let us pray also that His will, and not ours, be done. Let us pray that with our obedience, His purposes for us in the SAF will be fulfilled.

Prayer

Father, help me to see that You have a purpose for me in the SAF. Help me to have faith to believe that Your will and plan for me in the SAF is to strengthen me and develop my character. Help me to trust in You. I commit my years with the SAF into Your hands, In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 37 Inner Substance

Verse of the Day

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does, prospers.

– Psalms 1:1-3

Devotion

We tend to ignore what cannot be seen.

Having served as a member of the Boys' Brigade, I thought that I was well prepared for the SAF experience. I knew skills such as drill and camp-craft. I had gone through many leadership camps and understood principles of leadership or at least I thought I knew. The instructors seem most impressed when soldiers are physically fit, demonstrate aggression and fighting spirit. They appear to judge a person by their outward accomplishments such as getting Gold for IPPT or Marksmanship. Though gratifying, this outward accomplishment is not where our primary energies should be expended.

The Psalmist writes that the blessed man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Outward accomplishments can be likened to the tree's fruits and leaves. However for a tree to grow, it needs strong roots. Strong roots provide the tree with adequate water and nutrients. They are important but not visible. God is also concerned with our inner substance and the strong roots in our lives. Senior Pastor Edmund Chan from Covenant Evangelical Free Church writes that a life of worship, lived before God in the fear of Him and held together with humility, wisdom and perseverance, constitutes a foundation that will withstand immense stress and strain. The continued maintenance and growth of our inner substance can be developed through the practice of spiritual disciplines such as Quiet Time and Prayer. What have you been developing in the SAF? Have you been focusing on developing your inner substance?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive me if I have been only concentration on developing my outer showcase during my SAF training. Holy Spirit, give me the discipline to develop my inner substance by spending daily Quiet Time and Prayer with You. Thank You Lord. In your name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 38 Rambo

Verse of the Day

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

– Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Devotion

Are you a Rambo?

In popular culture, Rambo is eponymous for a person demonstrating great heroism through extreme violence and skill, especially when outnumbered by enemies. A Rambo is one who acts alone in the destruction of his enemies. However, the Christian faith is never about being a Rambo, it is about strong Relationships.

Saturdays were precious for me. I can finally book out, be transformed into a civilian and catch up on my sleep. It was also when I met my Christian brothers for Bible Study. It was on one of these Saturdays that I decided to sleep instead of going for Bible Study. I was too tired from the week's training, God seemed far away and I wanted to be alone. By God's grace, the Bible Study leader gave me a call.

"Where are you?" he asked. While I felt guilty, I remained honest. To my surprise, instead of a disappointed response, he enthusiastically said that the Bible Study members were concerned over me and that they wanted to visit and have dinner with me. Thus on that Saturday night, instead of me going, the Bible study group came to me. It was an amazing time of Christian fellowship and prayer. I was deeply moved by the love of my Christian brothers.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon writes that "pity is the man who falls and has no one to pick him up." We can never grow in God's kingdom by being spiritual Rambos. We need Christian brothers around us to encourage us in our Christian faith. We need godly relationships. Are you feeling alone in your walk with God? Maybe it's time to look for strong

Christian fellowship. After all, "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Prayer

Lord, thank you for providing me with godly Christian brothers around me. Help me to be committed in meeting up with a Christian fellowship so that I can continue to grow in godliness and grace. Thank you Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 39 Running the Race

Verse of the Day

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

– Hebrews 12:1-2

Devotion

Have you ever run a marathon?

The name marathon comes from the legend of Pheidippides, a Greek messenger. He was sent from the town of Marathon to Athens to announce that the Persians had been defeated in the Battle of Marathon. It is said that he ran the entire distance without stopping and burst into the assembly, exclaiming “We have won” before collapsing and dying. How dramatic!

The SAF organizes an annual half-marathon for the nation. It is a gruelling 21 km run that tests a soldier's strength and stamina. I had to endure countless hours of training and preparation before we were eligible to run the race. The instructors would increase the distance gradually till we ended up running 8-16 km every week, so as to prepare ourselves for the 21 km run. Since it was a 21 km run, I always wondered why we trained only by running 16 km?

Later I learnt that the mid-point of a marathon is the most difficult and that it was the breaking point. If one could keep on running for 16 km without stopping, running the next 5 km would be a breeze. It was only on the actual day that I realized how true it was.

You may be feeling tired of the SAF experience. You would probably be at the mid-point, at breaking point. However, the Christian race does not end at mid-point. It ends when we finally meet our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The SAF experience is just one of those mid-points in your Christian race. It enriches our lives and furthers the distance we can go with God. Take heart that many clouds of witnesses (brothers in Christ) have finished their SAF experience and grown closer to the Lord. When the race gets difficult, remember to fix your eyes on Jesus by spending time with God, reading His word, praying and surely Jesus will help you finish the race whilst perfecting your faith.

Prayer

Lord please give me the strength and grace to finish the Christian race. You are the author and finisher of my faith, and I shall trust in You. Thank you Lord, In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 40 Seek, Save, Serve

Verse of the Day

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

– Luke 19:10

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

– Mark 10:45

Devotion

“To seek, save and serve.” Motto of the SAF Medical Corp

We all love a good motto. Unforgettable mottos such as “The Best is Yet to Be” or “Sure & Stedfast” help to motivate a group to achieve a vision or a mission.

I never imagined that God would send me to be trained as a medic for the SAF. It was truly an unforgettable experience as we learnt many skills related to first aid. However, what captivated my imagination the most was the motto of the Medical Corp. A medic was to seek out the wounded, save the injured and serve the sick.

As I reflected on the motto, I began to wonder whether Jesus had a personal motto for his life. Luke 19:10 writes that the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost. In Mark 10:45, it writes that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. I believe that one of Jesus’ mottos for life was to seek and save out the lost (people who did not know God) and to serve the people around Him.

As sons of God, we too have a mission. One of missions is to seek out the pre-believers and share with them about our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Our time in the SAF is an audit period whereby we can learn to serve our bunk mates, our buddies and even our instructors. Just like Jesus, we can also learn to seek, save and serve the people around us. What is your spiritual motto?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, give me compassion for my fellow servicemen in the SAF. Open my eyes to see that the many needs of my SAF friends. Help me to serve everyone around me, so that You will be glorified through my service. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 41 Worship in an SAF Camp

Verse of the Day

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

—John 4:21-24

Devotion

Myth: God's presence cannot be found in SAF camps.

I always wondered if this myth was true. Can God's presence really be found in SAF camps? On the first week of my NS, I was shocked to hear so many vulgarities in a day. SAF training was getting tougher and more tiring, and God seemed so far away.

One night, as I was sleeping and listening to Christian worship songs over my CD player, I felt an urge to worship Him in the darkness of my SAF bunk. As my bunkmates were all sleeping, I could not worship him aloud. All I did was to mouth the words and lift my hands up to worship Him as I lay on the bed. As I sang the worship songs from my heart, I felt the Lord comforting me and tears welled up my eyes. I knew that God was here, God's presence was with me in a SAF camp.

In John's gospel, Jesus declared to the Samaritan woman that a time was coming when she would worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. It is promised that at time would come when true worshipers worshiped the Father in Spirit and in Truth. The area of worship is thus not nearly as important as the attitude of the worshiper. As God is spirit, he is present everywhere and he can be worshiped anywhere and at any time.

Do not be disheartened or discouraged by the environment around you. Rather, start to worship God in spirit and in truth and be amazed to discover that His presence can be found in a SAF camp.

Prayer

Father help me to worship You in Spirit and in Truth. Help me to realize that it is the attitude rather than the area that matters to You. Give me a heart of worship, In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 42 The Righteous Man

Verse of the Day

Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord

— Psalms 112:4-7

Devotion

The SAF is sometimes a fascinating place to be. During rest periods, you are able to interact with and mix around with many different types of people from all walks of life. Unfortunately, you are also able to experience all forms of sin from all walks of life as well.

When you're exposed to sinful habits and experience peer pressure to join them, I pray that you will remember the words of Psalm 112. Be like the righteous man whose heart trust in the Lord alone, and does not way in whichever direction the wind blows. God knows what is best for us and has specifically condoned sin as something dangerous to our souls. A habitual sin could jeopardize our spiritual future and pave the way for the slavery of far worse vices.

As the living temple of God, it is our duty as Christians to remain a Holy people.

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to be righteous. Let me be a man after Your own heart, and do not let me ever give sin a chance to take control of me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 43 Great is God's Faithfulness

Verse of the Day

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

— Lamentations 3:22-23

Devotion

Oftentimes things do not go the way we want them to. Problems appear at the most unlikely times or we are placed in the worst possible circumstances. At times, I simply feel like screaming, "Where are you God? Why did you let this happen?" After I simmer down I always get the same answer, "God is with you. He always was, and always will be."

God's love for us doesn't guarantee us a life of sunshine and no rain. God himself said that He, "sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45) What God does promise is that He will never test us beyond what we can withstand, and He will always be with us. Oftentimes the problems in our lives are God's ways of making us stronger and wiser. I remember in particular the time when I first enlisted. All of a sudden I was forced to be subject to the (sometimes unreasonable) commands of virtually anyone with a higher rank than me. While I certainly did not enjoy it, I feel that it has made me a wiser and stronger man. So far, I think that God's training is working. I have gradually become used to the SAF regime and no problem has been too great to solve or endure. If we have faith in God, He will carry us through.

Prayer

Dear God, please help me to trust in You even as the going gets tough. I know that You work all things for the benefit of those You love. Let these trials teach me to trust and love You more. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 44 Preparation!

Verse of the Day

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son why have you treated us like this? Your Father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

– Luke 3:46-48

Devotion

Preparation! By now, you would have probably done thousands of push-ups, pull-ups and situps. Your muscles have been aching, and at the back of your mind, you will probably be thinking, “what do all these add up to?” A single word will suffice. Preparation.

Jesus as a young boy was in the temple courts asking hard questions to the priests. And the priests were amazed by the inquisitive Jesus. But why was Jesus doing in the temple? Was he boasting of his wisdom to the priests? The answer is aptly answered by Jesus himself. He had to be in His Father’s house. Asking those questions probably sharpen Jesus edge on matters on Judaism. God was preparing Him for the work ahead, where He will preach the gospel to the Jews.

So it is with you; God has put you in the SAF to prepare you for His plans in the years to come.

The hardship will probably give you an edge over difficulties in life you may face next time. Maybe God will call you to be a missionary in the jungles of Indonesia for some unreached people group. Your experiences in the jungle and camp craft will make you a likely candidate to go. And ultimately, God will be glorified.

Prayer

Lord, Your love is higher than the heavens and deepest than the deepest seas. Thank You for lovingly moulding me in the SAF so that I may be a useful vessel for Your purposes, whether it be now or in the years to come. Let me be humble to take the preparation stage of my life seriously, so that the seeds that You sowed in my life will grow, for Your glory and namesake. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 45 The Thorn

Verse of the Day

But He (the Lord) said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

– 2 Corinthians 12:9

The Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

– Deuteronomy 21:6

Devotion

I spent the night lying in bed, my heart pounding like crazy. I have this huge phobia for falling, and the next day, we were all supposed to do a confidence jump from 5m into a pool. What is the thorn in your flesh this season? There are many times when we find ourselves stuck in situations, and it seems just so impossible to overcome. So often, the immediate response will be to try to solve the problem ourselves – and we find ourselves lacking. Yet, we know that we have a Savior who loves us, has the best in mind for our lives and promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us. That means, that He is here now too, whenever or wherever you read this.

Thorns appear in our lives for good reasons. If we never felt weak, just as if we never admit that we're sinful men, we will never find ourselves at the foot of the Cross. Then again, coming to the cross should never be a dread, since there is never a better place to hide than behind the Cross of Christ. But the emphasis in this verse is also in the fact that we have to realize that we are weak and that we all need the power of Christ in our lives in these moments. When we place ourselves at the foot of the cross, praising a Lord who tells us that HE has overcome the world, is there any better comfort, any better assurance or peace?

Often when I come to these moments – like when I was lying in my bed that night – I think of the shepherd and the sheep. In traditional times, the Shepherd would break the legs of the young sheep, such that when the grown-up sheep comes to a wall, it would look to the Shepherd, and He will put the sheep on His shoulders and carry it over. Do we look to our Shepherd or do we keep staring at the wall?

Prayer

Father, I thank you for Your grace which is enough for me even in tough times. I pray that even as I live for You, Lord, You would teach me to place my hope and trust in Christ. Father, I commit these struggles of my life to You, as I face them with You by my side. So help me, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 46 An “Impossible” Situation

Verse of the Day

Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, “Remember O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.” So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation may not be changed.

– Daniel 6:15-17

Devotion

Most of us are familiar with the biblical story of Daniel and the Lions’ den. Daniel was in an impossible situation. But he was faithful to God and did not bow down to the King, and eventually was delivered by God supernaturally. God shut the mouths of the lions, so that the lions will not harm Daniel.

I remember that in my times in the SAF, I was also placed in impossible situations. Once, one part of my weapon went missing, and I was in a panic throughout the whole day. I can’t even remember whether I prayed. But at the very last moment, when the arms were to be sent back, I found it at the bottom of my cupboard.

I praised God, and was relieved. I remember God’s faithfulness. I pray that when you are placed in a similar situation, you may want to pray to God and seek his deliverance.

Prayer

Lord, You are my deliverer in my time of need. Sometimes, I’m placed in situations where I can do nothing except to look unto You for my deliverance. Jesus indeed be my guide, into Your hands, I commit myself to You, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 47 Living for God

Verse of the Day

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

– 2 Timothy 2:1 & 15

Devotion

When we enter a new environment surrounded by people we are unfamiliar with, there is sometimes a great need to feel affirmation from people around us, to feel belonging and acceptance. What happens when our environment is one marked by coarseness, vulgarity, dishonesty and pride? We then face the dilemma of deciding what to follow. Should we do our best to blend in with those around us, so that they naturally accept us, or should we continue to do what is right, and risk being rejected?

Sometimes, temptation comes in various ways. About half of the men in my reservist company smoke, and many of them had started because they were offered cigarettes by their SAF buddies and agreed in order to feel accepted. During my officer cadet training days, there was an occasion where an incident happened, and those around me started to discuss elaborate fabrications to cover up the incident, and sought my compliance to share in the lie. I was in a dilemma – should I lie, and receive acceptance or should I tell the truth, and bring consequences upon my fellow cadets and I who were part of the incident, resulting in the rejection of my peers? I was really stuck, and prayed for a long while. In the end, I decided to tell the truth, but thankfully, the instructor was in a good mood and did not mete out the punishment that we expected.

In the book of 2nd Timothy, Paul Told Timothy, a young pastor, how it was much more important to feel acceptance and approval from God, than from those around him. Sometimes, this would involve making decisions that could make us unpopular before others. In all such circumstances, let us pray for God's grace to help us make the right decision and live for God.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Thank You for Your grace, that You showed by dying on the cross for me. I ask for grace for me to live for You too. Help me to make the right decisions and to put You first above all others. Thank you Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 48 Divine Delight

Verse of the Day

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

— John 16:13-14

Devotion

Many Christians I've met are in unison about the trials and agonies of the military life. The breaking of our comfort zones as we mingle with a wider group of people from different backgrounds is already testing, notwithstanding the verbal lashings from seemingly tyrannical superiors. Many Christians falter as they enter what appears to be an unceremonious entry into the real world, lonely and melting like ice-cream in the hot sun. Yet the verses from John should assure us deeply. For if we are known by Him, He is guiding us into truth.

The truth does not mean increased comfort or personal aggrandizement; rather the deepening knowledge of Christ and the profound and divine delight that exists in knowing Him forever. That is the Spirit's great purpose — To declare Christ to us, thereby glorifying Him. My dear friends, if the Spirit desires to declare Christ to you urgently, does that not mean that every circumstance that you face is but a step towards knowing Him more? Rejoice! For all suffering (and what is our suffering compared to the agonies of Christians in persecuted regions) is but a means by which Christ may be glorified in you and you delighting ever the more in Him. This divine delight is far greater than we can understand and if suffering should aid in distilling our impurities away lest we do not delight ever more, than let us suffer. The staggering truth of our Christian walk is that we've never walked alone, not since He rescued us from the clutches of sin. We've experienced His grace and continue to dwell in it because the Holy Spirit empowers us toward greater love and righteousness. Delight my dear friends, in the glories of Christ, for through Him and with Him, we see all these in its real form, but temporal moments leading up to an eternal embrace.

Prayer

Father, may You guide me in all truth, truth that will be reflected in my life in the SAF. May Your Holy Spirit be glorified in my life, believing that my NS mates may see Your work in my life, testimony and I pray that they will ask some questions regarding my testimony. In doing so giving me the opportunity to share your love with them. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 49 The End is Near!

Verse of the Day

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

— Acts 1:7-8

Devotion

In Acts 1, Jesus was telling them His final words before He goes up to heaven. The disciples were expecting some form of direction, but all Jesus said was to expect the Holy Spirit to come on them, and they will be his witnesses.

You are coming to the end of your recruit life. You will be posted soon, either in a command course or a non-command one. You might be worried or have certain inclination or desires to go for a certain course. But one thing remains. It is that wherever you are posted, the Holy Spirit will be upon you to empower you and give you directions for one purpose. So that you can be a witness wherever you will be.

Prayer

Lord wherever I go, let Your will be done. Use me as your vessel to excel in this season of my life in the SAF. Let me apply the lessons that I have learnt so that in all ways, I am honouring You through as I serve my country and doing your best. Empower me I pray, in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

Day 50 Keeping the Faith

Verse of the Day

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

– 2 Timothy 4:7

Devotion

By now, you have finished the toughest training sessions and the weeks that seemed to drag on for an eternity. You're probably looking forward to your POP. While your ORD is still a good way off, take heart that you have fought the good fight, you have finished the race and that you have kept the faith. It is a good time for you to reflect on the lessons that you learnt during your recruit days, the friends that you met and the journey that God has brought you through.

Prayer

Father Lord, thank You for Your love and faithfulness towards me during my first phase of NS. Thank You for Your grace as well as the lessons that you have taught me. Indeed, even during the darkest times You were in control. Bless my platoon mates for helping and supporting me through this journey. Bless my sergeants and officers as well, even as they train and lead us. Thank You for making me a Christian Soldier. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

MOVING FORWARD

After your recruit days, whether you enter Command School (Officer Cadet School / Specialist Cadet School) or begin life in the operational unit / department, you will have new roles and responsibilities. You may be posted to a different camp and have a new environment. You may also have new friends and commanders. Whenever you are posted to a new unit/camp, pray this prayer – “God, show me who are the like-minded believers. Reveal to me Your purpose for me in this camp / school / unit. Bring me to people whom I can encourage. Help me excel for You in all I am tasked to do.”

Moving forward, whatever phase of National Service you may now be in, look out for opportunities to tell people of God’s goodness in your life. Nobody is up all the time, nobody is down all the time, and that’s why we need one another. As you move up and down in life, remember that you are headed heavenwards, and there is no stopping the power of a personal testimony of an overcoming life. Here is a prayer to begin your journey as an Overcoming Soldier:

“As I enter my National Service, I thank You for Your promise in Hebrews 13:5 that You will never leave me nor forsake me. You are the God of the forever more. You did not hold back Your only Son, bearing my sins on the Cross that ought to be for me. As You hung there on the Cross, You opened the way for me to come back to You every day. As I proceed on this journey of faith, the Holy Spirit is my comforter and I will begin to do things that in my human mind I thought impossible to do. So today I present myself before You. Search me O God, and remove any locks that I have placed in my life. Thank you Jesus for the completed work You have done on the Cross. Thank You Holy Spirit for the ministry You do in my life. Give me Your divine perspective and provision, that I may fulfil Your plans and purposes for me during my time in National Service as a Christ-centred, Overcoming Soldier! In Jesus Name, Amen.”

CONTACT US

You can find out more about Military Christian Fellowship (MCF) Singapore by emailing us at 'singmcf@gmail.com', or find us online at our web link which shares about our affiliation with Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES) Singapore⁵. Should you desire to obtain more copies of this devotional, you can also write to us at the above email address.

For further resources, you can refer to our references section and for further devotional materials, we recommend the publication by our Daily Bread. You can obtain copies of their special military edition by ordering through their website⁶.

⁵ <http://fessingapore.org/ministries/military-christian-fellowship>

⁶ http://rbcintl.org/news/sg/sg_20150205516.html

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fellow servicemen who have contributed their personal National Service stories:

- Ang Weifeng
- Delwyn Goh
- Douglas Wee
- Gavin Tan
- Gregory Loh
- Jarett Kan
- Li Kayue
- Michael Lim
- Ng Kashing
- Vincent Lim
- Wesley Cheong

Special thanks also to MCF Council and Exco, Hope Church, and many others who have shared their experiences and insights.

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