

VETERAN WEEKEND HOMILY

What Service Do You Belong To?

ser3988 Alone in the Room, Pt 3

November 15, 2020 E & L

by John Miller

RECOGNIZING VETERANS:

In recognition of Veterans Day, it's time for 'Roll Call' please stand if you can when your branch of service is announced, and those at home feel free to do the same.

Will all "Army Veterans please stand". Where are all the boy scouts? Now those who served in the "United States Marines" please stand. All my passengers..... All those who served in the Chair Force... I Mean "Air Force" Please.... All those who served in the Coast Guard or as they are lovingly referred to as our "Puddle Pirates" will you please stand. Now for my fellow squids. All those who served in the "United States Navy" please stand.

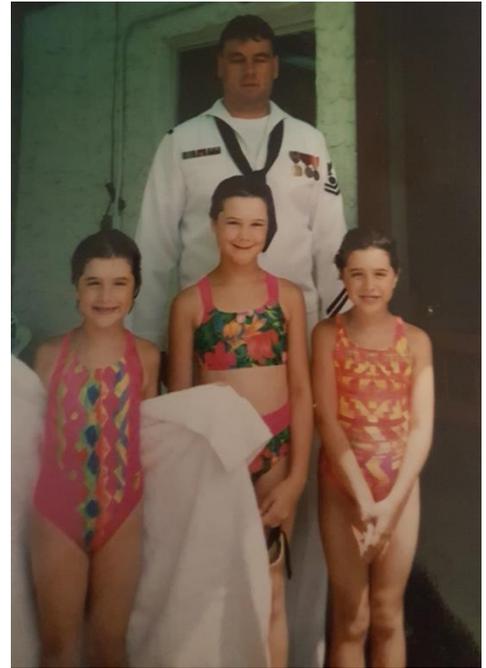
Gloucester County Community Church, this is your Veteran Family!

POINT OF INTRIGUE:

Good Morning, GCCC. For those who don't know me, my name is John Miller. I am part of the Creative Arts Team, my wife and I oversee the Garden bookstore, and I have recently become a part of the Military Ministry here at GCCC, which hopefully will again be meeting in person.

A little background: I served just under 15 years in the United States Navy. I completed 2 tours in the Gulf, 1 Panama mission, served on the ship self-defense force on board the USS Vulcan and the USS Whidbey Island, was part of the island self-defense force in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and served with Special Boat Squadron 2 out of Little Creek, VA, on board the USS Thunderbolt.

This may all sound like something important, but the thing I am most proud of is mastering the art of combing my 3 daughters' hair without a major explosion. **(Show photo)** They are all grown and married now, and would kill me if I put up another picture. So off we go. LOL!



I bet you all noticed the playful nicknames I had for the branches of the military. This is actually very normal behavior between branches of the military, but when it comes right down to it, we are all one military, one family that has a common goal: complete the assigned mission no matter what the odds. Every branch of the Military fully respects the others.

Oh! I forgot a branch of the Service. Where are all my Christians? Show of hands please. Yes, come on. Where are you?

I know you're saying "Branch of the Military?" I say yup! The toughest branch of all the military is "The Army of God". We face the most oppression, the most criticism. We face the biggest uphill battle to getting people to join than any other service. Being a Navy Veteran, when I am talking to people about the

Military, or things I have done while on active duty, I can say I see genuine interest. My fellow Vets can probably agree with me. But if I bring up (when I muster the courage in a public setting, that is) God or Jesus, you can imagine the faces. Most of time they change expression, give me the old, “Oh, look at the time. I gotta go.”

This is the way our society has turned. They do not want to hear about Christianity. You see there are just too many rules:

- I can't do that.
- I don't have time to sit during the day and pray.
- What? You want me to give 10 percent of my hard-earned money? Are you kidding?

See, this is how our society thinks now. Television, movies, social media, everywhere you look promotes “Give me. I want that. That is the way to live.” And, Christianity is just interfering with it.

WHEN GOD SPEAKS, LISTEN, OBEY AND YOUR LIFE WILL BE CHANGED, FOREVER.

On a quick side note, I was like that once also. I always thought I was a good Christian. You know, go to church on Christmas and Easter, and drop \$20 in the collection plate, and feel like I did what I was supposed to do. Say “God Bless” after someone sneezed. You know, “Christian Stuff” or in Military terms, enough to get by without getting in trouble. Then something happened to me; it changed my “personal way of thinking.”

Giving was always an issue for me. Tithing was a word to me, not an action.

We have been coming to GCCC for at least 20 years, and I heard all the sermons about tithing and giving of time, but never took it seriously. Then a few years ago, there was a concert here at Church, and we decided to come.

Well, during the intermission, my wife and I went out to the lobby, and there was a table set up by World Vision to sign up to sponsor a child. They had put out pictures, my wife was all over it and said let's do it. I was like "Um, we can't afford it. We give a bit to Church already and that's enough." Between you and me, "a bit" was not the 10 percent we are commanded to give. Anyway, after a bit of quiet arguing, because we were in public ("come on man," you know what I mean), I walked away to go to the bathroom and wash my hands. Well, I went into the hall bathroom, which by the way was empty during the intermission with a few hundred people here. So, there I am using the bathroom (to be politically correct) and I felt a huge push on my back. Not just a feeling, but I actually fell forward. I looked around, no one was there. Then I instantly got the feeling that I had to sponsor a child. I could not shake the feeling at all. So, I went out and my wife looked at me again and helped me pick a child to sponsor. Now, the monthly fee was \$35. Doesn't seem like much, but at the time, was a bit high for me. But we did it. The very next day when I went into work, I was called into the office and told that I was being assigned a new position that I applied for, like, 9 months before. The position was previously awarded to someone else, but they decided to add a second person to the team, and I was selected since I had applied

before. And, the raise was \$350 a month. 10 times what we had committed to World Vision or one tenth of my raise. So, I quickly learned you cannot out give God! And have tithed faithfully ever since. And, truthfully, we have never been in financial trouble since.

FACING CHALLENGES AS A SOLDIER IN GOD'S ARMY

Ok, back to my message. As I was saying, The Army of God faces so many challenges in today's world. You have marches and gatherings to support same sex marriage, abortion, taking God and religion out of public schools. We have organizations that are trying to take down any Biblical references in our state buildings as well as even our courts.

In schools, when the pledge of allegiance is said, the phrase "One Nation Under God" has become an option ... AN OPTION! My fellow Veterans at home, and sitting here in the congregation, fought to protect our rights, fought to ensure every American can continue to live in freedom, in a country that was formed "One Nation Under God." You see, even though we may all be sitting here thinking we no longer serve in the military, we actually face the greatest battle now. And that is why I say we are all not only Veterans, but we all have to serve. We must serve in the Army of God in order to protect HIS word!

Did you know the word "Battle" shows up 170 times in the King James Bible, in 163 verses?

Ephesians 6:12 states, "***For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,***

against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

And vs **13** goes on to say, ***Therefore, take up the whole Armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.***

All the marches and protests that go against Christianity are triggered, I believe, by an event. Someone decided that there is no God, or there is no way a loving God could let things go on like this.

So, the evil one preys on people who may be hurting, and they get together and off they go. It becomes their passion to bring down the Kingdom. And a lot of times they outnumber people who want to support God’s ways and will. What happens next? What happens when you’re out numbered? You back down. It’s not the way our God intended us to be. Christians have been persecuted throughout history. We have read of Christians being dropped into a stadium with lions, beaten, crucified, and tortured. But our Lord knew this would happen.

1 John 3:13 says it all, ***Don’t be surprised brothers, that the world hates you.***

And why do you think that is? The Devil wants a war. He wants to have people turn away from God. Live like this—get yours, be jealous of what others have. This is the battleground, and God has given us the armor to protect us in that battle. Not to protect us while we sit, but to protect us while we go out into the world to fight the forces of Evil, to go out to save His children

and bring them back to our God. That is what we are commanded to do.

“THE SWORD OF THE LORD”

A few weeks ago we learned that the sword is the word of God (Gina taught us that). We have to put on the full Armor of God and go out to recruit His people. Whether we feel brave enough or not, we have to do it. And believe me, I am speaking to myself, also!

Ephesians 6:10 says ***“Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole Armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil!”***

ACTIVE DUTY

You see, although there are a few of us that have been discharged from the armed forces, we are still on active duty in the army of GOD. And when serving in the military on active duty, soldiers find strength in each other to complete one mission - Strengthen and recruit others for God’s kingdom. Man, what a great tour of Duty, huh? Talk about making a difference! When I was on active duty, there were many times I was told to do something, but never knew why I had to do it. “It’s above your pay grade,” you get told. How many Vets out here have heard that line? Well guess what? GOD’s army doesn’t have a pay grade. Everybody has the same stripes on their sleeve, and everybody is totally aware of the mission! We just have to find the strength and the courage, in a public setting, to carry it out!

When I leave church, on the way out, I love to say: “Have a blessed Week!” but when I leave work it’s “See ya later!”

THE CHALLENGE

Why? Because society has programmed us to be afraid of what the other person will think of us or say to us. But, if we remember the Armor of God, and know that we have the Holy Spirit with us, why be afraid, right? Well, I am setting out a challenge. This week as you leave from someone, end the conversation by saying “God Loves You” and then turn away. If the person you said it to comments back, then maybe that opens a conversation with them. But if that person says nothing, and you have turned away, you won’t see the face they make. LOL! Now that person may go home that night and during dinner say to their spouse or family “Guess what some person said to me at work today? ‘God Loves Me.’ Can you believe that?” Well, just maybe they have children at the table and one of them says, “Well, Mom/Dad does he?” You just spread the word and planted a seed, which God will make grow by simply saying three words!

That is what our God wants us to do in His military. That is why He gave us His Armor. You see, the most important part of the armor, the best weapon given to us, in my opinion is “The Belt of Truth.”

Ephesians 6:14 Stand firm then with the Belt of Truth buckled around your waist.

You have heard many times “The truth shall set you free” and it will. And it’s not just a myth, it’s in scripture. But we have to be truthful to ourselves also.

John 8:32 *Then you will know the Truth, and the truth will set you free.*

THE BIG QUESTION:

Are we doing what we have been commanded to do by God? Or are we watching other people try and are just following the march deciding what to do once we see what happens?

There are all kinds of marches and protests against the Bible, but very few in support of the Bible. Am I correct? Let’s remember and never forget, “One Nation Under God!”

INVITATION:

So, how can you help defend God’s word you are saying? So, how do you enlist in God’s Army you ask? If we can all stand, please, if you can. It’s easy; there is no physical, no tests to take, and best of all no shots. It’s as easy as ABC:

“A” - Admit you have done things that are wrong. God calls these things sin,

“B” - Believe God did something about that in the person of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to cover our sins, and

“C” - Commit yourself to Him by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And as we do here at GCCC we add a

“D” - Do it today as we are not promised tomorrow.

Just say these few words to yourself...in your heart, “Lord, I know that I have done things that are wrong. You call these things sin. I am sorry; please forgive me. I believe you sent Jesus Christ, who died on a cross for my sins so that I would be forgiven. Jesus, please, come into my heart, come into my life, I accept you as my Lord and Savior.”

Please let us know by completing the Welcome Card in the pew and checking off FTD and we will be in touch with you to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

For those of you watching online, please text “pray” 62488 or email us at pray@gcccpray.com and we will be in touch with you

And those of you who said this prayer, welcome to the greatest military in the world. CONGRATULATIONS! I Salute You.....

Ser3988, What Service Do You Belong To (Words: 2529 with Invitation (19 minutes)

