

“Son” Flowers... A Devotional by the members of New Hope Church in Cooper, TX

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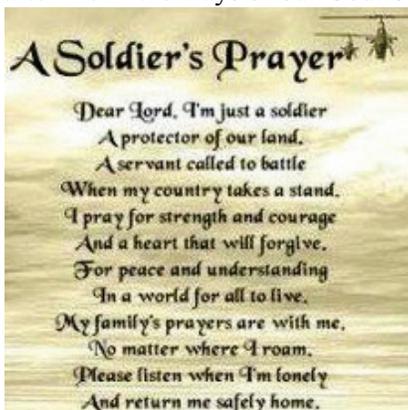
Scripture Verse Reference: 2 Timothy 2:4; ***“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*** (NKJV)

Veteran’s Day Devotional – A Faithful Band

I think back to a time long ago when I reported to the military; just a young kid fresh out of high school. I entered as a Private First Class, but you would have thought from my enthusiasm, I was at least a Captain. In the folly of youth, I convinced myself I was going to be a career soldier, live a life of adventure—filled with tales of heroic actions and daring escapades. But alas, like most dreams of youth, reality interceded and I put away those childish thoughts. Upon reporting for in-processing at Fort Jackson, SC, I found my new adventure in life filled with rules, regulations, and strict training doctrine developed exclusively to transform a diverse group of young men into a cohesive unit that performed its assigned tasks effectively and efficiently. In just days, I found myself on a bus headed for Fort Benning, GA, home of the U.S. Army’s School of Infantry. It was also home for Airborne, Ranger, and Sniper schools, so I knew I was going to be near Columbus, GA for a long time to come.

What stood out for me most in those early days of military service was how effective the Army was at breaking down a group of raw recruits with such diversity and rebuilding us into a disciplined, focused group of soldiers. We quickly learned to work together toward a common goal (mostly dislike of our drill instructors at that time). In forming our training squad, platoon, company, and battalion, I met other young men from all over the United States. Some were simple “country boys” like me who came from small towns all across our country, while others had the sophistication and street smarts of the big cities. Most of us were volunteers, but there were a few who were given the option of either serving jail time or serving their country. Like any organization, there were schemers who wanted only to work the system and avoid any real activity; there were a few “gung ho” young men with chips on their shoulders who thought they were God’s gift to heroism. Some seemed to have lived a comfortable life and others were hardscrabble and had worked for everything they earned. Lastly, there were a few who just tried to keep our heads down, mouths shut, learn well, and become effective soldiers. We came together in the coming weeks, learning to depend on one another and work together to accomplish our tasks.

After reaching my permanent duty station on the other side of Georgia, I began to develop strong bonds with my fellow soldiers. In time, we became what is commonly known today as “a Band of Brothers” as we ate, trained, prayed, laughed, fought, played, and cried together. Some, I’ve forgotten to the ages. Others, I hold in the highest esteem to this day. As I’ve gotten much older, I have begun to understand how similar my life as a soldier was to how my life as a Christian is today. While I am grateful to God that He saved me before becoming a soldier, it is only now—these decades later—I understand my time as a soldier prepared me for my lifetime appointment in God’s army, as a contributing member in His body of Christ. As a member of our “Family of Faith”, I am honor bound to contribute the gifts and talents God has given me and combine them with the talents of others to carry out together the mission of Christ’s salvation. In the military, I used the skills they trained me for to be a highly effective marksman, interpret foreign languages, skillfully navigate through hostile terrain, and instruct others in the tradecraft of being a soldier. In God’s Army, I use the skills He has trained me for to keep focus on the target, interpret different languages (today’s youth speaks a very different language than I grew up using), navigate safely through the hostile environment of this world, and instruct those who will come after me in the ways of our God. Some of you may be thinking that being a soldier and being a Christian is not so different after all; good for you.



I want to end with a request that you send up prayers for our current service members and their families on this Veteran’s Day. Each one deserves your respect, support, and gratitude. I wish I knew the person responsible for the words of this poem; perhaps they are lost to history. Yet God knows them, and I am wont to believe that they also knew God.