



BRIDGES TO HEALING SERIES

THE COMBAT TRAUMA HEALING MANUAL

Christ-centered Solutions
for Combat Trauma

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The Combat Trauma Healing Manual:

Christ-Centered Solutions For Combat Trauma

Including Spiritual Tools for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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The Combat Trauma Healing Manual– Table of Contents

The Combat Trauma Healing Manual takes the reader along a spiritual path toward healing through renewed relationships with God, self, and others.

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The Combat Trauma Healing Manual – Sample Pages

The Combat Trauma Healing Manual offers practical and sensitive guidance to help our returning warriors and their families re-discover faith and hope. Chapter 9 describes how caring Christians can become “bridges” to help renew broken relationships with God.

STEP 9 : HOW DO I GET ACROSS?

F I N D I N G B R I D G E P E O P L E

When you're weary, feeling small,
When tears are in your eyes,
I will dry them all.
I'm on your side
When times get rough
And friends just can't be found –
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down.

– Paul Simon¹

THE NECESSITY OF BRIDGES

The day started slow but the squawk box shattered the stillness: “RPG ambush!” The adrenalin began to rush, even though the voice on the radio wasn't familiar to me. But then the radio squawked again, “KIA!” It was the fifth day since we took over command of this sector in Afghanistan and the reality of war was already too clear. The sergeant under fire relayed more vital information in the staccato cadence of a man fighting for his life – and the lives of his platoon members.

Somebody needed our help. The soldier who was killed wasn't even in my company, but the memory was fresh of the two great Americans we'd lost to RPGs just two days earlier. It made me mad. As I sprinted out of the TOC, it dawned on me that they were pinned down on bad ground, one of the worst parts of the sector to support, even *before* the socked-in weather severely limited our air support. They were only about five clicks north of us, but the storm we'd been getting the past twenty-four hours had turned the ditch north of us from a slight inconvenience to a roaring river. I knew there was a bridge west of us, but it would take at least forty-five minutes to take that detour. What would be left of them when we got there?

As I ran to my M1A1 Abrams tank I noticed an unfamiliar shadow moving off a flat bed that had come in during the night. It was a M60A1 AVLB (Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge) that was being unloaded. I learned later it belonged to a Wisconsin Reserve unit – their transport had busted an axle on its way to battalion. “Is that thing fueled and mission ready?” I shouted out as I ran. The vehicle's crew looked at me, startled, but one of them quickly responded, “It's ready, Sir! What do you need?” While I hadn't trained with them or built the trust needed to know that I could depend upon them, the situation called for placing trust where it had not yet been earned. “Mount up!”

We headed straight for the ditch. Moments later I was gawking as this monstrosity of metal on tracks started to look like one of my kid's Transformers unfolding itself. In minutes, the maelstrom of water was spanned by sixty-three feet of bridge able to support a tank. The AVLB disconnected and we rumbled across to engage the insurgents and bring our comrades home.

You should have seen the look on the face of that sergeant as my tank, the Bradley and two Humvees started providing cover enough to bring the engagement to an end! We quickly gathered both teams and retraced our tracks to where our bridge-builders were positioned to provide crossing cover. Then quietly, efficiently, the AVLB team hooked up and secured that beautiful folding bridge back onto its moving platform. It and they had brought us home, and those “Cheese-Head” Reserve engineers immediately became our best buddies.



In the heat of battle, you can't be too fussy about where your help comes from. Normal people in abnormal circumstances need unique transfusions of support. While the M60A1 AVLB was the answer in this scenario, God's preserving and providing doesn't usually come in the form of a 750 HP diesel, 58 ton, 20-meter-spanning Transformer. It may not appear as you'd expect, but if He sent it, it will be just what you need.

BRIDGES TO HEALING

Throughout this manual we have stressed that God is your Healer (Exodus 15:26). But because we live in a fallen world with its various complexities, traps, weaknesses and land mines, your healing is no easy fix. It will take place when the environment surrounding your woundedness gives God maximum access to your soul. We've shared many practical measures you can take to facilitate that, but one of the most effective – and least used – has to do with people. You need to be in contact with people who are Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed, unselfish servants of God who want to provide direct help to others. When we get into trouble, God *expects* us to help each other out. There is safety and strength in numbers – even if it's only one or two others:

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

– Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)

FRIENDS OF FAITH

When you get the chance, read **Mark 2:1-12**. This is the story of a paralyzed man and four of his “bridges.” The word had gotten around that Jesus was at a certain house in Capernaum healing people. These four men immediately thought of their paralyzed friend. They knew there was no way he could get there, so they rushed to his house, put him on a stretcher, and carried him to Jesus. Unfortunately, they weren't the only ones who had heard about the Healer. The house was crammed full of people and surrounded by hundreds more. The four men cared about their incapacitated friend too much to give up and go home. They hoisted him up on top of the house, tore up the roof and lowered him through the hole down to Jesus! They would not be denied. Then Jesus – *seeing the faith of his friends* – healed the paralyzed man immediately.

There are faith-filled people who want to do that for *you* – if you'll let them. It goes against the macho GI image of a man or woman who is self-sufficient and in need of no one's help. But, if your pride isn't getting in the way, you know that you *do* need some help right now – just like that platoon north of the ditch-turned-river. There's no shame in needing and seeking help – every one of us does from time to time. The shame goes to the one who doesn't seek it, preferring to remain proud but forever paralyzed.

These “bridges” may be old friends, or you may not know who they are at this time. You might not even have met them yet. But they're nearby, motivated by their love for God and their love for you. In this Step we'll tell you what to look for...

The four men in the story did not heal their friend – Jesus did. But would the healing have taken place had the men not taken the initiative and altered their friend's environment so that it included Jesus? What does this fact make you think about your current situation and potential “roof demolishers” you have in your life?

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GOD INVENTED BRIDGES

There is an obvious principle of Bible interpretation that says, “If it's in the Bible, it's in God's will.” As you read the following verses, would you say it is God's will that we should be “bridges” for each other?

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

– Romans 15:1

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

– Galatians 6:2

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.
– **Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)**

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
– **Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)**

Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. – **James 5:16**



WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM A BRIDGE?

The “bridges” we’re talking about in this Step are people who will help transport us to God, so that He can provide healing. In many ways, they are representatives of His, ambassadors, messengers and liaisons. The following Scriptures will give you some insight as to how a properly-functioning bridge can help you get closer to God. As you read through them, answer the questions asked after each verse.

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. – **Proverbs 17:17**

There are probably a few people – perhaps you went through combat with them – to whom you could say, “For better or worse, I’m on your side. Even if you’re wrong, I’m still on your side. I’ve got your back no matter what.” You would consider it an honor to aid them, right? Write down their names:

There are people who feel the same way about you. If you were to list them now, that list would probably be the same as the one you just wrote. If any of your friends were in a jam, you’d come to their aid in a heartbeat, wouldn’t you? And wouldn’t you be upset with them if they concealed from you that they were having trouble, keeping you from putting yourself out for them?

The Point: *Expect* your “bridges” to be eager to help you out. They *want to!* Don’t hesitate to call on them.



The Combat Trauma Healing Manual offers spiritual solutions for struggles with PTSD by helping construct an environment that will give God optimal access to the wounded soul. Designed for individual or group study, the Combat Trauma Healing Manual combines the latest insights of the medical and counseling communities with the timeless principles of God's Word. The book outlines a step-by-step program that will help PTSD sufferers...

- Understand your trauma – spiritually, psychologically and physiologically
- Adopt therapeutic spiritual disciplines to bring you closer to God
- Process your loss and grief
- Experience the freeing influence of giving and receiving forgiveness
- Rebuild your identity based on what God says about you
- Strengthen yourself spiritually against future attacks
- Connect with those who will support you in many ways
- Define plans to fully reintegrate into society as a strengthened man or woman of God

From the Introduction

The reality of war is that everyone gets wounded. Some wounds heal rapidly, but some last for a lifetime. The reality is that the wounds of heart, soul and spirit have a spiritual component that is not being adequately addressed. Despite the valiant efforts of many organizations and the commitment of billions of dollars to address these issues, there remains a serious gap – the faith gap.

Major General Robert F. Dees, US Army (Retired), Executive Director, Military Ministry

From the Prologue

My family and I thought leaving the Army would remove me from the dangers of war. I had survived war and had come home, safe at last. Now I could focus on being a parent and a husband. But upon leaving the Army, I entered a different kind of fight: the war for my own heart and mind. I went face-to-face with my memories, with the horrors and stresses of combat—and lost.

Questions and doubts ravaged my mind: *Why did I survive and my men die? Why did they send me there? Why does God allow such terrible wars to happen? Why can't I feel anything?*

Ashamed of the man I had become and unable to reconcile war, I reached a breaking point. I was highly praised and decorated for leadership under fire—yet I anguished in the aftermath of war. I realized I was about to lose everything: my marriage, my family, even my life. I had led a daring rescue mission and found myself in dire need of rescuing. I had fought to keep a promise—to never leave a fallen comrade—but who would keep that promise to me?

Former Captain Nathan Self, US Army Rangers

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