

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Army Retirees at the Hunter Army Airfield Chapel in Savannah, Georgia, Will Gain the Confidence and the Basic Skills Necessary to Form Spiritual Mentoring Relationships With Young Soldiers Through a Constructivist Interview and Back-brief Process**

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

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Dr. Dennis McDonald  
Dr. Larry McDonald

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

A near-mythical connection bonds a soldier with his Army, his unit, and his battle-buddies. A soldier can be removed from the fight, but the fight can never be removed from the soldier. This is why aging warriors can be seen wearing hats adorned with monikers of past wars. A sense of patriotism propels a war veteran when well-wishers thank them for their service, for it was in that service that they experienced a brotherhood that is second only to true blood relatives.

Most veterans fondly look back on their time in uniform as the most meaningful time in their lives. However, age or time in service often concludes the relationship that a soldier has nurtured for two or more decades. Because of this connection, there is often a sadness that results when a soldier retires from uniformed service. For many, the connection they felt for most of their adult life is not something to cast away, for they hold a deep sense of loyalty to both the institution and the individuals in that institution. Being a soldier is not just a job or even just a career, it is a way of life that is driven by altruistic patriotism. This way of life wakes up early in the morning to stand in a formation of men and women who also raised their right hand and verbalized the oath:

I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So, help me God.<sup>1</sup>

A common ethic and a unified purpose motivate a soldier to live their call to preserve the freedoms and liberties that our forefathers envisioned for our nation. After 20-30 years of

<sup>1</sup> Title 10, US Code; Act of 5 May 1960 replacing the wording first adopted in 1789, with amendment effective 5 October 1962).

wearing the uniform of the American military, a soldier has been institutionalized with the Army way of life. Many retired soldiers find employment as government service employees after they retire. This post-Army career affords them the opportunity to perform a function similar to their military occupation specialty and stay as close to soldiering as possible, however, they are no longer required to wear a uniform. Sometimes a soldier will retire in uniform on Friday and then report for duty in civilian clothes on Monday. The majority of people who choose to work as a civilian in a military supportive role do so because they know no other way of life, want to continue to serve their country, desire to continue to contribute to “the fight,” and cannot imagine a life devoid of soldiers. Such retirees chose to live in close proximity to a military installation, because living close provides many benefits, such as: continuing to shop in the discounted commissary, remaining in the military medical system, enjoying many other recreational benefits offered at military installations, and remaining as close as possible to the world they love. Thus, most Army garrisons across the entire Army enterprise have retirees who have chosen to permanently remain close to the Army posts at which they honorably served. Homesteading near a military installation gives a retiree the opportunity to live among those with whom they existentially identify.

Another cross-section of army retirees choose to find employment in the private sector, but also choose to live near a military installation in order to receive the same benefits and similar exposure to soldiers as those who work in civilian roles. This segment of retirees often finds another way to stay connected to soldiers by contributing financially to programs and services that support Soldiers in need. There are numerous organizations across the nation that allow individuals to make charitable donations to directly meet the financial needs of soldiers, especially during the holidays of November and December. One such Savannah, Georgia,



organization has a veteran population that provides the HAAF Chapel an annual fall donation of approximately six thousand dollars. This money is given to allow Army chaplains the ability to provide young soldiers monetary aid for groceries during the holidays. Other institutions like the YMCA, United Way, Red Cross, and local civilian churches provide similar benevolent aid to needy soldiers. Army veterans are often used as liaisons between civilian benevolent organizations and the military world, where the veteran is able to use his or her civilian connections within the military to forge direct pathways to support soldiers.

Whether a retiree is a government civilian employee or a veteran retiree working in the private sector, the garrison chapel programs provide the retiree a unique spiritual connection to soldiers. The HAAF chapel in Savannah, Georgia, attracts a few dozen retirees that faithfully attend Sunday services and delight in helping soldiers with both spiritual and material needs. These retirees are dedicated to the ministry and take every chance they can to support young soldiers and their families. Several of these army retirees have both retired from the Army and from their second career as a government civilian employee. For these individuals, the chapel is both spiritually nostalgic and a conduit to interaction with true, modern-day, American heroes. Pop-culture makes heroes out of people who can throw a ball, sing, or even post pictures on social media. Veterans understand that true heroes are men and women that risk their lives every day and prepare to lay down their lives for others any day.

Widows of veterans often attend chapel services for decades after their spouse has passed away. The widows find solace being surrounded by military members. Their comfort amidst soldiers is not just fond memories or devotion to their late spouse, but it is the culture and warrior ethos. Nothing can replace a spouse; however, a dim reflection of their spouse can be seen in the faces of new generation that has been called to carry the torch of freedom.

Once a Soldier is promoted to a leadership rank, they are expected to impart wisdom to the younger soldiers under their supervision. In fact, all commissioned and non-commissioned officers spend the majority of their careers training young soldiers in life-skills and army-skills. Both commissioned officer and non-commissioned officers are trained to develop young, civilian men and women into adult soldiers. This is a perpetual cycle that repeats itself as the new soldiers become the seasoned leaders. The desire to develop the inexperienced civilians into proficient army leaders drives on long after military service ends, because the warrior ethos is engrained. However, the retiree's desire to influence young soldiers is often met with an inability to understand young people and no opportunity to learn how to personally interact with them. Young soldiers are just as busy as they always have been but are more detached from the interpersonal social life that formerly was prolific in the now defunct officers and enlisted clubs on every army installation. Some of the reclusiveness is due to an over-saturation of social media that encourages non-human interaction. Although today's soldier has more access to information than any other generation, there is a weakening ability to process that data in interpersonal relationships.

On the very surface there exists a generational gap that separates the army retiree from today's young soldier. Although they share a common love of country, they mostly connect on a merely superficial way if they connect at all. A "Baby-Boomer" or even a "Generation X" retiree thinks, acts, and interacts in a completely different way than today's "Generation Z" soldier. Retirees often seek out ways to fulfill their benevolent spirit towards soldiers. Since giving financially is an impersonal aspect of supporting the troops, they desire to develop mentoring relationships that mirror the responsibilities of their prior military service. Moreover,

some retirees desire to become spiritual mentors but do not have the confidence or opportunity to bridge the generation divide.

The average Army soldier volunteers from a pool of potential candidates that comprises 25.9% of the American population.<sup>2</sup> From the entire corpus of eligible individuals, approximately 1% volunteer for the armed forces. The first year or two of a soldier's career is spent in basic training, military occupation specialty training, and then inculcation into their first unit of assignment. Although army chaplains and religious services are offered during all phases of training, even the most faithful church attenders are unable to make meaningful interpersonal connections with spiritual mentors during this time-period.

The Pew Research Center noted that 23% of American adults claim to have no religion. The “nones” comprise the largest religious group in the country, containing those who have de-converted, atheists, agnostics, and those with no religious preference or affiliation.<sup>3</sup> Every soldier wears dog-tags that contains three vital items: social security number, blood-type, and religious preference. This database is maintained by the personnel section, which can generate a by-name report called the “Religious Preference Profile”. This report is used by the unit chaplain to either “perform or provide” pastoral care for potential combat casualties and resultant last-rites, memorials, or funerals. A chaplain can “perform” only what is practiced in their particular civilian denominational endorsement. If there is a soldier that comes from a different faith background, a chaplain “provides” the necessary coordination with chaplains from that other denomination. The author conducted such queries on numerous occasions since 2003 and

<sup>2</sup> Emery James White, (*If this is part of the title, it needs to be in italics.*) *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 37.

<sup>3</sup> David Kinneman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church—and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 66.

notes that on average more than half of all soldiers listed “no religious preference”. However, claiming “no religious preference” most often indicated a lack of affiliation with any organized denomination or distinctive faith group, not opposition to religion.<sup>4</sup>

### **Ministry Context**

The author currently serves as the senior garrison chaplain of the Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF). There are two distinct congregations that utilize the HAAF chapel, the Protestants and the Catholics. Because chaplains are cycled through the senior chaplain position every 1-3 years, the lack of continuity has historically caused a degradation of both congregations. In the fall of 2018, the author initiated a facility rehabilitation and beautification to prepare the chapel for growth. Organizations such as the local Boy Scout troop and the Home Depot volunteered both time and labor to this endeavor. The physical improvements and subsequent advertisement led to a rapid growth for both congregations. The Catholic service grew from 20 attendees to an average of over 60 attendees. The Protestant service grew from 20 attendees to an average of over 80 attendees. The services provide ministry in a military context to a wide variety of both civilian and military personnel. The foundation of each congregation remains to be the 20 original attendees that have faithfully served and supported the chapel programs for years and even decades. Many of these individuals are retired veterans and spouses that have stayed engaged with the military life-style continuously after they retired from active-duty.

The ministry context into which this project will be conducted is to be within the HAAF chapel. As aforementioned, the constituency of both the Protestant and Catholic services has been a core group of 20 retirees for at least the last decade. These individuals have seen many chaplains cycle into the leadership role and have remained engaged whether they fully

<sup>4</sup> David Kinneman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church—and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 66.

appreciated the chaplain or not. Just as these aged warriors endured painful military training or wars that they did not choose, they have weathered a myriad of leadership personalities over the decades. The army trains its soldiers to endure hardships and respectfully salute a leader's decision, whether they agree with it or not. This ethic permeates the core of a soldier's decisions and fundamentally changes their perspective on supporting an institution rather than an individual.

A few of the chapel's most senior retirees have attended HAAF chapel for 25 years, never losing hope even during the lean times or when every HAAF chaplain was deployed in support of campaigns in the Middle East. The longsuffering and selflessness of these faithful men and women drives them to stay committed to their ideals and never quit when things are bad. They patiently look at the big-picture and know theologically that God has everything under His control. This is one excellent example of how the Army earned the colloquial motto of "hurry up and wait". Despite leadership vacuums or years of lean chapel attendance, these retirees have historically been faithful attendees, never wanting to lose their spiritual connection to the Army.

The main purpose of every army chapel is to minister to soldiers and their families. However, there has been a continual erosion of young soldiers attending religious services across the army enterprise. In the fall of 2018 after the renovation to the chapel was completed, the inter-post digital marquees were used to advertise with the motto: *The Hunter Chapel: Hope, Peace, New Beginnings*. Soon after the re-launch, new families and young soldiers began attending the service, boosting the attendance and creating true chapel communities. The HAAF chapel's focus on young soldiers and families was designed to gain interest in Christianity and spiritual formation in a military setting. Alongside the new attendees were the 20 or so retired

army veterans that desired to connect with soldiers on a more than superficial way. In fact, many army retirees enjoy interacting with current soldiers because it brings them back to the most meaningful contributions of their lifetime.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Young soldiers need spiritual mentors to successfully navigate the stress and inherent suffering that is a part of the chosen profession. The majority of older, seasoned veterans attending the Hunter Army Airfield Chapel do not have the confidence or skills necessary to mentor and disciple younger, active-duty soldiers and families. Yet, most retirees are more than willing to recount the most impactful lessons they learned from their military service. It is therapeutic to talk about the bygone glory days.

There is a divide between the older and younger generations that occurs in Sunday services, wherein, interpersonal conversations are usually kept within generational categories. Individual chapel services function both as a retiree's service and a younger generation's service in the same room at the same time, attempting to be a one-size-fits-all solution. Since retirees usually attend chapels in order to keep their connection with soldiers, they are willing to change music, dress more casual, and incorporate technology if it attracts the needy. Although they willingly sacrifice their preferences in order to help others, they rarely initiate anything other than superficial conversations with the soldiers that they hold dear. Thus, the wealth of wisdom, experience, resources, and desire to help soldiers becomes wasted potential. The problem is that at the HAAF Chapel, retirees are ready and willing to disciple young soldiers, however, there is no intentional program to train, encourage, and empower the older generation of soldiers to form spiritually meaningful relationships with contemporary soldiers.

The problem lies neither with the willing retiree nor the impressionable young soldier but is a combination of two things: the generational gap and the privatization of religion. First, there is an enormous difference in methods of communication between the two constituencies. For instance, Army retirees have a hard time sending texts on a smartphone due to the small text size and unfamiliarity with modern technology, but young soldiers can send a text message with lightning-fast precision and dread investing time initiating a phone conversation. The army retiree has a slower pace of life, whereas most young soldiers are stressed and busy. The older generation may be frustrated with a young soldier's inability to converse without multiple interruptions from their phone, whereas a young soldier may feel vulnerable and out-of-touch without their digital connection to the world, even amidst a meaningful interaction.

Secondly, modern culture encourages the privatization of religion. Army commanders of the past used their mostly Christian world-view to encourage and rally their troops. Great army generals of the past were not afraid of the political ramifications associated with their faith because culture allowed and encouraged military leaders to espouse their personal religious beliefs in their leadership decisions. General George A. Patton famously directed his chaplain, Brigadier General James H. O'Neil, to provide a prayer about the weather: "This is General Patton; do you have a good prayer for weather? We must do something about these rains if we are to win the war".<sup>5</sup> Subsequent to that conversation, O'Neil wrote a great prayer invoking God's help in stopping the rains and that was distributed to all 250,000 soldiers in the Third Army. His prayer was overtly Christian and implored God to "Graciously harken to us soldiers that call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and

<sup>5</sup> James H. O'Neill, *The True Story of the Patton Prayer* (Washington, D.C. US Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 1.

crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations.”<sup>6</sup> General Patton was not afraid to show his faith or to ask his troops to pray to God. After the war had concluded with a decisive victory for the Allied forces, General Patton said to Chaplain O’Neil, “Well, Padre, our prayers worked. I knew they would.”<sup>7</sup> General Patton was a man that led by example. Today’s army leaders are fearful of the infiltration of organizations that are church and state watchdogs like the Freedom From Religion Foundation that purposes “to promote nontheism and defend the constitutional separation between religion and government”.<sup>8</sup> These groups have the power to place such pressure on military members, especially commanders and chaplains, that religious convictions are discouraged from public discourse.

The privatization of religion has caused leaders to retreat from openness about their faith and modern soldiers have been trained to do the same. The military is often a testbed for American culture at large, and the nontheistic policies that started in the military has been adopted in the American education system, news-media, and even private business. Prior generations wore their faith as a badge of pride, conversely, the modern politically volatile environment discourages verbalization of religious association and trains soldiers that faith must be suppressed in the workplace. Although sensitivity to people of different faith traditions is important, the over-emphasis of the separation of religion from government has led to a

<sup>6</sup> James H. O'Neill, *The True Story of the Patton Prayer*, (Washington, D.C. US Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Chaplain Robert. L. Gushwa. *The Army Chaplain Corps History Volume 4 (1920-1945) Best and Worst of Times*, (Washington, D.C. US Government Printing Office, 1977), 156

<sup>8</sup> <https://ffrf.org/> “Freedom from Religion Foundation - Freedom from Religion Foundation.” Accessed September 14, 2019. <https://ffrf.org/>.



generation of soldiers that are trained to not talk about their faith journey in the workplace. This certainly has created a soldier that is afraid to talk about their faith while on or off duty. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, famously warned about this. He said: “The chief danger of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell”.<sup>9</sup>

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project will be to interview, encourage, and empower 10 Army retirees and spouses that attend the HAAF chapel programs to confidently rely upon their age, experience, and faith in order to mentor young soldiers. This project will explore the generational gap between the HAAF chapel retirees and Generation Z soldiers and families. Exploration of this gap will ultimately lead to an examination of communication, discipleship, and spiritual formation. These topics will be discussed in the interview format and reported in a follow-up briefing. The follow-up briefing will provide both data and suggestions for improvement. This will be done so that retirees will gain confidence to teach, coach, and mentor young soldiers. The follow-up briefing will encourage participants to meet with a younger soldier in order to establish spiritual mentorships. Although competency will not be measured, the data obtained in the interview will shape the recommendations for improvement. The final result will aim to produce 10 retirees that are equipped and actively attempting to establish and develop mentoring relationships with young soldiers.

<sup>9</sup> “A Quote by William Booth.” Accessed September 14, 2019.  
<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/792960-the-chief-danger-of-the-20th-century-will-be-religion>.

## Definitions

*Bible meditation*: “intentional reflection on God’s Sovereignty”<sup>10</sup>

*D. A.*: Department of the Army

*HAAF*: Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia.

*Retiree*: A retiree is any service member having completed 20 or more years of active duty or their spouse. AR 165-1 names the retiree alongside military personnel, Family members, DOD Civilians as recipients of Chapel-related ministries.<sup>11</sup>

*Spiritual formation*: “a composite term not found explicitly in the Bible. It refers to all God undertakes and undergoes for us to bring us to maturity. It points to the resources he brings to the task of forming us into his likeness, as well as to what we do in the pursuit of this goal”<sup>12</sup>

*Soldier*: A soldier is any enlisted member of the Army in the rank of E1-E4. Soldier, Family, and Civilian are uniquely capitalized under certain internal Army correspondence; however, this study will adhere to the Turabian format.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Harry Shields, “Preaching and Spiritual Formation” in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation* ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 253.

<sup>11</sup> AR 165-1 h. Use of chapel facilities. Religious facilities on military installations are classified as dedicated facilities. Appropriate activities, which do not detract from its primary purpose, may be scheduled on a temporary basis. Such facilities are used for religious services for military personnel, their Family members, DOD Civilians, and retirees.

<sup>12</sup> Darrel Bock, “New Testament Community and Spiritual Formation”, in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 103.

<sup>13</sup> AR 25-501–13. Unique capitalization: The following is a selection of style and usage preferences for internal Army correspondence: a. Capitalize the word “Soldier” when it refers to a U.S. Army Soldier. b. Capitalize the word “Family” when it refers to U.S. Army Family or Family members. c. Capitalize the word “Civilian” when it refers to DA civilians and is used in conjunction with Soldier and/or Family.

## **Limitations**

The scope of this thesis project will be to determine the methods, ways, and means in which Army retirees that attend the HAAF Chapel service in Savannah, Georgia, could be equipped to spiritually mentor young soldiers. The data collected from the 10 retiree interviews will serve as a guide but will not provide a comprehensive plan to eliminate the intrinsic problem. Follow-up interaction after the data has been collected and analyzed will focus on three areas: personal interaction, spiritual formation, and Biblical application. The follow-up will provide suggestions and encourage confidence within the target audience. There exists a myriad of possible civilian church mentorship training, but there is not a comprehensive guide that specifically trains army retirees to interact with young soldiers. A further limitation exists in the uniqueness of experience, in that each retiree has a different story to tell and a wide range of lessons learned from that story.

This thesis will analyze the theological framework for older Christians that mentor younger generation, the necessity of discipleship, and the practical application of a discipleship model that is tailored for each of the 10 participants. A custom model for each participant will be necessary due to the limitation of age, experience, mobility, health, and gender. This research will not be conclusive as a model for all Army chapels or all retirees, but it will provide the framework necessary for duplication of the process across the army enterprise.

## **Delimitations**

The delimitations of this thesis project will include three sequential elements. First, there will be 10 Army retirees or their prospective spouses that will volunteer for and interview process. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and safe-guarded on a password protected

computer. The interview questions will be designed to ascertain the confidence and knowledge that each retiree has in the areas of cross-generational communication, the necessity of Christian discipleship, and implementation of discipleship models. Second, the data will be analyzed with the intent of capturing common fears and gaps in mentorship training, and the theological foundation for spiritual formation as seen in Romans 15:1-4 (NIV)

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

Last, there will be a post-interview briefing that will encourage and empower the 10 retirees to pursue mentoring young soldiers with confidence and knowledge.

A further delimitation for this project will be limited to retired personnel and spouses that attend the HAAF chapel services in Savannah, Georgia. Based on the delimitation, this thesis will further specify that the 10 Army retirees have been attending the chapel for a minimum of 10 years. These 10 retirees will be encouraged to disciple a young soldier at the conclusion of this study. A further delimitation will be those retirees that are not willing to or able to participate. This thesis will be practical, applicable, interpersonal, and intensely Biblical.

### **Assumptions**

The author desires to provide insights, research, and applicatory elements influenced by parishioners. This thesis assumes that it is possible to develop a model for discipleship primarily based upon a potential coach's life experiences and desire to see young Christians developed into fully functioning followers of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the author assumes that army retirees will voluntarily learn, practice, and incorporate the findings in personal interaction, spiritual

formation, and Biblical application. The scope of this thesis project will not address all issues or train all areas, nor will it guaranty successful interaction between retirees and young soldiers. However, it will address a huge gap that exists at HAAF. This project will not address any congregation other than the HAAF chapel, however, the lessons and models developed will serve as a guide and Biblical approach to bridge the gap between retirees and young soldiers. The author hopes to bring a greater awareness to the need, the readily available personnel, and a simple solution to the gap between motivated retirees and needy soldiers.

### **Thesis Statement**

Army retirees at the HAAF Chapel will gain the confidence and the basic skills necessary to form spiritual mentoring relationships with younger soldiers through a constructivist interview and back-brief process. The goal of this study will be to help the older generation interact with young soldiers and form relationships that will improve personal and spiritual resiliency. The older generation of Army retirees have the knowledge and the desire to help younger soldiers navigate life in the Army, however, they do not have a viable conduit through which their wisdom and desire flow. There is a great and growing gap that can be bridged through intentional intervention.

## **CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Organization of the Review**

The literary review will allow the research question discussed in the previous to be highlight the most significant material into a conceptual timeline. First, the review will analyze the unique stress of military service in relation to spiritual formation. Second, church-based literature will be discussed as a unit for developing six practices that could be implemented for a spiritual mentorship program within the military. Lastly, the literature will bridge the generational gap between the Baby Boomers, (current army veteran retirees) and Generation Z (current young soldiers) in regard to the development of army chapel-based spiritually formative relationships. The categorizations will develop four definitive lines of effort by which older generations of soldiers can purposefully interact with young soldiers in the formation of relationships that will improve personal and spiritual resiliency. The goal of this study will be to help the older generation interact with young soldiers and form relationships that will improve personal and spiritual resiliency.

### **Uniqueness of the Military Context**

The United States Army develops and deploys soldiers that have equipment and abilities that exceed any other fighting force in history. The fire-power is greater and that soldiers are strong, smart and lethal; but they are also young, stressed, and morally challenged. This is compounded by the job-skills they learn that will accomplish the Army's primary goal of fighting and winning America's wars. There are "trigger-pullers" and there are a multitude of other supporting roles. However, whether a cook, musician, or an infantryman; every Army role and responsibility leads to the ultimate goal of stopping or smiting those that would do harm upon America or her allies. The official U.S. Army twitter account has quoted William

Churchill's famous statement, "people sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf".<sup>14</sup>

Training for the art of war puts a unique stress on a person that cannot be duplicated or compared to other job-skills training. The "profession of arms" taxes both the body through physical training and the mind that has to morally and spiritually cope with the development of combat skills. The only soldiers that maintain non-combatant status in the U.S. military are the chaplains, but even they have an armed religious affairs specialist that trains for and is tasked with protecting the Chaplain with deadly violence if necessary.

According to Karl Marlantes, training for war produces internal wounds that are suffered due to compromises a soldier must make in order to study a tradecraft that violates moral norms, societal norms, and religious norms.<sup>15</sup> This is embodied in the Army Ranger Creed, which states, "Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession. I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move further, faster, and fight harder than any other soldier."<sup>16</sup>

### **Past Thought on Unique Military Stress**

Mental stress, physical injuries, and troubled relationships are some of the greatest occupational hazards of being a soldier. Yet, many other existential threats to a soldier's well-being are constant in training for combat, deploying to combat, and moving every few years to a different Army Post in order to repeat the cycle. In training, an airborne paratrooper regularly

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Army (@USARMY), 2012. "People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf. <https://twitter.com/usarmy/status/250060237086793730?lang=en>." Twitter, June 23, 2012, 7:33 p.m.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marlantes. *What it is Like to Go to War*. (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), loc 52.

<sup>16</sup> Army Values. The Ranger Creed. <https://www.army.mil/values/ranger.html> (Accessed April 28, 2019).

jumps out of airplanes which causes trauma on the mind and the body. Even with great confidence in the rigger who packed the chute, over 60 successful jumps, and a craving the adrenaline rush of exiting the aircraft; the author's heart-rate repeatedly rose to dangerous levels until he was safe on the ground and has life-changing physical damage caused by hard landings. In real-life combat situations, this same scenario is common and almost inescapable. Special operations groups monitor the increased heart-rate and train to lower the body's natural tendencies during stressful situations. Lowering the body's stress helps an operator shoot, move, and communicate with far greater precision. This same principle applies to simple, daily life choices that can be achieved without heartrate-rising stress.

As a Vietnam War veteran, Marlantes lived through the stress of war and his assessment of the causes of internal wounds was not simply academic. Carl von Clausewitz noted that "war is the domain of physical exertion and suffering".<sup>17</sup> There are numerous books related to post-traumatic-stress-disorder, however, scholarly research on the integration of the lethality of the warrior with evangelical Christianity is lacking. Works like Stu Webber's, *Tender Warrior*, address the dilemma in a devotional context, but personal experiences are used rather than field research.<sup>18</sup>

Both good soldiers and good Christians are those that can balance their professional lives by not being obsessed about their own situational suffering to the degree that it negatively effects their opinion of God's justice.<sup>19</sup> Peterman warned that the penchant that modern culture has

<sup>17</sup> Michael Eliot Howard. *Clausewitz: On War* (Washington, UNITED STATES: Library of Congress, 1997), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=3328255> (accessed September 22, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Stu Weber. *Tender Warrior: God's Intention for a Man*. Sisters (Or: Multnomah Books, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Heinrichs. "The Enigma of Suffering: A Biblical Perspective." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 15, no. 1 (2003): 119-36, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/195889135?accountid=12085> (accessed April 28, 2019).



towards eliminating pain and suffering is often the impetus for “constructing one’s own truth.”<sup>20</sup> The inability to compartmentalize the infliction of pain and suffering upon other people, even in an intense combat scenario, creates an emotional and ethical challenge. This challenge can lead to mental health issues that is usually prescribed either medication or talk therapy. The spiritual aspect of pain and suffering is only introduced if a soldier seeks out religious answers or the intentionality of chaplains and other spiritually minded individuals.

Barber and Baker took this idea further by suggesting that the “individualistic orientation to the self is in our cultural DNA”.<sup>21</sup>

*The Art of War* has been a textbook for military training by countless warriors and has been required reading for the Army Command and Staff College for decades. Tzu would agree that the warrior has a responsibility to know one’s self. He wrote, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”<sup>22</sup> The author contends that the greatest contribution veterans can have to the modern army is to mentor young soldiers to know themselves and to be at peace in their spiritual journey.

<sup>20</sup> Gerald Peterman and Andrew Schmutzer, . *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4904457> (accessed April 28, 2019)

<sup>21</sup> Betsy Barber and Chris Baker. "Soul care and spiritual formation: an old call in need of new voices." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (2014): 270, [http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A470462284/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=0186b3c0](http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A470462284/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=0186b3c0) (accessed April 28, 2019) .

<sup>22</sup> Ralph D. Sawyer Sunzi, and Mei-chün Sawyer. *The Art of War: Sunzi Bing Fa*. (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1994) <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=618907> (accessed September 22, 2019).

## Modern Church-based Thought on Mechanisms of Support

Mentorship and individual spiritual formation belie the principle of a soldier being just one part of the larger formation of his unit. Soldiers are individuals, but Christian soldiers also serve a higher entity.<sup>23</sup> Unit cohesion is of upmost importance in combat situations; however, each soldier is trained to expertly perform their individual responsibility to the collective whole. Twentieth century American culture fought for individual dependence, yet at the same time looked to socialistic programs to provide security. Compounding the individualistic mindset, in the mid-2000's, the popular Army slogan, "Be all that you can be" became "An Army of One".<sup>24</sup> This was meant to highlight the important part each soldier plays in the larger scale, but the individualistic orientation reflected Postmodernism and caused a disenfranchisement of peer-to-peer learning and unit cohesion, which is mirrored in the civilian world's pop-culture as noted by Willard.<sup>25</sup> Instead of soldiers that became balanced in mind, body, and soul, the slogan focused on the problem of soldier's penchant for being lonely, spiritually weak, and lacking the joy that can be found in companionship. Sun Tzu noted the importance of a warrior to mentally win an entire war before ever stepping on the field of battle.<sup>26</sup>

Collin's research on the problem of individuality in church settings is quite applicable to the army chapel programs. He researched and developed a list of 6 practices that are found in a

<sup>23</sup> Karl Marlantes. *What it is Like to Go to War*. (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), loc 52.

<sup>24</sup> James Dao. "Ads Now Seek Recruits for 'An Army of One'," *New York Times*, January 10, 2001. <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/10/us/ads-now-seek-recruits-for-an-army-of-one.html> (accessed September 22, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. (Colorado Springs, Colo: NavPress, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Ralph D. Sawyer Sunzi, and Mei-chün Sawyer. *The Art of War: Sunzi Bing Fa*. (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1994) <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=618907> (accessed September 22, 2019).

healthy community, they are: “building social support, getting help from others, teaching social skills, equipping lay people, preventing problems, and change the community if it is not helping.”<sup>27</sup> Adapting and implementing these six areas in the HAAF chapel could provide the impetus for a revolutionary mentorship program. The 6 practices can be formulated into an army the terminology of a standard operating procedures (SOP).

#### SOP #1: Support System

A healthy community becomes proficient in building social support systems. This is often neglected in the military due to the transient and somewhat nomadic lifestyle of moving permanent duty stations ever 2 or 3 years. Although social media has changed the way people communicate, finding a comfortable community of people on a cyclical basis tends to jade a soldier’s mindset. Aside from chapels and taverns, there are very few places that a soldier can be sure to meet with like-minded people. The impetus for a community that understands the military life is one reason that retirees decide to settle in close proximity to military installations. However, there is a disconnect between the soldier and the veteran that requires intentional efforts to bring the two together for mutual enrichment.

#### SOP #2: Outside Help

A healthy community is not afraid to ask for help from others. Soldiers could benefit immensely from hearing the story of an aged warrior that walked in the same boots and carried the same rucksack at a different time. For instance, the author spent hours painting a curb in front of the HAAF chapel with a retiree that painted the same curb 45 years earlier as a punishment for his conduct as a young soldier. So many of today’s soldiers would benefit from the retelling of the Universal Code of Military Justice charges against him, the painful

<sup>27</sup>Gary R. Collins. *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*. Third ed. (Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 48.

punishment he endured, and then the change of conduct that led him to achieve the second highest enlisted rank. Soldiers are motivated Americans that sometimes just need a kind, wise word to propel them to success.

### SOP #3: Equip Volunteer Leaders

A healthy community is built through equipping volunteers. This at first would seem to not fit in a military chapel context, however, every retiree in the HAAF chapel would serve soldiers without question. They love soldiers, because they were once young soldiers that could have used good advice from elderly companionship. During their time in the Army, chapel communities were more traditional and well attended. Commanders would worship alongside their troops without the culturally-mandated privatization of faith. Lieutenant Colonel commanders used to be affectionately called, “the old man”, a phrase that is also colloquially used for father figures. Since the “old man” no longer plays the role of religious leadership, the retiree is waiting in the warm-up pen to be put into use.

### SOP #4: Prevent Preventable Problems

A healthy community works to prevent problems. Commanders are desperate to find any solution to the intrinsic problems of suicide, alcohol abuse, and sexual assault and harassment. Many resources are readily available for the soldier to self-refer or for a command-directed referral, they include but are not limited to: mental health psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, military family life counselors, substance abuse programs, and even soldiers assigned to special-duty and tasked to execute the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) programs. Deep in his bag of resources is the chaplain. The chaplain has no command authority but has the ear of his commander as a member of his special staff. Leadership starts from the top

and trickles down. Most commanders would be more than happy to utilize veterans to speak truth into the formation of troops.

#### SOP #5: Change What is Broken

A healthy community reforms the areas that aren't working. Most leaders would look at the army and see many things that just aren't working. The army is a constantly evolving bureaucratic enterprise that is unique and eccentric. A community of warriors that are trained to kill contains many unhealthy practices that lead to pain and suffering, but the problems can be easily mitigated by experienced sages.

There is a major tension that exists between a soldier's capability to engage in battle, his mental capacity to handle the stress of that capability in battle, and then balance his physical, mental, and spiritual wellness after battle. However, there is not a lot of research-based scholarship that directly targets this tension. Grossman concluded that mental and spiritual wellness after a traumatic situation are directly relational to the mental and spiritual capabilities that existed prior to the trauma. He suggested that the preparation of soldiers' psyche is of critical importance for the overall physical, mental, and spiritual wellness of soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

Marlantes agreed with Grossman's conclusion that a soldier's ability to handle the stress of battle and then be able to bodily function in normal society is a direct result of what mental and spiritual capabilities that they bring to the fight.<sup>29</sup> The interconnectivity of body, soul, and spirit is also true in theological studies focused on generalized suffering.<sup>30</sup> Pettit would contend that

<sup>28</sup> Askan Grossman. *Warrior Mindset: Mental Toughness Skills for a Nation's Defenders*. (United States: Warrior Science Publications, 2010), vii.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Marlantes. *What it is Like to Go to War*. (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 144.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Amato. *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering*. (Wesport, Ct: Greenwood Publishing, 1990), 329.

the body, mind, and spirit should be married to two other categories: public vs. private, and secular vs. sacred<sup>31</sup>. The aforementioned authors embody the third stanza of the Ranger creed, which states: “Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself physically fit, mentally strong, and morally straight. I will always should more than my share of the task, 100% and then some”.<sup>32</sup>

### **Comparison of Soldier and Civilian Spiritual Formation**

Soldiers are not the only persons to struggle with the pain and suffering of the normal life-cycle, for the trends of the military are directly related to contemporary culture. Sociologist Peter Berger noted that across cultures one can note that they all have an “explanation of human events that bestows meaning upon the experiences of suffering and evil.”<sup>33</sup> If this is true, then the WWII, Korean, and Vietnam Veterans were able to handle the stress of combat and military life with stronger resiliency. Cox and Peck concluded that this is a direct result of contemporary culture’s slide toward agnosticism.<sup>34</sup> Biblical theology acknowledges suffering and clearly teaches that it can be the impetus for spiritual growth, discipline of character, and as a witness to the world.<sup>35</sup> According to Collins, when culture pushes God away from the equation of suffering

<sup>31</sup>Paul Pettit. *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 24.

<sup>32</sup> “Ranger Creed - Army Values.” Accessed September 22, 2019. <https://www.army.mil/values/ranger.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*. (Google Books: Random House, 1973), 185

<sup>34</sup>William Cox and Robert A. Peck. "Christian Education as Discipleship Formation." *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2, (August 2018), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2080880941?accountid=12085> (Accessed April 28, 2019).

<sup>35</sup>Peter K. Nelson. "Discipleship dissonance: toward a theology of imperfection amidst the pursuit of holiness." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 4, no. 1 (2011), [http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A285088205/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=262fa491](http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A285088205/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=262fa491) (accessed April; 28, 2019).

that produces growth, the culture tends to rely less on the theological implications of their situation and more on their personal beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and values.<sup>36</sup> Soldiering, suffering, and spirituality are always conjoined in combat, however, a gap exists in both the resiliency training a soldier receives from his unit and the existence of Chapel programming that directly addresses this problem.

Spiritual formation often happens in traumatic and stressful situations, but the majority of soldiers are not able to bridge the gap between their spiritual needs and their contemporary problems.<sup>37</sup> After a suicide bomber in 2006 killed 2 Americans, 6 Iraqi's, and nearly killed the author, there was an enormous response among the ranks to prayer and Bible study. In fact, every time a traumatic event happened in war or in garrison, soldiers are always more likely to be open to spiritual discussions.

Spiritual formation is not an active part of the majority of soldiers' lives. However, God can be seen through the stress inherent in a soldier's life if God is treated as God.<sup>38</sup> In agreement with Keller, Amato determined that pain forces an individual to look into themselves for the tools necessary for a response for survival?<sup>39</sup> It is well noted that mental and spiritual toughness comes from a counter-response to negative situations.<sup>40</sup> Cherry agreed with the concept of

<sup>36</sup>Gary R. Collins. *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*. Third ed. (Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 104.

<sup>37</sup>Karl Marlantes. *What it is Like to Go to War*. (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>38</sup>Timothy Keller and James Lloyd. *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. Unabridged ed. (United States: Findaway World, 2013), 186.

<sup>39</sup>Joseph Amato. *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering*. (Wesport, Ct: Greenwood Publishing, 1990), 329.

<sup>40</sup>Askan Grossman. *Warrior Mindset: Mental Toughness Skills for a Nation's Defenders*. (United States: Warrior Science Publications, 2010), 202.

mental and spiritual toughness, and concluded that this toughness is found through prayer and worship.<sup>41</sup> This is also echoed by Yancey, as he noted that each person has within themselves both the capacity to face the dilemma of despair and the spiritual capacity to triumph over that despair through a proper understanding of God.<sup>42</sup> The Bible says that “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10, NIV), which is an attitude of gratitude that delights in God’s work. The key to inner strength is a concept that Piper calls “Christian Hedonism”, in which, delight in God provides the ultimate joy over all situations.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the Apostle Paul stated in the doxology of Romans: Now to Him who is able to establish you...to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ!” (Romans 16:25-27 NIV).

Eava noted that “real encounters” are an essential element of discipleship and that the relationship that a teacher establishes with his learners creates a greater ability to influence.<sup>44</sup> Relationships are critical to discipleship and spiritual formation, but there is a great gap between the retiree attending chapel services and the soldier that would greatly benefit from the retiree’s wisdom. Although today’s Army is extremely lethal, it is also fragile. More research is needed to analyze this problem and to develop the tools necessary to utilize willing and able retirees to reach out to and disciple young, hurting, and spiritually needy soldiers.

<sup>41</sup>Stephen Cherry “Discipleship and Christian Character.” *Theology* 119, no. 3 (May 2016): 193–99. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/epub/10.1177/0040571X15623705> (Accessed April 28, 2019).

<sup>42</sup>Philip Yancey. *What Good is God?: In Search of a Faith that Matters*. 1st ed. (New York: Faithwords, 2010), 81.

<sup>43</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. (Minneapolis, MN: Multnomah Press, 2003), pg 31.

<sup>44</sup> John Eeva, Naomi Nixon & Nick Shepherd (2018) “Life-changing learning for Christian discipleship and ministry: a practical exploration.” *Practical Theology*, (November 2018), 300-314, DOI: [10.1080/1756073X.2018.1458178](https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2018.1458178) ( accessed April 28, 2019).



## **Baby Boomer Veterans Mentoring Generation Z Soldiers**

The retirees that attend HAAF chapel were born during the post-WWII Baby Boomer generation of 1946-1964. The newest recruits are from Generation Z, having been born between 1995-2010.<sup>45</sup> According to the Army and U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the vast majority of the Army is comprised of Millennials.

Millennials (65%) that were born between 1980-1995 and Generation Z (20%) accession into the Army are increasing in numbers with approximately 70,000 new recruits every year.<sup>46</sup> In explaining the Millennials, Taylor and Keeter determined that there are three sources of generational diversity: life-cycle effects, period effects, and cohort effects.<sup>47</sup> These three sources tend to be inter-generationally consistent. Life-cycle effects simply refers to the difference between older and younger generations, noting that the younger people may eventually resemble the older people later in life. Period effects is based upon major national events like war and economic decline. The most interesting source of generational diversity related to a military chapel context is the cohort effects, in which, different influences and trends shape the core values of an individual as they are maturing into adulthood. This encompasses many things, to include parenting, education, and technology. The validity of Taylor and

<sup>45</sup> Corey Seemiler and Meghan Grace, "Generation Z: Educating and Engaging the Next Generation of Student," *About Campus* 22, no. 3 (2017), <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/abs/10.1002/abc.21293?journalCode=acaa> (accessed September 22, 2019)

<sup>46</sup> Spoehr and Handy, "The Looming National Security Crisis: Young Americans Unable to Serve in the Military." The Heritage Foundation, Issue 3282, page 10, (February 2018), <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-looming-national-security-crisis-young-americans-unable-serve-the-military> (accessed 22 September 2019).

<sup>47</sup> Paul Taylor and Scott Keeter. The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change." *States News Service*, (24 Feb. 2010), *Gale Academic Onefile*, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/> (accessed 22 Sept. 2019).

Keeter's categories are apparent when seen through Elmore's comparison of generations.<sup>48</sup> In this comparison, he noted that attitudes toward authority have changed over the course of every generation. As they came of age, the Boomers wanted to replace authority, the X'ers wanted to ignore authority, the Millennials wanted to choose their authority figures, and the Z'ers want to be their own authorities.<sup>49</sup>

An intentional, two-way relationship where both retirees and young soldiers across generational and cultural lines is a key aspect of past societies that may have become a lost art. Some learning can occur amongst the future leaders, but the vast majority of wisdom must come from the past. The culture is always in transition and today's young people have an incredible aptitude in the digital realm that contains an inconceivable amount of information, yet, the older generations, in comparison, may not be in touch with today's technology. Although this presents an information gap, it does not preclude that the older generation has nothing to offer. Taylor and Keeter determined that Z'ers want to be their own authorities, which presents a generational gap that can only be closed if Z'ers are met on their own terms. If Z'ers do not respect an authority figure, they will most likely not take their advice.<sup>50</sup> Elmore concluded that there are 4 ways that young leaders should be developed: cultivate a relationship, teach like a mentor, remove the fear of failure, help critical thinking and prepare them to be problem solvers.<sup>51</sup> Each

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, chapter 1

<sup>49</sup> Tim Elmore. *Generation IY: Secrets to Connecting with Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age*. Growing Leaders, Inc, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Paul Taylor and Scott Keeter. "The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change." *States News Service*, (24 Feb. 2010), *Gale Academic Onefile*, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/> (accessed 22 Sept. 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Tim Elmore. *Generation IY: Secrets to Connecting with Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age*. Growing Leaders, Inc, 2015.

of these categories can be transferred from his civilian-based leadership to a slightly modified military program.

There are 4 lines of effort (LOE) developed through the review of literature that will allow for bridges to be built that will allow retirees to effectively pursue mentoring and spiritually formative relationships with the current generation of soldiers. The LOE's are adapted from Elmore's categories of development for young leaders and compared and contrasted with other similarly designed paradigms.

#### LOE #1: Develop a Relationship

Credibility is everything to a Z'er and credibility cannot be established without a relationship. Leaders must earn the right to speak truth into the life of a young soldier. For instance, a Ranger squad leader disparaged a certain senior commander as a weak leader. The young Ranger leader did not respect the senior Ranger commander because the young, highly motivated manhunter falsely perceived that his leader canceled too many capture or kill missions. The hard-charging, tactically savvy squad leader saw the decision from his own foxhole, but could not see the complexity of the entire battlefield. On numerous occasions during a 2019 deployment rotation to Iraq, he and his men were in full battle-rattle and anxiously anticipating a short helicopter ride to conduct a raid on enemy combatants. When the missions were canceled, the men were then angry.

What the squad of waiting Rangers did not see was that the brilliant commander decided to cancel several missions due to the high level of illumination from the moon phase, which would greatly increase the risk to Ranger's lives. The darkest night gives the Rangers a huge tactical advantage over sleeping combatants that do not have the specialized night vision gear. The young Ranger obtained more respect for the leadership decision after an explanation of the

heavy responsibility that is placed upon commanders to always make the right decision and the obligation to execute careful planning and strategic thinking that will avoid all unnecessary casualties. The young Ranger had never considered his leader's responsibility and when frustrated he automatically assumed that he would be able to do a far better job and make far better decisions. This dialogue was proof of Elmore's comparison in which Z'ers want to replace authority figures with themselves and that they only trust an authority when they have a relationship with them. A mentor has to earn the right to speak truth into a Z'ers life through a relationship.<sup>52</sup> Retiree veterans that attend HAAF chapel want a relationship that will make the difference in a soldier's life, but have been historically unable to do so. The retiree veteran need not have been a brilliant commander or Medal of Honor recipient to be credible in the eyes of a Z soldier. Nearly all adrenaline-seeking, invincible soldiers have respect for anyone who served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam or any other small conflict in which Boomers participated.

#### LOE #2 Communicate Credibility

Z'ers are not afraid to voice their opinion, nor are they opposed to others voicing an opposing opinion. They want someone who can be their mentor if that person passes the credibility test and can offer them something different than that which they can quickly obtain on the internet. There are a very few number of Z'ers that do not own a smartphone and they use it numerous times every hour. A generational gap exists between them and the Boomers due to the instant access of information that Z'ers depend upon. An older mentor has to honestly dialogue with a Z'er, if not, the relationship will not progress. Twenge would concur that the social anxiety in a world of texts and social media can find a place of comfort with an honest,

<sup>52</sup> Tim Elmore. *Generation iY: Secrets to Connecting with Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age* Growing Leaders, Inc, 2015.

trustworthy mentor. In-person social interaction may be better for mental health, but digital interaction has replaced it.<sup>53</sup> Boomers are not as digitally connected, but in order to communicate with Z'ers, a conscious effort must be made.

### LOE #3: Remove the Fear of Failure

Stories are the best verbal tool to teach and learn. Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher of all time, himself used stories as his main medium of communication. Most retirees have stories of personal failure that led to new, enlightened responses. They can describe how new response and new actions often led to success and promotion. The army is a meritocracy and has very little variance in its response to wrongful behavior. The dilemma is that young soldiers often get in serious trouble for doing infractions that would be overlooked in the civilian world, such as being late for a formation or having hair that touches the ears. A great deal of stress is placed upon rules in the military that are used to form a cohesive group. Often, one soldier's failure will lead to public shame and group punishment. The legacy ideology is that the normalization of failure can increase the morale of a soldier so much that it will lead them down the path of success. Many times, during the author's experience in ranger training, group punishments included exercise sessions to muscle failure, deprivation of sleep, and denial of meals. The platoon took the punishment and tried not to make the same mistake due to the pain associated with a singular ranger's failure. Gen Z'ers are often paralyzed by fear of failure so much so that they do not take risks and need a lot of encouraging words from a parental figure, pastor, or mentor.

<sup>53</sup> Jean M. Twenge. *IGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy-- and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood (and what this Means for the Rest of Us)*, (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2017).

#### LOE #4: Equip Soldiers to Think Critically

Z'ers want to think critically. Escape rooms became extremely popular and part of today's culture because they desire a hands-on way to analyze a situation through their own skills and knowledge. Z'ers want to experience a situation in which they are given the chance to solve a problem. Elmore notes that Z'ers are the most skilled generation as multi-tasking.<sup>54</sup> A mentor has the ability to speak truth into a life and challenge them to think-out their particular problem, which is needed due mental health of Z'ers being a huge detractor to troop readiness. Twenge would agree that most Z'ers consider their own personal mental health as below average.<sup>55</sup> Their self-assessment may not be accurate, but the mental health of an individual is closely tied to their critical thinking ability.

According to the Heritage Foundation, the typical military age is between 17-24 years old, with 71% of young adults ineligible for military service due to poor physical condition, mental disabilities, criminal convictions, or even prescription drugs. This has led recruiting to use waivers and exemptions in order to meet the recruiting goals. The number of applicants for active duty service is lower than it has been historically, however, the number of actual accessions has increased. The Department of Defense has determined that less than 1% of young adults are both eligible for service and are willing to consider military service. This low percentage is amplified by the anti-military sentiment and activism of many schools in more

<sup>54</sup> Tim Elmore. *Generation iY: Secrets to Connecting with Today's Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age* Growing Leaders, Inc, 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Jean M. Twenge. *IGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy-- and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood (and what this Means for the Rest of Us)*. New (York, NY: Atria Books, 2017).

liberal states. In these states, recruiters are not given the same access as other occupational counselors.<sup>56</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The WWII, Korea, and Vietnam veterans that were drafted into service gave way to the Army's malaise era of the 1970's post-Vietnam downsizing. The young soldier looks back on the past army in respect for all the previous generations did to defend the American way of life. Interestingly, the older generations were not a part of the all-volunteer army, so they greatly appreciate the decision of those who choose to join today out of patriotic duty. Conversely, today's soldiers are endeared to veterans based on the simple fact that when these aged warriors were soldiers once and young, they were compelled to join the army due to a draft, judicial mandate, or a punishment. Retiree veterans know the emotions, pain, and processes of the army and would at any time be willing to share a part of themselves to enrich a young soldier. The admiration goes in both directions, but soldiers of the past have difficulty engaging the Z soldier.

Although there is not a great deal of literature that directly relates to generational mentoring and the spiritual formation of young soldiers, the need is incredibly apparent. This is compounded by the crisis that is looming because the best officers and non-commissioned officers are not being retained for service after their initial service obligation. Thus, there are far fewer talented role models for junior soldiers.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Spoehr. "The Looming National Security Crisis: Young Americans Unable to Serve in the Military." The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-looming-national-security-crisis-young-americans-unable-serve-the-military> (accessed September 22, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Gerras and Leonard Wong, "Changing Minds in The Army: Why It Is So Difficult and What To Do About It." Strategic Studies Institute. (October 2013) <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1179> (accessed September 22, 2019).

The bureaucracy of the system compels talented individuals to leave the army and find an environment that thrives on innovation and that rewards hard work. The rapid exodus of talent from the army has the potential of creating a leadership crisis in the years to come.<sup>58</sup> A retention of army talent is necessary in order to maintain America's place in world politics through the presence of a strong military. Furthermore, the limited number of eligible young people for recruiters to pick from could potentially force the army to pour an enormous amount of time and resources into the well-being of those currently serving on active duty. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has been one of the few major commands to recognize the looming crisis and attempt to stymie it by offering their operators enormous sums of money, often \$150,000 in exchange for a commitment of 3 additional years of service. This is usually arranged to be paid out in a tax-free zone and in addition to the regular wages. The money doesn't heal the gripes or stress, but it does provide an incentive to re-enlist.

Scholarly literature has not yet addressed the retention of Z'ers in relation to spiritual formation and Boomer mentorship. However, a spiritually fit soldier is attractive to the highest? Levels of army leadership because spiritually fit soldiers usually have different outlook on army life and life in general. More programs and louder Sunday chapel services will not meet the looming crisis of an army that is mostly comprised of Z'ers. The way to mitigate the crisis is through relationships, not through programs. More than any generation, Z'ers need personal interaction with a person that they respect and that will teach, coach, and spiritually mentor them through the rigors of army life.

<sup>58</sup> Tim Kane. "Why Our Best Officers Are Leaving." *The Atlantic* (January 4, 2011) <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/01/why-our-best-officers-are-leaving/308346/> (accessed September 22, 2019).



## Theological Foundation

The Apostle Paul's theology of discipleship and spiritual formation will be analyzed in order to form the theological foundation for this project. This project will further analyze the Apostle Paul's mentoring relationships in reference to the feasibility of military retirees at the Hunter Army Airfield Chapel becoming spiritual mentors for young soldiers.

Missionary work and church growth always require cultural awareness and looking for the gaps that need attention. The very foundation of outreach of any kind requires firm convictions and fluid adaptation. The theoretical foundation of the Army chaplain corps is that chaplains have to take on the mission of their units in order to be relevant to their constituency. The author took the road less travelled in the Army chaplaincy and spent the majority of his career training with and ministering to special operations soldiers. The tough training and real-world missions have left his body with permanent disabilities. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19, said, "For though I am free from all, I have made myself servant to all, that I might win more of them" (ESV).<sup>59</sup> Although a chaplain can attempt sincere relevancy amid young soldiers, the retiree does not have that option. A very specific and specialized methodology is essential to bridge the gap between the 18 year-old and an octogenarian.

Just like the Army chaplain, the Apostle Paul was called by God to preach in areas that were hostile to or oblivious to the benefit of Christianity. Paul wrote: "and I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation" (Rom 5:20). In fact, Paul stated in Galatians 1:15-16, that he was called from birth to preach the Gospel to the far reaches of society, "in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles". Moreover, Paul wrote: "How, then, will they call on one they have not believed

<sup>59</sup> I Corinthians 9:19, English Standard Version (ESV) Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this thesis project will be from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom 10:14)

The HAAF Garrison Chaplain rotates leadership and denominational affiliation every few years. The change of leadership often provides little or no continuity in programming. Thus, Paul’s desire to preach the gospel on “someone else’s foundation” (Rom 5:20) is an ever-present reality for the Army chaplain. In order to eliminate the turmoil of leadership change, faithfully attending retirees may provide the foundation necessary to avoid the cyclical nature of attendance and effectiveness in the Hunter community. The theoretical framework of this project is to build upon the long-term, faithful, available, teachable, and knowledgeable foundation found in the retiree population.

Spiritual growth does not happen in a vacuum, but Army culture tends to inculcate introversion and self-help above spiritual fitness. Despite the best efforts of commanders and helping-agencies, attracting young soldiers to events outside of work that do not contain danger or alcohol is an ever-increasing problem. The Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program (BOSS) struggles to find anyone who is interested in participating in wholesome activities. In contrast to the increasingly introverted army culture, the Apostle Paul clearly saw Christian spiritual formation happening in and among groups of peers that hold similar values. In Romans 15:5-6, he wrote of a harmony of mission so “that together you may with one voice glorify the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The modern soldier has the internet at his or her fingertips that provides an avenue of spirituality for the disciplined soldiers that prefer to stay in bed on Sunday morning and are far too busy to attend any recurring weekly Bible study. The HAAF Chapel began broadcasting weekly services in the fall of 2019 in order to reach out to a digitally connected constituency.

## The Apostle Paul's Spiritual Formation

The Apostle Paul was a late-comer that joined the Christian cause only after a divine encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). He was well aware of pedagogical mentorship, for he had been a mentee under some of the greatest theological scholars of his day prior to his conversion. He was “educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day” (Acts 22:3b). The Damascus road was a huge milestone in the young scholar's life, as his allegiance changed from Judaism to Jesus. His years studying the Pentateuch gave him an enormous depth of knowledge, which served as a basis upon which he was trained by the guidance of God in Damascus for three years. After three years of intense training, he came out ready to plant churches and write the majority of the New Testament books of the Bible (Gal 1:16-24). This was such a dramatic transformation, that the once persecutor of Christians became the most powerful advocate for its advance. “They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy” (Gal 1:23)

Paul's approach toward discipleship in the corporate setting can be seen in 1 Corinthians 1:7-9, “so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Although Paul never used the term “spiritual formation”, he is the ultimate subject matter expert in discipling his congregations toward transformative relationships with God. Pettit describes spiritual formation as a community benefit, whereby spiritual formation is a “process for influence”.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 19. What is the chapter title this quote is found in? Who is the author of this chapter?

There are three prominent applicable themes found in Paul's framework regarding spiritual formation: hope, peace, and new beginnings. First, is the process whereby a source of hope causes a believer to be transformed into the image of the object of his faith, Jesus Christ. Second, is the process whereby a Christian has peace in this life because his eternal state is not in jeopardy. Third, the key to transformation is a continual dying process that spawns new beginnings.

### **Hope**

First, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul wrote: "And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another". Imitation is flattery. Armies around the world try to replicate the technological and tactical strength of the United States. Both allies and enemies want to reflect the power and success of the greatest superpower the world has ever known, so they look at the American military. Both have hope that they will be image bearers. Neither of them are perfect reflections and only one of them has good intentions.

Paul challenged the church in Corinth to keep their eyes fixed upon the glory of God. By looking at His glory, Paul said that they will become like Him. Transformational imitation in this instance is not just flattery, but deep and sincere affection. The believer must see God for who He is, constantly think about Him, fashion their lives around Him, and see Him in every situation. In fact, everything in life must be seen through a heavenly filter for the transformation to progress.

The Christian life is meant to be expressed in community, not in isolation. Pettit described spiritual formation as a process that finds success through intimate relationships.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 253.

Role-models are an essential part of growth. The Apostle Paul instructed Titus that he was “in all respects to be a model of good works” (Titus 2:7). Interestingly, Paul told his young apprentice, Timothy, to be a model believer while simultaneously not allowing anyone to disregard his influence because of his young age (1Tim 4:11). This admonition indicates that the older folks garnered more respect than the younger. Furthermore, Paul perpetually challenged his constituents to follow his example as he followed Christ (1 Cor 4:15-17, 11:1, Phil 4:9, 2 Thess 3:7-9, 2 Tim 3:10-11).

Spiritual formation is a gradual process that is rife with personal failures. The older or more mature Christians are an integral asset and an essential factor of the Christian maturation process. Paul’s mentorship directive was not a new concept. King David wrote, “So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation” (Ps 71:18). Years later, Solomon wrote, “whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Prov 13:20).

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, many army veteran retirees attend chapel services to keep their connection to soldiers. Many of them are mature believers that could show young soldiers what right looks like. Retirees are fully capable of echoing Paul’s instruction to imitate his life and in so doing reflect the image of Christ, however, an easily bridgeable gap separates the HAAF chapel retiree’s willingness to mentor and the implementation of a program that bridges the gap. Young soldiers need hope that they can live redeemed lives amid an unregenerate formation by sharpening themselves through the strength of others (Prov 27:17 “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”).

The goal of spiritual mentorship is to help form fully dedicated followers of Jesus Christ. Apart from the truth of the Gospel, there is no hope for mankind’s plight. Over the last decade,

suicide rates at HAAF and its sister post, Fort Stewart, has continued to rise even though helping resources have grown exponentially. Soldiers need hope. True hope can only be found in Christ. This study portends that Gen Z soldiers do not respond to formalized, ceremonial spirituality as well as they respond to authentic role models that reflect God's glory. The reflection of the glory of God has the power to transform both the reflector and the one who sees the reflection.

### **Peace**

Second, in Philippians 4:8, Paul gave six adjectives that can help the believer live in peace by transformational thinking that focuses on things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and commendable. In addition to this, Paul said, "What you have heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." (Phil 3:9). The six adjectives provide a framework on which to build transformational spiritual formation that leads to true peace. Furthermore, Paul offered himself as an example of what right looks like. These six adjectives are not only to be pedagogically taught, but also visibly practiced by the mature Christians so that they can be a living example of what right looks like.

Each of the six categories of transformational thinking will be individually dealt with in order to analyze their theological importance to this project.

### **Truth**

Untruth robs peace from all who give in to it because to believe a lie is to "suppress the truth" (Rom 1:18). Every Christian needs someone who will be an honest broker with them. Retiree mentors have the capacity to fill a parental gap and honestly assess a soldier's situation. For instance, there are many used car lots on the outskirts of every army post. The business model of the dealers prey upon the naivete of young soldiers that have a steady paycheck for the

first time in their lives. Since the young soldiers have no credit, these dealers sell them questionable vehicles at extremely high interest rates. New recruits are continuously moving into the area, so there is a steady customer base. There is nothing illegal about these businesses, so the only way to help soldiers is to interdict their purchases by telling them the truth. Although this interdiction may seem elementary, the interest rate and quality of the vehicles are easily justified by young soldiers without wise counsel.

Spiritual mentorship relies upon wise counsel that confronts sin and challenges decision making. Thinking about what is true will lead to peace because the truth of the Gospel promises that even the best day on earth will be the worst in heaven. Fear of the future can cripple, but reliance on all that God accomplished through His Son can soothe the soul. Retiree veterans who have had similar experiences while they were soldiers can greatly help by being completely honest with their experiences and how they overcame them through the power of God.

#### Reverence

Thinking about what is honorable is to focus upon that which deserves reverence. Dedicated Christians tend to fall away from their faith amidst a typical testosterone filled, irreverent formation. The mind can be a soldier's best and worst asset. Maintaining personal devotion to God can become a losing battle if there is not someone that can come alongside a soldier for encouragement and accountability about the spiritual battle for the mind. Mentors can ask simple questions about a soldier's thought life and share how ignoble thoughts can severely damage the soul. Retiree veterans are more apt to see life reverently as a frail gift from God due to their aging bodies, while a young soldier's inexperience leads him to believe he is invincible and treat his body irreverently. All life should be honored and cherished, but few can come to that conclusion without a guide.

## Justice

Peace can only truly be achieved within a right relationship with God. Righteous living begins by being right with Him and then gradually makes right choices because of that relationship. Rules always lead to rebellion, however, a relationship with God through faith leads to peace. To be self-righteous is to depend upon behavior as justification. To be in a right relationship with God is to depend on all that Christ did by shouldering the wrath of God on man's behalf. Justice was served on Him so that believers can have a relationship just as if we had never sinned.

The army culture instills companionship through the "battle-buddy" system. Soldiers are paired with a peer for accountability and esprit de corps. If one of the soldiers fails to perform or makes a wrong personal decision such as an alcohol-related offense, both battle-buddies are punished. This may seem like an injustice, but it is an excellent tool for soldiers to self-regulate. This is not a fail-proof system because it does not remedy a situation in which both battle-buddies make wrong decisions. True peace can only come to a soldier that fully depends on his cosmic battle-buddy, Jesus Christ.

The army is a meritocracy that depends on good behavior for promotion. It is safe to say that the majority of retiree veterans that attend the HAAF chapel were able to finish their army careers under honorable conditions. Each one successfully navigated the annual assessments positively and was promoted accordingly. Another safe assumption is that soldiers that faced administrative punishment are not faithful in the chapel. Thus, the majority of the retiree population understands how to make right choices as soldiers. Furthermore, their current level of faith likely has helped them make right choices since retiring. Soldiers need help choosing what



is right and the quickest and most effective way for this to happen is for the soldiers to have the wise, sagely advice of someone outside of their formation.

### Purity

Peace cannot live in a toxic environment. Although much of the sexually charged environment has been regulated out of the military, the remainder is still damaging to young soldiers. Both male and female soldiers suffer from sexual assault and harassment. Impure thoughts lead to impure actions and without regulation can cause immense damage and feelings of alienation from God.

Spiritual formation must focus on the internal thought life, because the guilty pleasures of private fantasy destroy peace. Peace eludes those who wish life was different and consequences eliminated. Sin always promises pleasure but brings only pain. Barber and Baker noted that “if the “care” and “cure” of souls is ultimately directed towards Christ-likeness, then the fundamental agent of soul care is the Holy Spirit working with our spirit.”<sup>62</sup>

### Loveliness

Most military members serve their country with the obligation that they will lay down their life in order to protect the lives of others. A majority of military funeral and memorial services use John 15:13 somewhere in the eulogies (“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”). In short, most people attribute a soldier’s death to be sacrificial for the needs of others. The loving thoughts that Paul described in Philippians 3:8 are those that encourage loving thoughts and actions.

<sup>62</sup> Barber, Betsy, and Chris Baker. "Soul care and spiritual formation: an old call in need of new voices." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (2014): 270+. *Gale Academic Onefile* (accessed October 2, 2019). [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A470462284/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=0186b3c0](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A470462284/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=0186b3c0).

## **New Beginnings**

Third, Pauline spiritual formation presents death to the old self and a new birth in Christ. For example, Romans 8:13, says “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” In Romans 12:1-2, Paul also described the Christian life a continual mortification of sins: “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”. Training for killing (as discussed in the review of literature section) can have a negative effect upon a person’s psyche, however, death to sin brings only positive outcomes. Paul challenged his readers to present themselves as living killings, a continuous death to self, through which new, abundant, and satisfying life in Christ can be obtained.

John Owen, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1656, wrote a personal treatise that focused solely upon Romans 8:13, “if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” He described mortification as, “to take away the principle of all his strength, vigour, and power, so that he cannot act or exert, or put forth any proper actings of his own”<sup>63</sup> Soldiers understand this terminology and can relate to the moral killing of sin just as they understand the use of deadly force against an enemy on the battlefield.

The killing of the flesh is a constant battle that humans face regardless of age or vocation. Young soldiers face constant sinful influences whilst standing in formation, living in the barracks, or training on the range. Without guidance and accountability, the author has found that most soldiers place their faith on hold after basic training due to peer-pressure. Many

<sup>63</sup> John Owen, “Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers, by John Owen.” [http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/spiritualformation/texts/owen\\_mortificationofsin.pdf](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/spiritualformation/texts/owen_mortificationofsin.pdf) (accessed October 4, 2019), page 10.

Christian soldiers find themselves alone in a sea of sin and find it difficult to stand up for what they believe in. A strange dichotomy occurs when a soldier raises his right hand to defend the country he loves but hides away the God that he loves. Owen noted that the mortification of sin is the “constant duty of believers”.<sup>64</sup>

Bridging the gap between the veteran retiree and the soldier that needs honest guidance is the dilemma that this project aims to address. Older Christian role-models have the experience necessary to help young believers see the importance of the elimination of sin. A young soldier would greatly benefit by having a relationship with someone who has dealt with and killed certain sinful temptations in their lives. For instance, retiree veterans had sexual temptations in their day and either conquered their lust or fell prey to sin. Either story has the possibility of influencing and encouraging a soldier as they struggle with youthful lust. The power of a personal story lends credibility to the claim that sin always has consequences and effects even those ancillaries to the sin.

Paul made it clear in Romans 8:13 that sin must be killed before it becomes a killer. There are only two responses to sin: kill it or let it live. Interestingly, choosing to let sin live causes death, but choosing to kill sin causes life. This simple lesson is so needed in the present army culture that glorifies drunkenness and immorality, and yet sensors Christian principles due to fear of reprisal from atheist groups. Even if the retiree community in the chapel can only mentor a few soldiers, they will as Jude said in vs 22-23, “And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, page 11.

## Conclusion

The Apostle Paul described the process of a metamorphic spiritual transformation as the goal for Christian living. The change from one state of being (dying in sin) to another (dying to sin) cannot be under-stated in its upmost importance for the Christian's spiritual formation. Although the statements are not descriptive of the process for each individual, they are clearly the prescriptive of the motivation that is necessary in every church's life.

The Christian ethic is a community that methodically develops into a body of fully dedicated followers of Jesus Christ. Several times Paul stated his desire was for Christ-centered communities that gave him reason to boast about the work of God on the day of Christ (2 Cor 1:14; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Cor 11:3). Moreover, he also was clear about his aim for a community of believers that continually transformed through spiritually formative relationship that were un-blamable in holiness (1 Thess 3:13, Rom 15:16, Phil 2:15).

The army chapels have never and may never be able to fulfill Paul's vision for the church. Army chapels are not denominationally affiliated and are categorized into faith groups, primarily Catholic, Protestant, and low-density faith groups like Judaism, Wiccan, Muslim. This presents a problem if the chapel is considered a church, in that, the ecumenical nature of building and resource usage must be done with collegially and equitably. Paul's goal of a community of faith that is blamelessly holy and one of which he could be proud is absolutely possible in the army chapel system, but there are few that reach to that level of a spiritually formed entity.

Paul made every effort to stay intimately involved in the lives of Christians. He desired to see the completion of God's work in his disciples as seen in Philippians 1:6, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ". He also saw himself in three specific familial roles with his mentees. First, he described himself

as a father figure to the church at large as seen in 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12: “For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you unto His own kingdom and glory”. He also saw himself as a spiritual mother in Galatians 4:19: “my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!” Lastly, he described himself as the father of the bride in 2 Corinthians 11:2: “I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ”.

In summary, the Apostle Paul was intimately involved in the training, equipping, encouraging, and reproduction of mentoring relationships that focused on spiritual formation. As a mentor, he knew that his life was on display for public criticism and used that possibility as a reason to be an example of spiritual maturity. He challenged people to follow his lead, and it is apparent that some did. Timothy was one of his young protégés that listened to his advice. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying that in contrast to the godlessness of who “oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding faith” (2 Tim 3:8). In contrast to Jannes and Jambres who foolishly opposed Moses, Timothy was commended by Paul in 2 Tim 3:10, “You, however, have followed my teaching and conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings”. Aside from the persecutions and sufferings, the ideal retiree veteran mentor would be able to model the very same behavior for a young soldier that desperately needs a mother or father figure to help them through what is likely the hardest time in their young lives.

It takes a lot of intentional effort to find and develop a relationship with someone that is outside of one’s normal socioeconomic circles. The Apostle Paul was not afraid of getting “in the trenches” with his recruits and the presupposition of this project is that the retiree population

at the HAAF chapel would willingly crawl “into the trenches” in order to help any soldier that was spiritually or materially struggling. The pool of retirees generously give finances to the ministries of the chapel and bring food each week to bless all who will partake. They are fully committed to the chapel program and volunteer whenever a need arises.

The theological presupposition of this project is that the majority of retirees will be fully committed to the increased level of ministry with gracious encouragement and slight instruction. The theological operating principle of this project is built upon the spiritual formation that Paul espoused, being carried out under the same charge that Paul gave to Timothy: “preach the word; be ready in season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching”(2 Tim 4:2). These relationships will not only fulfill Paul’s instruction, but the greater instruction of Jesus as given to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

Paul’s mission in life was focused on the spiritual welfare of others. At the end of his life, he told Timothy that he was “being poured out like a drink offering”, so that in his selfless sacrifice others would come to know Christ more intimately (2 Tim 4:8). The sacrifice brought him joy because he was dedicated to the one who sacrificed infinitely more on a cosmic scale. He did this not to earn cheap grace, but out of profound love that went far beyond the normal because he recognized that there to be an incalculable need. This project will ask a little more from the generous hands of the dedicated retirees at the HAAF chapel. Many chapel services across the army are dying a slow death of attrition as the dedicated population ages. The theological implications of mentorship and spiritual formation make this project imperative for the future life of the chapel at HAAF and across the entire army enterprise.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the generosity, life-experiences, and the mentorship capability of the retired chapel community and how it could intersect with the spiritual resiliency of young soldiers.

The context of this research was in Savannah, Georgia, and the other municipalities surrounding Hunter Army Airfield. The targeted demographic was the dozens of military retirees that continue to participate in the Hunter Chapel programs and services. The researcher found that their decision to attend and support an army chapel stemmed from the profoundly formative years that they spent in fatigues and boots. Furthermore, they embodied the colloquial saying, "you can take the man out of the army, but you can never take the army out of the man". The retiree population at all Army installations suggests that imprinted memories, both good and bad, deeply impact a soldier for a lifetime. Some military retirees grow a beard, stop exercising, and move as far away from the army as possible. Conversely, others continue to wake-up before the crack-of-dawn, cut their hair with a razor, and homestead within a short distance from their adopted family members that are the contemporary soldiers that fill the formation, train for war, and travel afar to fight and win America's wars.

Among the group of military retirees that live in the Savannah area exists a remnant that were somehow impacted by military chapels during their time in service. Despite living in a city full of great civilian churches, these retirees perpetually support the Hunter Chapel. Their support includes attendance at Sunday services, charitable donations to the chapel offering, and involvement in chapel programs. They are a group of very dedicated, very generous, and very philanthropic people.

## **Background Research Summary: Methodology Operating in the Applied Research**

### Methodology Question 1: Why?

The researcher asked the question: “Why?” Why do these retirees continue to come to the same chapel, the longest having attended for 25 years? Unlike the civilian church, the chaplains in charge change-out every few years. The researcher learned from retiree attendees that they continue to attend because they know that if they do not like the chaplain, there will be a new one in a few years. This means that there is very little consistency in the theology, preaching, and relative impact of the chapel program. When the researcher first arrived at the Hunter Chapel in the summer of 2018, there were 20 people attending service each week, almost all of which were retirees. There was something that drew them in every week, year after year. The researcher concluded that it could not be the preaching or the singing, because both were not on par with the local civilian church counterparts.

### Methodology Question 2: What?

This led the researcher to ask the question: “What?” What was it that these retirees were receiving that made them so faithful to the chapel? It appeared as if there was something that these retirees were receiving that they could not obtain elsewhere. Perhaps they were searching for something that they knew that they could only find in an army chapel. This suspicion was confirmed when a new initiative was successfully introduced to recruit young soldiers and families to attend services. The first step taken was to replace the topical preaching of the past with solid, exegetical preaching. The second step taken was to replace the organ with guitars, keyboards, and drums, in an effort to liven-up the worship music. The third step taken was to overhaul the facility and the landscaping. The retirees were 100% in favor of all the changes,



shown by volunteering their time and support for the rehabilitation. The faithful remnant of retirees was blessed by the rapid growth of the chapel program attendance.

### Methodology Question 3: How?

The researcher then asked the question: “How?” How can the longevity and dedication of these retirees be used to perpetually reach out to young soldiers? The chapel experienced explosive growth in the fall of 2018, to the joy of the retirees. The new attendees were composed of young soldiers and families, which was the intended demographic of the outreach. This growth was welcomed, but a large gap readily became apparent between the retiree’s desire to reach out to young soldiers and families and their confidence in developing meaningful relationships with them. Upon investigation, the researcher found that many of the retirees felt that they had nothing to existentially offer young soldiers and no skills through which to offer anything meaningful. They were comfortable giving money and inviting young soldiers and families to attend services, but not comfortable developing relationships outside the confines of the chapel service.

The researcher learned from 17 years of army chaplain experience that young soldiers need life-coaches that can guide them through the obstacles of young-adulthood while in the military. The army understands this need, which has led to the numerous helping agencies on Hunter Army Airfield that specialize in different aspects of soldier life-skills training. Financial, marital, psychological, and professional counseling services are fully funded by the army and fully advertised throughout the command infrastructure. The programs and services that the army supports are designed for soldier wellness in body, mind, and soul. However, spiritual mentors are not a part of the army’s focus. Chaplains exist to defend the 1st Amendment rights of every soldier for free exercise of religion, but are not numerous enough to meet each soldier’s

individual spiritual needs. The chaplains counsel and minister to soldiers, but they do not have enough time in their schedule to be spiritual mentors to all of the young soldiers that need a spiritual life-coach.

The researcher identified the need for mature, experienced Christians to bridge this gap between a soldier's need and a knowledgeable person that could potentially meet that need. The Hunter Chapel retiree community was the subject of this qualitative study, which was a single case study that recognized the generosity, life experiences, and prior service-related mentorship training of military retirees that attended the Hunter Chapel. The qualitative research was conducted to study and understand the military retiree's potential for bridging the gap in becoming spiritual mentors for young soldiers. Several recommendations will be made at the conclusion of this study for further development of this research and implementation of programs that could fill the gap between the aged, baby-boomer soldier and the fresh, young, inexperienced Generation-X recruit.

The research relied upon qualitative research in order to explore the phenomenology of the retirees that faithfully attended the Hunter Chapel. A phenomenological study finds the crossroads of shared experiences of individuals through which common ideologies and practices emerge. According to Creswell, "the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of universal essence".<sup>65</sup> The researcher perceived that there is an invisible bond that most soldiers share that is built upon similar training, traumas, and triumphs. The researcher has experienced this bond in various places with strangers that once wore the same uniform and boots. For instance, the army ranger community

<sup>65</sup> John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* Third edition. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014). 79.

forms instant bonds at the sight of the coveted ranger combat scroll, signifying that the bearer of that scroll has gone to combat with the Army Special Operation's premier raid force. Similarly, the aged paratrooper retiree wore the same jump-wings on his uniform and jumped out of aircraft with parachutes similar to those which today's soldier utilizes, thus forming a kindred bond that is unique between veterans. Uniforms are uniforms, boots are boots, and the American Flag was worth risking it all in the past and is still a symbol worth the sacrifice.

The purpose of this study was to research the phenomenon of the shared experience of military service that transcends generations and could provide the impetus for developing cross-generational, spiritually mentoring relationships.

### **Step-by-step Explanation of the Applied Research**

#### **Participants**

The participants for this research were randomly selected from 24 potential retirees. The 10 retirees that were selected had participated in either the Protestant or the Catholic Hunter Chapel programs for over 5 years. Although the participants were not asked which congregation they supported, their service of preference came out during the course of their responses to the interview questions. The retirees met three main criteria: supporter of one of Hunter Chapel's services for at least 5 years, retired after at least 20 years of military service, resided near Hunter Army Airfield. Although not a research criterion, all the subjects used for this research were men, as there were no female military retirees involved in the Hunter Chapel programs.

#### **Buy-in From Participants**

The research project was not announced or advertised in a public forum. The researcher constructed a list of potential participants by personally asking individuals if they would be interested in participating in this study. From the pool of possible participants available for this

research, 10 individuals that met the criteria for participation were randomly selected to undergo an interview process. This sampling provided more than adequate data for analysis. Both those who participated and those who were unable to participate expressed a deep interest in the subject of this research. Without exception, each individual expressed to the researcher that any amount of time for the interview would be acceptable. Many were willing to spend far more time recounting their experiences than was necessary. This willingness to talk was indicative of the phenomenological nature of this study: soldiers can talk about soldiering with any soldier. The interviewees simply enjoyed being able to talk about their military service and the researcher enjoyed the stories. Moreover, the participants were happy to share important life lessons with someone who was genuinely interested in hearing their story.

#### Materials Used to Facilitate the Research

The material requirements for this study were minimal. The key information was qualitative and phenomenological, thus, was solely contained within the individual participant's memory, Christian faith, and preferences. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent, whereby all background information, procedures, risks, compensation, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of the study were specified. Upon reading and understanding the informed consent, each participant was asked to sign and date the form. These forms were safeguarded and will be stored for 3 years as per the Institutional Review Board's criteria.

The researcher used the "voice memo" feature on his iPhone to record individual sessions with participants. The phone and files were safeguarded with a password to protect confidentiality. The recordings were then used to complete a response matrix, in which each of the participant's responses were entered for comparing and contrasting. This response matrix

was used for categorization and analyzation of the responses, as well as used for noting similarities and differences.

The researcher also used a notebook and pen in order to record any insight that could be used during the analyzation process. Body language was not analyzed, however, the researcher noted that every participant was fully engaged and exhibited only positivity toward the subject matter. The researcher also noted that all participants could have continued talking about their experiences if the researcher had not stopped recording as a sign that the interview was over. Also of note, the post-interview conversations lasted from 5 minutes to 45 minutes after the initial 20-60 minute recorded interview. The notebook containing these non-researched observations was safeguarded during use and was destroyed upon entering the data in a password protected computer.

#### Progress of the Research

The research was conducted over a two-week period. The researcher allowed the interview process to extend for as long as the participant desired to talk, but often re-directed the conversation to the research questions. The researcher planned for 20-60 minutes per interview, but was not beholden to any timeframe. Some participants enjoyed the questions so much that their answers lasted until the researcher politely asked the next question to keep the interview moving. This was noted in the matrix as potentially substantive in and of itself, as it clearly displayed the participant's willingness to tell his military story to someone who was interested. Other participant's answers were shorter and to the point, but that did not indicate a dissatisfaction with the subject material being discussed. The progress of the research moved as planned with no significant barriers beyond the appointments for the 10 participant's interviews.

### Initial Response of the Participants

Every participant was delighted to partake in this study. In fact, those that were not chosen for the study indicated a desire to be involved in some capacity. The researcher observed that military retirees love and support the military and have a genuine compassion for soldiers and families. This love is evidenced by their generosity and involvement in activities in the Hunter Chapel and in other HAAF events.

There was great initial interest in this study and the findings thereof. Military folks are well accustomed to “hurry-up-and-wait, yet some potential participants were very eager to contribute and learn of the results of the research. The researcher noted that some of the most fruitful contributions and heartfelt altruisms resulted from simply asking a military retiree to participate in a study that could benefit soldiers and one that could utilize their experiences to do so. The participants of this study spent the best part of their lives wearing the uniform of the United States military. Their personal experiences are embodied now in the young soldiers who now wear the uniform of their beloved country. The researcher noted that the participant’s love for soldiers encouraged them want to do almost anything to help the newest generation of heroes have success personally, professionally, and spiritually.

### How Was the Data Collected?

The data was collected on the voice memo application on the researcher’s personal, password protected cellular device. The audio files were then transferred from the device to the researcher’s personal, password protected computer. After the transfer was complete, the audio files were deleted from the cellular device.

The records of this study were kept private. All names were replaced with pseudonyms and a key was made available only to the researcher. This was done to eliminate the possibility of participants being identified. The responses to the interviews were then transferred to a matrix for further analysis.

Each interview was conducted either in person or via phone in a private setting. If the participant was unable to meet the researcher, they were asked to set aside a time when they could comfortably sit and be uninterrupted for the duration of the interview. The participant was told that they would be given as much time as they desired, but that 20-30 minutes was the target time. This time was greatly extended by a few participants and shortened to 15 minutes by one.

#### How Did the Research Establish a Baseline for Measuring Change?

The researcher made some general assumptions regarding the retired military Hunter Chapel supporters in order to create an unbiased baseline for measuring change. The assumptions were based on both professional observation, consultation with colleagues at other military garrison chapels, and literary research. These suppositions were not a hinderance to the thesis, rather, were key benefits in development of the problem statement and the baseline whereby change could be accurately measured.

1. The researcher assumed that military retirees that continue to attend chapel do so to remain connected to the military that they love and vowed their life to defend.
2. The researcher assumed that military retirees that continue to attend chapel services do so because they remain dedicated to the oath of enlistment that they took decades ago. This oath was not entered into lightly and the patriotism did not end when the soldier took off his uniform for the last time.

3. The researcher assumed that military retirees that continue to attend chapel services are generous in the chapel ministry with both their time and their money. Most military retirees have pensions as well as other sources of income, so giving financial contributions to the offering plate seems to be their chosen method of supporting soldiers.

4. The researcher assumed that military retirees that continue to attend chapel services and desire to support soldiers and families because of their warrior ethos. Although it may seem like hyperbole to non-military people, serving in the military changes a person and indoctrinates that person to always follow the Warrior Ethos: “I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.”<sup>66</sup>

5. The researcher assumed that the majority of military retirees that attend chapel services do not have current relationships with active-duty soldiers.

6. The researcher assumed that the baseline for measuring change would begin with military retirees that would be willing to have relationships with active-duty soldiers and be willing to spiritually mentor them if they had both the opportunity and the training.

7. The researcher assumed that change could easily be measured by either the recruitment of retirees willing to learn how to engage in mentoring relationships or the inability to do so.

### **Intervention Design**

How did the project address the ministry context problem and the research question?

This project addressed the ministry context problem wherein soldiers and families that attend the Hunter Chapel desperately need sound advice and spiritual counsel in order to successfully navigate the military lifestyle. Today’s soldiers are busy, tired, stressed, and most

<sup>66</sup> *Warrior Ethos-The Army Values*. <https://www.army.mil/values/warrior.html> (accessed February 4, 2020).



rely upon peer-to-peer advice. Soldiers are trained to operate as a cohesive team and take care of each other as a cohesive team. However, a problem arises when the advice and experience of past soldiers is not available or acceptable. The problem is that at the Hunter Chapel, retirees are ready and willing to disciple young soldiers, however, there is no intentional program to train, encourage, and empower the older generation of soldiers to form spiritually meaningful relationships with contemporary soldiers.

The problem lies neither with the willing retiree nor the impressionable young soldier, but is a combination of three things: the generational gap, the privatization of religion, and lack of training in discipleship models. This project addressed the generational gap between the retired soldier and the Generation-Z soldier. The communication styles and avenues needed a bridge in order for a retiree and a Generation-Z soldier to establish a mentoring relationship. The researcher observed this need and consulted with colleagues across the army enterprise that also observed this ministry context problem.

The problem is simple, military retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel are generous and want to give back to soldiers, but young soldiers have privatized their faith and retirees have a difficult time connecting with them. This is why the average retiree supports young soldiers with their generous financial gifts rather than engaging in personal relationships. The research was conducted to ascertain the potential mentoring and discipleship capability of the retired chapel community beyond simple charitable contributions. The average military retiree has an enormous capability and capacity to pass-on their wisdom from age and experience. The problem of pairing a willing retiree and a needy young soldier existed and will continue to exist until a program is developed to meet this need.

### How Was the Research Designed to Support the Purpose and Objective?

The observed gap between the active duty soldier that needs guidance and the military retiree that has the wisdom and experience to address many of their personal, professional, and spiritual concerns. Although fellowship has always been encouraged, the researcher noted over the course of 18 months that very little interaction occurred between the generations.

The purpose of the project was to analyze the possibility of building a bridge that would encourage and empower 10 retirees to rely on their age, experience, and faith as sources of credibility for the purpose of mentoring young soldiers. This was perceived by the researcher as the easier route to building the bridge, as it was assumed the at top-down approach would work better than a bottom-up approach. Young soldiers would be far more reticent to engage in conversation than the retiree, thus far less willing to initiate the bridge.

The thesis statement of this project outlined the reasons for and methodology of this project. The goal of this study was to help the older generation interact with young soldiers and form relationships that could improve personal and spiritual resiliency. The older generation of Army retirees has the knowledge and the desire to help younger soldiers navigate life in the Army, however, a viable conduit through which their wisdom and desire could flow had not been established. The growing gap can only be bridged through intentional intervention.

### How Did the Literary Research Guide the Research Choices?

The literary review clarified the researcher's assumptions based on 17 years of soldiering and caring for soldier's spiritual and personal needs through counseling resources, ministry programs, and chapel services. There were three areas of emphasis while conducting a review of

relevant literature: the unique stress of military service, a viable model of discipleship, and a generational bridge.

First, the review analyzed the unique stress of military service in relation to spiritual formation. Based on the researcher's personal and professional experience, most soldiers stop going to an organized church or chapel once they complete basic training and move to their first duty station. The literary review showed that the "profession of arms" creates dilemmas that people were not designed to cope with independently. Thus, there is a gap between the soldier's spiritual need that is developed through war-related training and a source of spiritual healing. The gap can cause internal suffering that may lead to depression, irritability, or even suicidal ideations.

Second, from the review of literature, the researcher developed six potential practices that could be implemented for a spiritual mentorship program within the military. These 5 practices were called "SOP's", which is a common military term for "standard operating procedures".

**SOP #1 Support system:** A healthy community becomes proficient in building social support systems.

**SOP #2 Outside help:** A healthy community is not afraid to ask for help.

**SOP #3 Equip volunteer leaders:** A healthy community is built through equipping leaders

**SOP # 4 Prevent preventable problems:** A healthy community works to prevent problems.

**SOP #5 Change what is broken:** A healthy community reforms the areas that aren't working.

Lastly, the literature review saw a possible bridge that could be built to connect the generational gap between the Baby Boomers and Generation-Z'ers in regard to the development of army chapel-based spiritually formative relationships. The researcher's analysis of literature categorized four definitive lines of effort by which older generations of soldiers could

purposefully interact with young soldiers in the formation of relationships that could improve personal and spiritual resiliency. Since the goal of this study was to help the older generation interact with young soldiers and form relationships that could improve the personal and spiritual resiliency of soldiers, these lines of effort were simple and achievable.

**LOE #1 Develop a relationship:** Credibility is everything to a Generation-Z'er and cannot be established without a relationship

**LOE #2 Communicate credibility:** Generation-Z'ers are not afraid to voice their opinion, nor are they opposed to others voicing an opposing opinion.

**LOE #3 Remove the Fear of Failure:** Most retirees have stories of personal failure that led to new, enlightened responses.

**LOE #4 Equip soldiers to think critically:** A mentor has the ability to speak truth into a life and challenge the soldier to think-out their particular problem.

#### Were the Results Measurable?

The scope of the thesis project could not address all issues or train all areas, nor could it assure successful interaction between retirees and young soldiers. However, it did address a huge gap that existed at HAAF. A constructivist interview and back-brief process was used for the research. This approach inherently provided measurable results, in that, the participants walked through their own experiences. The research questions were designed to lead the participants through a series of questions that revealed to them both their love for soldiers and the value of their experiences to help the current generation of soldiers to successfully navigate military life.

The actual problem was a gap in generations, non-existent programs that could bridge that gap, and lack of training in discipleship techniques. The most interesting revelation in the research was a discovery of retiree insecurity. The majority of retirees felt that they had nothing

to offer young soldiers from their personal experience. Furthermore, the majority of retirees felt under-prepared to lead a soldier in a spiritually mentoring relationship. This will be discussed more in chapter 4.

The research was simple to implement because the majority of military retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel had very flexible schedules. The majority of the interviews were conducted during the normal workday, indicating that the participants were retired and had the freedom of a clear schedule. Although this was not a research question, the researcher inferred this due to the participant's age and availability.

The results of the research were measurable and will be discussed in chapter 4. The purpose of the research was to interview, encourage, and empower 10 Army retirees that attend Hunter Chapel programs to confidently rely on their age, experience, and faith in order to mentor young soldiers. This was accomplished through the interview and the researcher's concluding comments given after each interview.

#### The Ingredients of the Research<sup>67</sup>

The purpose of the project was one of encouragement and empowerment. This was accomplished through the interview process which allowed the retiree to tell their story. This was cathartic for each and every participant.

The objectives of the project were to identify the problem and potential solution through constructivist interviews designed to address the 5 SOPs and 4 LOEs that were developed in chapter 2's review of literature.

<sup>67</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. (Eugene, OR: Wimpf & Stock, 2011), 66-67.

## **People Involved**

A pool of approximately 24 military retirees were identified that attend the HAAF Chapel and that would be interested in participating in a research project. The researcher randomly selected 10 military retirees from the larger pool of potential participants.

Ethical issues related to informed consent and confidentiality:

Informed consent was obtained from the 10 individuals that were selected to be a part of the research project. Each participant received a copy of the informed consent and agreed to be interviewed for this research. The informed consent forms were filed as per the Internal Review Board's requirements. (See Appendix ## for IRB approval and informed consent example.)

## **Place Where the Activities Occurred**

A recorded interview was conducted either in a neutral setting or in the participant's home. The interviews were intended to take 30 minutes, but the time varied based on responses from 15 minutes to over an hour. The recordings were done on the researcher's personal iPhone and transferred to the researcher's personal computer. Each device was password protected.

## **The Required Resources and Tools Used for Gathering Data**

The resources used to conduct the field research were a recording device, a field notebook, pen, and a personal computer with password protection. The participant's personally identifiable information was safeguarded on a password protected computer and any written notes taken during the interview process were transcribed and then destroyed.

## **Type of Data Collected That Was Used for Change**

The researcher back briefed each retiree as to their potential for mentoring young soldiers immediately after each interview. The constructivist nature of the research questions made this

possible. Furthermore, the data collected was used for change through the 5 SOPs and the 4 LOEs.

### **Analysis and Evaluation**

Each interview was transcribed to create a matrix for analysis. There were no additional resources needed for this step of the research process.

Analysis of the data was done by grouping responses that were similar and those that were disparate. Similar themes were used to bolster the researcher's thesis statement and see threads of phenomenology. Each individual spoke from their own personal experiences and perceptions, however, similar themes and phenomenological data emerged.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

#### **Narrative of the Implementation and Collection of Data**

The researcher was the primary instrument for the collection of data and interpretation. Implementation of the intervention design was performed using a constructivist interview and a back brief. This approach used informal but interactive interviews that were done individually with participants. This allowed the researcher to record the participant's most important data points throughout their career and their lived-through moments that could aid the researcher in development of thematic elements that could be linked to other military retiree's experiences. This approach allowed the researcher to isolate the participants and obtain only their personal stories and impressions without the spillage of data between interviews.

The data was collected from a random sampling of 10 military retirees that attended chapel services. The 10 participants were randomly selected from a larger group of 24 military retirees were identified as willing to participate in the study. The selection process was simple and effective. First, the individuals were randomized and then the top 10 were called. If

someone was not available at the time of the initial call or the second call, another potential participant from individuals 11-24 were called as replacements. This randomization technique allowed the research to continue irrespective of the availability of certain individuals.

Furthermore, it removed any of the researcher's personal biases due to personal relationships that he may have had with respondents.

The interviews were conducted orally, as the researcher wanted to capture all of the pertinent data. A written questionnaire would not provide the phenomenological data that the researcher was attempting to examine. The participant's comfort level was important to the collection of data, so the majority of the interviews were conducted with the participant in their personal residence. This was determined by the participant's individual preferences and mobility.

The researcher clearly stated that the interviews were scheduled for 20 minutes, but could extend any length that the individual participant desired. Some participants so thoroughly enjoyed telling their story that the interviews took over an hour. Others were more direct and averaged 20-30 minutes.

The interviews began with a review of the informed consent. The researcher clarified each section of the informed consent so that there would be no confusion. The researcher also obtained verbal consent from the participants to conduct and record the interview. The researcher moved the interview along by prompting the participants with the subsequent questions. The participant did not have a list of questions, but they were told that there would be 15 direct questions.

The recorded interviews were used by the researcher to catalogue answers that were pertinent to the study. The answers were placed on a matrix for further analysis. The recordings



provided a complete package of data without the need to readdress any of the participant's for further clarification of their responses. The in-person interviews allowed for the researcher to re-ask questions that required clarification at the time of the interview.

#### Cross-check with Colleagues

Prior to the selection of the current project thesis, the researcher queried army chaplain colleagues across the Army Chaplain Corps. This was done informally, but in-person at various training events at the United States Army Chaplain Center and School at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The researcher found through a random sampling of chaplains serving across the contiguous United States and at installations abroad, that military retirees attend one or more services and have limited or no exposure to young soldiers and families. Each chaplain colleague indicated that most retirees expressed a desire to help young soldiers and families navigate military life, but most often had no personal relationships with current active duty soldiers.

As a frame-of-reference, from 2015-2017 the researcher was involved in a chapel in the Military District of Washington, overlooking Arlington National Cemetery and the Pentagon. The picturesque surrounding did not attract young soldiers to the chapel services. In fact, there were usually zero soldiers present in either of the two Sunday Protestant services. The congregations included several retired 4-star generals, but not a single active-duty soldier. Interestingly, the congregation was extremely generous and was openly willing to do whatever they could to support young soldiers and families. In fact, the offerings were so large that the chaplains found it difficult to fully spend the funds with integrity. The researcher re-investigated this particular phenomenon in December 2019, to discover that nothing has changed. The chapel services continued to be nearly 100% attended by generous, altruistic retirees. This trend belies

the fact that current Army Chief of Chaplains, a Major General, not only has attended the service but also has attempted to attract a more multi-generational congregation. The fact that the most senior-ranking and proficient chaplain in the Army Chaplain Corps has experienced difficulty linking military retirees with young soldiers in a worship service is indicative of a thematic, enterprise-wide problem.

### **Analyzation of the Data: Themes, Slippages, and Silences<sup>68</sup>**

The researcher was careful to not discuss his personal views or biases with any of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher did not discuss the answers of any of the participants with other participants, but held them confidential and securely stored. This was done because a phenomenological approach is one that eliminates the researcher preconceptions and conclusions. The researcher was careful to make certain that he did not interject his opinion or advice. Furthermore, the researcher did not indicate thematic elements between participants. In order to identify themes, the researcher used the following method:

#### Transcription of the Interview Data.

The recorded interviews were gleaned for pertinent data. There was a significant amount of excess data points, as most participants tended to not immediately answer question or to answer the question and then veer off into personal experiences that were impacted by whatever subject material the question covered. This was a good indication to the researcher that the questions touched a place in the participant's formative experiences.

<sup>68</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. (Eugene, OR: Wimpf & Stock, 2011), 35.

### Group Similar Answers as Themes

The majority of answers were subjective, however, there were several non-subjective questions that forced the choice between a positive or negative answer. Similar answers were coded and grouped for further analysis and application of the research project.

### Determine if There are any Silences

The research interviews did contain several silences. Most of these silences were expected, however at least one question produced results exactly the opposite of which the researcher's bias assumed. There were no major areas that were completely missed by the participants. This will be discussed thoroughly in chapter 4.

### Determine if the Expressed Themes are Relevant to the Research Question.

These are described as themes. The phenomenological data was used to normalize the common sentiments and capabilities of the participants.

### Review Disparate Answers and Slippages for Relevancy.

These slippages were very minimal, as most of the responses were similar. Those responses that were outside of the norm were noted and analyzed for chapter 4.

## **Further Analyzation**

### Processes

The researcher used the qualitative data to provide a broad-overview of the particular phenomenon of military retirees not wanting to lose their grip on the military lifestyle and willing to support young soldiers and families, but having no connection with current active-duty soldiers. The qualitative data was also used to characterize the average retiree's sense of preparedness and willingness to mentor young soldiers in spiritual formation. Although this data

may not be indicative of every military retiree that attends army chapels, it approximates what is normal. Since there are not statistics in a qualitative study, the data in this researcher was categorized based upon attributable values.

### Issues

The 6-step process of analysis allowed the researcher to methodologically determine any key issues that would require more research. Data was considered a key issue if the participants did not respond as the researcher assumed that they would. This anomaly was noted as very relevant. Key issues were also determined if the participant's responses were different from one another. This difference was noted by the researcher as very relevant.

### Research Questions

The following question were used for gathering relevant data from the participants in a standardized interview format. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and secured on a password-protected computer.

*1. Please state the dates of your military service.*

This question was an icebreaker, in that, it allowed the researcher to better understand the background of the participant. The easy to answer and non-subjective question was designed to allow the participant to immediately feel comfortable sharing his story.

*2. What was your military occupation specialty (MOS)?*

This question was asked for two reasons. First, there is a wide range of experiences in the military. An infantryman has a vastly different exposure to trauma than a helicopter mechanic. Both may have seen combat, but it is likely that both were not actively engaged in killing enemy combatants. The researcher's personal life experiences confirm this notion. The second reason the question was asked was for the researcher to ascertain the participant's professional

leadership qualifications. This was also an introductory question that was not subjective in nature.

3. *Where did you serve and what was your favorite duty station?*

This question was the first of 12 subjective questions. The researcher assumed that Savannah, Georgia, would be the favorite location of every participant. However, as will be noted in chapter 4, not a single participant named Hunter Army Airfield as their favorite duty station.

4. *What made you raise your right hand and enlist/commission into the military?*

The researcher assumed that there would be a wide range of reasons that people entered into the military and similar reasons that kept them in military service. The researcher wanted to know if the participant's initial enlistment was voluntary or was due to the draft in the 1960's.

5. *Were you a Christian prior to entering the military?*

The researcher made no assumptions about the participant's timeline for claiming Christianity. However, the researcher assumed that each participant at the time of the interview had become a Christian at some point pre, mid, or post-military service.

6. *How did faith play a role in your military service?*

The researcher assumed that somewhere along the participant's journey there was an intersection of faith and personal experience. The experience was assumed to be a crisis point or a major life-marker such as marriage.

7. *Why did you decide to retire near an Army military installation?*

The researcher assumed that the participant's desire to be in close proximity to the military was the reason for retiring near Hunter Army Airfield and several other Air Force and

Navy bases within a short drive. Each participant's answers were different, but none of the responses to this question named HAAF as the reason for their choice.

8. *Why do you remain involved in an Army chapel when there are so many great civilian churches in the area?*

Savannah is called a "city of churches". There are churches of various flavors on almost every corner in the local area surrounding Hunter Army Airfield. The researcher assumed that military retirees had deep, personal reasons for continued attendance at a military chapel.

9. *Do you have any personal relationships with current active duty soldiers?*

The researcher assumed that except for a few highly engaged retirees, the vast majority of the participant's did not have relationships with active duty soldiers. It was assumed that the participants desired to have a connection with active duty personnel, but were not able to make the connections through chapel attendance.

10. *Would you be willing to spiritually mentor a young soldier?*

This question provided the researcher an understanding of the participant's personal spiritual confidence. The researcher assumed that some participants would not feel comfortable responding positively to this question due to their lack of Biblical literacy or discipleship training. The researcher also assumed that each participant was a mentor to junior enlisted men and women at some point in their military careers. The researcher wanted to determine if a lack of confidence was due to the participant's insecurity with mentorship capabilities, personal spiritual growth, or a combination of the two.

11. *Are you comfortable engaging in dialogue with “Generation Z” soldiers?*

The researcher assumed that dialogue between participants and Generation-Z persons would include, but not be limited to, interaction with extended family members. The question opened-up dialogue about communicating to a digital generation. The researcher assumed that most participants would feel comfortable speaking to young soldiers and other Generation-Z people, but had not been trained to do so.

12. *What is one spiritual life-lesson that you learned from your time in service that you wish you could tell a “Generation Z” soldier?*

The researcher assumed that participants had at least one spiritual moment in their career or one big insight that had been distilled over the course of many years in uniform. It was further assumed that a recounting of this lesson would be an easy story for the participant to tell, opening up a portion of their memories that could be helpful to young soldiers and families.

13. *How can you as an individual best support soldiers and families?*

This question was designed to confront the participant to move from theoretical dialogue to practical application. It was assumed that participants would not think outside of the box, but would provide the researcher with activities that the participant had done or was currently doing to support the military.

14. *Do you or did you ever have a spiritual mentor?*

The military chain of command structure includes mentors at all levels of the rank infrastructure. This affords every military member the opportunity to both lead those with less experience and be led by those with more experience. The researcher did not assume that the participants had a spiritual mentor, but did assume that they had military mentors throughout

their careers. The researcher also assumed that each participant would understand the benefit of having an experienced Christian to teach, coach, and mentor a younger Christian.

15. *Would you be willing to learn how to be a spiritual mentor?*

The researcher clarified the conceptual framework of this question and its non-recruiting nature. It was assumed that the answer to this question would be varied, but that the majority of participants would see the benefit of training to be a spiritual mentor. It was also assumed that some would not desire to participate in training for various personal reasons.

### **Conclusion**

The research interviews provided the information that this project was designed to uncover. The military retirees that participated in this study were honest, sincere, and interested in the subject matter. The research data was sufficient to move forward with proposals for future programs to address the gap and empower the retirees with discipleship skills. Furthermore, the participants of this study were encouraged to tell their story and use it to help young soldiers and families.



## **Chapter 4: The Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the results of the research project and its impact on the problem addressed in chapter one. The problem researched was the gap between military retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel and the needy young soldiers and families that could benefit from a spiritually mentoring relationship. Military retirees that attend the Hunter chapel are generous and want to give back to soldiers, but young soldiers have privatized their faith and retirees have a difficult time connecting with them. Thus, the researcher interviewed 10 military retirees with questions that analyzed the generosity, life-experiences, and the mentorship capability of the retired military participants and how they could intersect with the spiritual resiliency of young soldiers.

#### **Evaluation of the Problem: How Does This Reflect the Research Proposal?**

The intervention plan analyzed the phenomenon of the shared experience of military service that transcends generations and could provide the impetus for developing cross-generational spiritually mentoring relationships. All aspects of the intervention plan focused on the thesis: Army retirees at the HAAF Chapel will gain the confidence and the basic skills necessary to form spiritual mentoring relationships with younger soldiers through a constructivist interview and back-brief process.

The ultimate goal of this study was to help the older generation interact with young soldiers and form relationships that could potentially improve personal and spiritual resiliency. The intervention plan focused on the retiree's potential ability and willingness to participate in training that would give them skills and confidence, but it did not analyze the long-term effectiveness in application of a discipleship program.

The perceived lack of communication between the two groupings was analyzed through 3 simple questions:

1. Why do these retirees continue to come to the same chapel for 25 years?
2. What was it the retirees were receiving that kept them coming back week after week, year after year?
3. How can the longevity and dedication of these retirees be used to reach out to young soldiers?

The 3 simple questions were then expanded into 15 interview questions designed to provide the participant with an increased confidence in telling their personal, military story. The hypothesis was that all new phenomenon is often old phenomenon happening to a new generation. A validation of this experiential bias was the implementation of an interview process to be used as both an information gathering device and teaching tool. Each question was asked in a certain order so that the retiree would both see their personal story as applicable to the younger generation of soldier and to ascertain their desire to move forward with training that would adequately prepare them for becoming a spiritual mentor. Directly after the interview, the researcher encouraged the participant to have confidence in their ability to impact young soldiers and families by becoming a spiritual mentor.

The phenomenological problem that was perceived by the researcher and outlined in the research proposal was proven valid. The research validated the gap between a retiree's desire to help young soldiers and the absence of interpersonal interaction skills necessary to form discipling relationships with young soldiers. In fact, 70% of the participants did not have a single relationship with a current active-duty soldier. However, 100% of the participants expressed a desire to help young soldiers and families.

## Evaluation of the Research

### Scope

The scope of the thesis project could not address all issues or train all areas, nor could it guaranty successful interaction between retirees and young soldiers. However, it addressed a huge gap that existed at HAAF. A constructivist interview and back-brief process was used for the research. This approach inherently provided measurable results, in that, the participants walked through their own experiences and drew their own conclusions. The research questions were specifically designed to lead the participant down the path of self-discovery. This was done by asking a line of questions that focused both on the participant's love for soldiers and the value of their experiences to help the current generation of soldiers successfully navigate military life.

### Relevancy

There were several areas of evaluation at the conclusion of the field research that proved the relevancy of the thesis from both the researcher's and the participant's perspective. Although the researcher received verbal affirmation of both the problem and the potential solution, it was theoretical until credible evidence could be obtained through qualitative research. The affirmation came both from colleagues and from participants.

The thesis of this project from the perspective of the relevancy to the participants can be broken-down as follows:

#### **Army retirees at the HAAF Chapel will gain the confidence.**

The average retiree wants to give back to the military for reasons that super-cede that of their civilian counterparts or constructs. However, as was evidenced by the interviews, most military retirees lack the confidence necessary to initiate a relationship with a Generation-Z soldier. This is not indicative only of military retirees, but could possibly reflect the very same

insecurities that non-military retirees have interacting with non-military Generation-Z individuals. The participants affirmed this tendency.

### **Gain the skills necessary to form spiritually mentoring relationships**

The participants indicated the importance of mentoring relationships as a part of military service. Every participant served in the military long enough to have a vast number of professional mentoring relationships. Since all participants were involved in the chapel ministries at HAAF, there was unanimous acknowledgement regarding the relevancy of spiritual mentoring and the spiritual need of young soldiers.

### **Through a constructivist interview**

A constructivist interview allows the participant to analyze their personal experiences from which they can construct models and meanings. This project utilized questions that not only asked for historical explanations, but also allowed the participants to self-reflect. The researcher designed the study to be relevant to both the participant and the young soldiers and families that could be impacted by the improved intergenerational communication. Although the research did not ask for participants to commit to participation in a mentorship training class, it did ask that they affirm or deny their likelihood of attending and benefitting from such training.

### **Through a back-brief process.**

The last interview question led to a conversation between the participant and the researcher. This allowed the researcher to encourage the participant and express gratitude for their years of faithful service to their country. The back-brief did not discuss data from any other participant, but used the data submitted from the current interview.

### Phenomenological validity

The data was mined for similarities that would account for themes running through all participant's responses. Ninety percent of the sample of retirees expressed an interest in learning how to become a spiritual mentor if the training was made available. This not only validated the presupposition that military retirees altruistically support young soldiers, their interest also suggested that new programming could be successful.

### **Reliability of the Participants**

Personal relationships could have caused a bias between the researcher and the participants. The potential bias was eliminated first by a random selection of the individuals chosen for the study from a larger list of potential retiree participants. This was done by listing all participants under their pseudonym, randomizing the list of pseudonyms, and then contacting the first ten people. The potential participants were contacted over the course of one week. If someone was not available to meet or did not respond to the researcher's call, the subsequent names on the list were called. There was not an order of merit list or a by-name targeting of individuals to which the researcher was friendly or familiar.

The interview format was standardized and formal in nature for all participants, further removing bias. The researcher did not base his questions or lack of questions from a personal or relational standpoint. After some pleasantries, the interview began with a formal review of informed consent, format for the interview, and verbal recognition of a recording device.

The interviews sequentially asked each of the fifteen research questions and allowed the participant to fully answer each question, even if the researcher knew the answer from prior conversations. Although all questions were asked individually from one to fifteen, some participants answered more than one question despite not knowing or seeing the questions that

were a part of the research project. Every participant was asked every question regardless of prior answers or of time constraints.

### **Reflection of the research proposal**

The research provided adequate data to suggest the implementation of programming that could adequately train retirees and implement that training to intersect with young soldiers and families. The research also provided a venue through which the researcher could lead the project's 10 military retirees through a series of questions designed for personal reflection and a constructivist outcome, allowing the participants to analyze their personal experiences from which they could construct personal models and meanings. Furthermore, the researcher was able to back brief each participant on the relevancy of their personal story to the modern generation and the potential impact they could have by becoming a spiritual mentor. The entire field research portion of the project was extremely encouraging and beneficial for both the researcher and the participants. The researcher gained knowledge and insight from the 200+ years of combined military wisdom and phenomenological insights. The participants gained an audience and a great appreciation for both the years they dedicated themselves in service to their country and their continued support of active-duty military personnel.

### **Analysis of the research data**

The following question were used for gathering relevant data from the participants in a standardized interview format. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and secured on a password-protected computer.

## **1. Please state the dates of your military service.**

### Data Gathering

Although the question could be answered quickly, the majority of participants took a few minutes to recount their career. The “get-to-know-you” question was not answered directly, likely because there is great American pride and patriotism attached to their time in uniform. Recounting the glory years of the past was somewhat therapeutic. This question, more than any other, allowed the participant to review their entire career in one broad brushstroke. It was designed to put the participant at ease with a simple question, but one whose answer is completely unique to a person’s own career.

### Grouping of Themes

The majority of the military retirees selected for this research began their service in the military during the 1960’s. This grouping showed that most of the participants volunteer for service during the United States’ involvement in Vietnam. Although not a research question, the majority of these participants deployed to combat in Vietnam at least once. Surprisingly, all of the participants volunteered for service during a time of involuntary conscription. Parental influence was the number one factor in 50% of the participant’s decision to enlist in the military. The second highest factor being money for college (20%). Only 10% of the participants joined out of patriotism and the exportation of democracy to struggling nations.

A second grouping that emerged from the research began their service in the military during the 1980’s. This accounted for 30% of the participants. They joined at a time when the military was reconstituting itself from the post-Vietnam malaise at the behest of President Ronald Reagan. The number one reason that this grouping joined was to pay for college.

The minority grouping (20%) enlisted during the later years of the Vietnam War in the early 1970's. This grouping enlisted due to limited options available to them upon completion of high school.

#### Disparate Answers/Slippages

This research question had zero slippages or disparate answers. All answers fell within the three decades of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's.

#### Silences

This research question had zero silences. All answers fell within the researcher's intended answer spectrum.

#### Processes

All information gathered in this research question was qualitative in nature. Although all participant's initial enlistment and retirement dates varied, they all served within a window of time from 1962-2012. The longest service of any of the respondents was 41 years, the shortest being 20 years and one month. The length of service beyond 20 years was not relevant the study, but the era during which the participants served on active duty was highly relevant to today's continuously deploying military. The relevancy and dignity that prior combat veterans can have upon the greater society of young soldiers cannot be understated, for they understand the fears and facts of deployment that contemporary soldiers face.

#### Issues and Anomalies

There were no issues or anomalies associated with this question.



## Summary

The researcher found significance in the three decades represented by the participants. The researcher also found the 250 combined years of military service to be an excellent source of primary data that was relevant to this study.

## **2. What was your military occupation specialty (MOS)?**

### Data Gathering

The researcher assumed that a certain percentage of participants would have been in combat arms specialties, such as infantry, armor, or engineer. However, there was no representation of these military occupational specialties. All of the participants selected for this study were in combat service support, such as logistics, repair, or aviation.

### Grouping of Themes

The MOS represented most (40%) in this research was aviation mechanics. This grouping was initially assumed relevant to the reason for which the choice was made to retire near an army aviation post, however, as will be discussed in a subsequent question, the proximity to aviation did not play a role in their homesteading decision. The reasons for this grouping fell outside of the scope of this study.

The second most represented MOS (20% each) was both logistics/supply and military law enforcement. This grouping of participants did not provide insight into areas important to this study.

The third most represented MOS (10% each) was signal support that changed mid-career to aviation. The researcher assumed that more of the respondents would have been pilots of some sort since HAAF specializes in aviation, but only one participant was a helicopter pilot.

Since all of the participants specialized in some area of combat service support roles, there was no primary data gathered from direct-action combat experiences. This theme mirrored the typical soldier that currently serves on active duty at Hunter Army Airfield, as the majority of units represented are combat service support. The only combat arms unit that resides on HAAF is a special operations tenant unit (1st Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment).

#### Disparate Answers/Slippages

The researcher was looking for commonalities between the military retiree and the modern-day soldier. All of the answers regarding participant's MOS provided a snapshot of the typical soldier located on HAAF. There were no disparate answers.

#### Silences

The responses of the participants covered all areas of the researcher's intended data gathering. Since the question was factually based upon individual experience, there was nothing missed by the participant's answers. The major silence was that there were no participants that specialized in direct-action combat arms. This is a silence because of the enormous difference in training, exposure to trauma, and the physical toll on the body.

The researcher spent the majority of his military career attached to special operations units and as a result has numerous, life-long physical injuries. Although beyond the scope of this study, the current relative physical health of the participants possibly reflects the nature of their career-fields in supporting roles. The beat-up and broken old infantrymen are not represented in this study due to the population of military retirees that support the Hunter chapel.

#### Processes

The qualitative data provided the researcher with potential insights based upon 100% of the respondent's occupational specialties in combat service support. Further research would be

necessary to determine the reason for the absence of participants in this study that specialized in combat arms.

#### Issues and Anomalies

The key issue illuminated by this research centered around the relevancy that the typical soldier that is assigned to HAAF has with the typical military retiree that supports the chapel ministry. The analysis of the data revealed that the participants have a great deal in common with young soldiers.

#### Summary

All soldiers share a common mission of supporting and defending the millions of Americans and people worldwide that benefit from their dedication. The researcher tried to find a common thread that would explain the bond, but it was not found in the occupational specialties of the participants.

### **3. Where did you serve and what was your favorite duty station?**

#### Data Gathering

The researcher assumed that most of the participants were attached to HAAF for a significant portion of their two decades of service, however, the data proved otherwise. Only 30% of the participants spent more than one tour at HAAF and over half had never been assigned to HAAF. Furthermore, 20% had never been assigned to HAAF or neighboring Fort Stewart. This finding was not expected.

#### Grouping and Themes

Since only 30% of the participants responded positively to being assigned to HAAF, this was the most common grouping. However, this did not provide the researcher with adequate data to discover a theme. The Army is a very big and vastly spread entity, as was the

participant's experience and favored duty station. Thus, the majority of participants (70%) had a favorite location unique to themselves. The broad array of experiences and career choices developed an individualized path for each person.

#### Disparate Answers

Except for the 30% of participants that served at HAAF and chose it as their favorite duty station, every other participant had a disparate answer. The wide array of favorite locations was not anticipated by the researcher. This highlighted the idiosyncratic nature of every military member's personal career path.

The broad spectrum of experiences the participants had throughout the two or more decades of service provided the researcher with a few unanticipated insights. First, HAAF and the Savannah, Georgia, area was not a favored location based upon military service, nor a prerequisite for retiring in close proximity. Further research would be required to determine whether or not this is normal for military retirees that are involved in chapels at other military installations. Second, each individual had a completely unique journey and personal experiences while serving in the military. Their careers had differing assignments unique only to them, but in their retirement, they all were able to assimilate into the civilian dichotomies of Savannah. The broadness of their assignments translated into broadness of their favorite duty station. The third insight from the disparate answers was that the Army can send its soldiers anywhere it wants to send them, and soldiers learn how to cope with pleasant and less than ideal locations. Perhaps this is how all of the participants chose to homestead near a less than desirable location in close proximity to HAAF.

Given that the majority of participants do not list HAAF as their favorite duty station, the participants continue to operate under the notion that "home is wherever the army sends me".

The disparate answers provided the researcher an awareness that the coping mechanisms necessary to be successful in a career-field requiring the adaptability to move to new and less than ideal location every few years are the same coping mechanisms that 70% of the participants used in the decision to retire in the Savannah, Georgia, area and attend the Hunter Chapel. This is exemplified by a dear widow that faithfully attended an army chapel at Fort Meade, Maryland, for 50 years before moving to Georgia for medical reasons. She has had perfect attendance at the Hunter Chapel since she moved to live with her son in Savannah.

### Silences

The reality of being a soldier in the US Army is that the army most often makes choices irrespective of the soldier's preferences. The army issues uniforms to wear, equipment to carry, vehicles to drive, parachutes to jump, and places to live. In the army's great wisdom, the normal cycle for a soldier is to move to a completely different location every few years. It is a very rare case in which an active-duty soldier stays at one location for extended periods of time. The servicemen and their families learn how to adapt to a new home that the army provides, a new town, a new school, new friends, and new community of worship. The participants did not catch the irony of their choice to settle in Savannah, despite it not ranking as their favorite duty location. There was not one person that realized that they preferred other locations, but adapted to Savannah for reasons unique to themselves. The ability of families to adapt to the whims of the army is captured by the colloquial saying, "Home is where the Army sends me".

### Processes

The qualitative data provided the researcher with potential insights based upon a wide range of the respondent s duty locations and that which was their favorite among them. The

interpretation of this data was simple, in that, every army journey is unique, and every soldier learns to be highly adaptable to his environment.

### Issues and Anomalies

Spending a military career traveling from location to location and finally homesteading at a less than ideal location is ironic. The army told the participants where to live for over 2 decades, yet when given the chance to choose the best location to settle-down they did not seek their favorite location.

### Summary

The researcher discovered an anomaly as a result of this research question. Researcher's bias wrongly assumed that all participants wanted to settle in Savannah, Georgia, however, the data proved otherwise. The data proved that soldiers are trained to adapt to any situation, and they are able to transfer their adaptability to their post-military, civilian life.

### **4. What made you raise your right hand and enlist/commission into the military?**

#### Data Gathering

The majority (70%) of the individuals surveyed began their service during the period of time in which our nation was embroiled in the Vietnam conflict. Throughout the several years of combat operations in Vietnam, there were 57,939 US military members killed and many more changed forever with life-altering injuries. This would be the last time the US invoked involuntary conscription, however, none of the participants were drafted. Although beyond the scope of this project, interesting phenomenological data may be found in the connection that volunteerism has in common with a 20 or more-year career during a national draft.

## Grouping and Themes

This research question uncovered four distinct groupings given for motivation to enlist. First, 30% of participants cited family tradition. All participants in this grouping had at least one of their parents serve in the military. Some noted that siblings, uncles, and grandparents also served. The researcher has observed and noted that second generation military members have a generally positive view of the military as a result of their parent's ability to rear them amidst a military lifestyle.

The second grouping of participants (40%) finished high school, but had no purposeful direction after graduation. Parental influence drove them to enlist in lieu of finding a job and moving out of their parent's home. One participant in this category noted racial tensions and not a lot of other opportunities in his hometown for a young man of his particular race. Racial barriers are beyond the scope of this study, but could provide insight into career military members amidst racial segregation, as race was a tertiary reason for enlistment of this participant.

The third grouping (20%) had college scholarships to play sports, but lost the scholarship due to injury or personal issues. The military provided for them a means through which to continue their college aspirations. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine whether or not they completed their education.

The final grouping (10%) cited childhood dreams of flying as their motivation to join the military. This participant was able to fly a number of different aircraft platforms throughout his career. This is significant to the study only because of career aspirations prior to a military obligation.

The phenomenological data that stands out most is the voluntary nature of 100% of the retirees that participated in this study. The significance can be found in their decision to better their lives through military enlistment, 70% of which enlisted during a time of extremely high levels of combat deployment. Furthermore, these participants weighed the options and determined that military service's benefits outweighed the probability of deployment to a hot war zone.

Today's newest soldiers enter service understanding that America has been engaged in combat operations in the Middle East for the last 2 decades. Many new recruits were not born prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Thus, they have grown-up knowing only a military at war rather than a peacetime military. The researcher notes that the reasons for enlisting and the conditions under which young people enlist today have a great deal of similarity to the majority (70%) of those interviewed for this research. This phenomenological insight may build the bridge between the modern-day soldier and the well-seasoned retiree. This bridge is an absolute necessity for two warriors from different generations to form personal and spiritual connections.

#### Disparate Answers

Only one participant cited national pride and the exportation of democracy as a motivation for military service. It was assumed that national pride was a factor in all of the participants, but it was only stated by one person. The exportation of democracy is a political notion that is not a part of this research. The one participant that cited this reason for enlisting also noted that he wanted to see the prosperity of America enjoyed throughout the world.



## Silences

The largest silence was any form of compulsory service imposed upon any of the participants. Researcher bias wrongly assumed that there would be at least a few participants that were drafted in the 1960's.

## Processes

The qualitative data obtained from the research allowed for four distinct groupings that spanned from 1962-2012. The data provided the researcher the ability to analyze the experiences of individuals and observe the similarities. The motivation to enlist in the military across the generations was similar, despite the difference in decades, which is as follows: 60% joined in the 1960's, 10% joined in the 1970's, and 30% joined in the 1980's. The national conditions under which 100% of the participants enlisted are not dissimilar to those under which a soldier enlists today.

## Issues and Anomalies

The only anomaly of interest to this research is in the area of national pride. The researcher assumed a high level of patriotism in all of the participants, but it was not orally expressed.

## Summary

The reasons for enlistment did not provide the necessary data to determine the connection between reasons for joining and the decision to serve in the military as a career. However, there was enough data to show that the reasons for joining the military are inter-generational, in that, the same reasons for joining the military are similar throughout the generations. This phenomenological data shows the relevancy of the military retiree to the modern-day soldier.

## **5. Were you a Christian prior to entering the military?**

### Data Gathering

The vast majority (90%) of the participants claim to have been a born-again Christian prior to their military service. Among those who claim Christianity, 20% stated that they were nominal in their beliefs, having drifted away from Christian beliefs and practices. Still yet, 80% stated that Christianity was part of their familial pattern while growing-up in a Christian household. Only 10% of the data came from a participant that was not a Christian prior to entering the military.

### Grouping and Themes

The data was broken-down into subgroups based on denominational leanings in their pre-military lives. There was 40% of the participants who grew up in a Catholic home and continue to attend mass every week. There was 50% of the participants that claimed Protestantism, however, only 20% of the participants claimed a specific denomination (Baptist and Methodist). Only 10% of the participants claimed to have grown up going to church, but had no conversion experience until they were on active duty status.

One major theme that the research revealed was that 90% of the participants were raised in a Christian home. This is significant in its implication for Christian families and those that attend chapel services. This theme bolsters the claim of Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it” (NIV).

As noted in chapter 2, being a Christian and being a soldier are not mutually exclusive, but can be congruent. This phenomenon can be seen in the 90%:10% split in those who claimed Christianity and those that didn't. The 90% retained their faith throughout their service time and never lost track of their faith. However, there was for over half a slow drift away from their

faith, followed by a sudden need for spiritual renewal. This vivification was due to a new wife or an enduring mother.

#### Disparate Answers

Since only 10% of the sample size answered “no” to this question, this can be seen as a slippage. The slippage did not affect the data analysis.

#### Silences

A major silence in the data is any discussion about adherence to Christian doctrines while serving in the military. The researcher realized the reality of this silence and its implication upon which the problem resides. The participants did not reflect upon the spiritual struggles they had as a Christian and a young soldier. Armed with that ammunition, it would stand to reason that retirees would want to inform and shield young soldiers from the same challenges they faced. The very heart of this research is to establish a recognition of this need and the motivation to fill the gap.

#### Processes

The qualitative data gathered as a result of this question provided the researcher with conclusive proof that being a successful Christian and concurrently a successful soldier is completely possible. This analysis does not address the difficulty of living the Christian lifestyle while in uniform, just that the possibility exists. The study does, however, show that sample selection of military retirees was able to maintain and even improve their faith throughout the decades of 1960's-2010's.

The participants that entered the service with a Christian background (90%) were very confident in their alignment with Christian doctrine and practices pre, mid, and post career. The researcher noted that it was very easy for an affirmative answer on their status as a Christian.

The researcher also noted that the participants that self-selected Catholicism (50%) stated that they attended mass regularly while in uniform, whereas, the remaining respondents claimed to have come from a Christian home.

#### Issues and Anomalies

One key issue found in the answers given by the participants required more than a simple, “yes” or “no”. The format of the interviews allowed for each question to be answered in as many or as few words as deemed necessary. Unsurprisingly, each person recounted either their familial upbringing or their marital status as impetus for their faith. The researcher’s bias assumed that some would have found their faith while amidst the stresses of the military, but only 10% of the participants found their faith while on active duty.

#### Summary

The participants of this study were not required to be born-again Christians, however, 100% of the military retirees professed to be Christians. The majority of their faith decisions occurred prior to their enlistment.

### **6. How did faith play a role in your military service?**

#### Data Gathering

Among all of the questions asked by the researcher, this question required the healthiest portion of introspection. A few of the participants indicated that they had never thought about the impact faith had on their military careers, but were able to think back and find at least one instance of their faith intersecting with their career. The majority were quickly able to answer because faith had a large impact on their service time.

## Grouping and Themes

There was a 90% positive response to this question. Only 10% of the participants indicated that they did not practice their faith while in the military. Among those surveyed for this research, 30% indicated that their faith played a significant part of the way they treated people regardless of rank. This group reported that their Christian faith allowed more compassion for others and fostered a less harsh leadership methodology. The older army allowed for harsh rhetoric, negative reinforcement, and physical punishment; but 30% of the participants stated that their Christian faith forced them to see the human dimension and treat fellow service members with dignity and respect.

The most important grouping from the interview process was the 60% of participants that indicated that faith was an integral part of their lives and allowed them to successfully navigate the challenges of the military lifestyle.

The major thematic element that was important for this study was the intersection of faith and military career. For the 90% that responded positively to this question, faith had a major impact on their military careers. This thematic element is important to highlight, as it may provide motivation for military retirees to share their experiences with the younger generation of soldiers that face similar military stressors.

## Disparate Answers

Only 10% of the sample size responded negatively to this research question. Some military members abandon their faith while in uniform, only to re-engage in religious activities upon retirement.

### Silences

The participants in this study clearly understood the importance of faith and its impact on all areas of life. The majority of participants saw this reality manifested in their military careers. The silence in this question is the gap between young soldiers and the retiree's life-story. Faith has become so privatized in modern culture that many individuals are afraid to tell of their personal faith journey for fear of retribution.

### Processes

The qualitative data from this question indicated that faith played a major part in the military careers of those that participated in this study. This data-point is helpful in developing processes that give military retirees the platform to share this with the current generation of soldiers. The gap lies between this important data that is known by the retiree's experiences and the newest generation of soldiers and families.

### Issues and Anomalies

The anomaly among the participants of this study was the 10% that indicated that faith did not play a role in their military service. This anomaly may be an outlier that does not represent reality. However, the researcher's experience indicates that there has always been a segment of soldiers that verbally indicate adherence to Christian faith, but do not allow their faith to intersect with their career. This group never wants to show vulnerability amidst their peers or subordinates.

### Summary

True faith will influence all areas of life. The participants overwhelmingly stated that faith played a role in their military service. The pressures of modern culture have created a toxic environment in which faith has become overly privatized. Military retirees did not face the same

anti-religious pressure; however, today's soldier can greatly benefit from hearing the story of faith and experience.

## **7. Why did you decide to retire near an Army military installation?**

### Data Gathering

The researcher assumed that all participants chose to retire near HAAF in order to retain access to the military health treatment centers, commissary, post exchange, and chapels. However, not even one participant interviewed for this research indicated any of the aforementioned researcher biases. The researcher assumed that military retirees that homestead near HAAF did so to stay in-touch with the army. Furthermore, the researcher assumed that this same group attended an army chapel for similar reasons.

### Grouping and Themes

There were 4 specific groupings of note. First, 50% of the participants named extended family that lived in the Savannah area as a reason for settling in close proximity to HAAF. Second, 20% of the participants stated that their spouse was from Savannah as the greatest influence on their retirement location. Job opportunities after the military was also indicated by 20% of the participants. The fourth grouping was the 10% that settled in Savannah due to their wife's career.

The researcher's assumptions were incorrect. An overwhelmingly specific 100% of all participants did not list access to HAAF as a reason to retire in the Savannah area. The incongruity between the researcher's biases and reality do not in any way diminish the thesis topic, but it does undermine the preconceived notion that being near soldiers is the number one reason for retirement in close proximity to an army installation. Although not the first motivation, being near the army was a secondary or tertiary reason for settling in Savannah.

### Disparate Answers

There were no outliers in response to this research question. Each participant listed family or job placement as reasons for settling in the Savannah area.

### Silences

The greatest silence in responses was the researcher's assumption that the Savannah area was chosen as a retirement location due to the close proximity of the military installation. However, the participants of this study continue to utilize many of the benefits given to military retirees with post access. Also, of note, there was also no mention of the chapel or chapel programs listed as a part of the decision-making process.

### Processes

The qualitative data gathered from this question fell into 4 distinct groupings, which are as follows: personal extended family, wife's extended family, job placement, and wife's job. These were specific reasons for settling in Savannah and not at all how the researcher assumed the participants would answer this question.

### Issues and Anomalies

The key issue illuminated from this question is that the close proximity to soldiers was not listed as an integral part of the decision to settle in Savannah, Georgia.

### Summary

Although the research showed that a close proximity to soldiers was not part of the decision-making process, the reality of military retirees continuing to attend army chapels is not in any way diminished. However, it could be that their lack of involvement with young soldiers and families is directly proportional to their lack of determination to retire close to HAAF.



## **8. Why do you remain involved in an Army chapel when there are so many great civilian churches in the area?**

### Data Gathering

The data gathered does not correlate with civilian church demographics, but is completely unique to the military chapel setting due to 100% of the participants surveyed for this research were retired veterans that attend a military-specific chapel. However, when one considers whether or not one “goes to church on Sunday morning”, the local church and the post chapel are synonymous. The reasons given for attending the Hunter Chapel as opposed to civilian churches outside of the military installation revolved around their unique entrance-gate access, status as having 20 years or more of active federal service, and the military-focused chapel services that are led by military chaplains.

### Grouping and Themes

The participant’s answers to this question can be grouped into three categories. First, 60% of the participants stated that they support chapel programs because they assume that by doing so they are supporting soldiers. Secondly, 30% indicated that they attended the chapel because it better reflected their personal views. Lastly, 10% said their support of the chapel was due to chaplain incompetence in the past and their desire to make certain that the ministry continues amidst that incompetence.

A major theme running throughout the participant’s responses was that a military chapel gives the retiree more spiritual guidance and comfort than a civilian church. While it is true that an army chapel can support the needs of soldiers and their families, retirees, and DOD civilians in unique ways, the military chapel is in no ways equal to the local church. The slight edge that a military chapel has over the civilian church is that the bulk of both the congregation and the staff

know and understand the military context. This becomes very important during deployments and long training scenarios, but also important for those that spent their best years in the military.

A secondary theme that emerged from this question was that the chapel program is less segregated than the local churches. It is true that most chapel congregations tend to be more interracial and intergenerationally integrated. Chapel attendance tends to be more ethnically diverse than civilian churches in the Savannah area.

Although not many retirees offer their absolute support to the chapel programs, there are a few that live by the phrase, "US Army retired. Still serving proudly". This small remnant of veterans tends to volunteer for every event and attend the chapel programs, waiting to be put to good use in whatever way they can be helpful.

#### Disparate Answers

The most interesting disparate answer was in regard to chaplain quality, integrity, and dependability. One participant said that he remained highly involved in chapel programs because of chaplain turn-over and the lack of interest many past chaplains had in doing a good job for the chapel programs. This participant felt that his ministry to the chapel was to either help the chaplain be the minister that he needed to be or to stand in the gap and perform the tasks that needed to be done for the chapel ministry. Unfortunately, this particular participant claimed that he has had to fill this gap often over the last few decades. He further stated that he has seen several chaplains that were unhappy with their assignment and caused the chapel attendance to significantly decrease.

#### Silences

The greatest silence in the research data was the personal, spiritual growth of the participants. All participants in some way wanted to give back to the military and retain the

connection that they still feel with today's warfighter. However, this desire could reflect misplaced loyalty if their altruism comes before their own spiritual growth.

#### Processes

The qualitative data gathered from this research question further suggests that military retirees want to retain a connection with the military that made them the person that they became. The chapel provides them an easy continuity of religious practice that they are comfortable with and a way to give back to those currently on active duty.

#### Issues and Anomalies

The data gathered from this question illuminates the key issue behind the loyalty that some military retirees have for the military. Chapel attendance allows them the opportunity to retain a connection with their past and a way to support those who have replaced them in the formations. The chapel services provide familiar surroundings and a place to give back to young soldiers and families through both volunteering time and charitable donations.

#### Summary

The researcher assumed that retirees attending Hunter Chapel do so to retain a connection with active duty soldiers. The researcher also assumed that the charitable donations the chapel receives each week are given by retirees to support young soldiers and families. Both biases proved to be true based upon the research conducted.

### **9. Do you have any personal relationships with current active duty soldiers?**

#### Data Gathering

This question more than any other reached to the center of the problem. Well-intentioned retirees attend the Hunter Chapel in order to be close to active duty soldiers, but struggle to

engage with soldiers and have meaningful interactions. The majority (90%) of retirees reported that they did not have even one relationship with a young soldier or soldier's family member.

### Grouping and Themes

Three groups emerged from this research question. The first group (60%) was those who had no interaction at all with active duty soldiers. The second group (30%) worked in and around soldiers, but only casually interacted with soldiers in the workplace. The third group (10%) was those who had one or more personal relationships with active duty soldiers.

The theme revealed in this research project was that military retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel are not engaged in meaningful relationships with soldiers. This inquiry does not preclude any desire to be in a meaningful relationship, only the existence or lack thereof. An incongruity exists between the military retiree's desire to positively interact with soldiers and their absence of a tangible relationship.

### Disparate Answers

The military retirees that are actively involved in relationships with soldiers was only 10% of those surveyed. Positive self-identification as having a meaningful relationship with an active-duty soldier was a slippage in the data. The disparate answer from 10% of those surveyed represents the ideal, however, 90% of those surveyed do not have meaningful relationship even if they desire one.

### Silences

One very substantial reality that was not discussed by the participants was in the area of charitable donations. Many of the retirees generously give to the chapel ministries as a way to support soldier programs and activities. The retirees are generally in a better financial position than they were when they were young soldiers and have more disposable income. When they

give, they do so to support the ministries of chaplains that daily interact with soldiers. This, for some, is the most connected they will be with young soldiers. No participant responded to the question with the linkage between charitable giving and interpersonal relationships between retirees and soldiers.

### Processes

The qualitative data from this study found that 90% of those surveyed need help and guidance in regard to having relationships with the current generation of soldier. The qualitative data also found that only 10% of the retirees surveyed have active connections with soldiers, but would benefit from further training.

### Issues and Anomalies

The key issue is that retirees are not meaningfully connecting with young soldiers. Only 10% are actively engaging in ministering from a place of experience. Unfortunately, the research revealed that retirees struggle to have meaningful interactions with young soldiers.

### Summary

In summary, there is an army of military retirees available to mentor young soldiers that live by the motto, “US Army retired. Still proudly serving”. Moreover, the retirees that attend the Hunter chapel are willing to get involved in whatever way that they can. The gap is woven between the retiree’s volunteerism, training, and meaningful interaction.

## **10. Would you be willing to spiritually mentor a young soldier?**

### Data Gathering

The majority of participants did not know what a spiritual mentor does or the qualifications to become one. Most participants indicated that they did not feel qualified to help someone spiritually. However, 60% of the participants indicated a willingness to spiritually

mentor a soldier if the opportunity presented itself. More than half of those willing did not feel qualified, but were willing if they were able to work out personal issues beforehand. A minority (30%) of the participants indicated that they would not at all be interested in becoming a spiritual mentor. An even smaller minority (10%) indicated that they were already mentoring young soldiers.

### Grouping and Themes

Three distinct groups emerged from this question. The first group was composed of those who were ready and willing to spiritually mentor a soldier. This group was small and actively involved in mentoring at the time of the interview. The second group was composed of those willing to be a spiritual mentor if given the proper training and time to prepare. The third group was not at all interested in becoming a spiritual mentor due to age or personal qualifications.

The most common theme from the participants was a lack of self-confidence in their qualifications or personal lives. In fact, 80% of those surveyed did not feel competent in their Bible knowledge or spiritual qualifications to give advice. This data was very helpful to the thesis intervention plan, in that, the researcher perceived that there was a lack of spiritual confidence in the targeted audience.

A second theme from the participants was a desire to first get themselves to a better spiritual position prior to becoming a spiritual mentor. The participants revealed an insecurity in their own spiritual preparedness. Spiritual discussions revealed a great irony in the vulnerability in men who spent over two decades preparing for war, going to war, and studying the art of war. These were men who were willing to die for their country and voluntarily put themselves in harm's way to defend the freedom and liberty of people whom they did not personally know.

Yet, these brave men did not have the confidence to immediately volunteer to move from physical warfare to metaphysical and spiritual conversations.

A third theme from the participants was those who indicated that they had no interest in becoming a spiritual mentor because of age, spiritual aptitude, or availability. This theme exposed an unfortunate problem inherent in the military chapel ministry as opposed to the civilian church. Because chaplains only stay at a particular assignment for two or three years, the dis-continuity of leadership can cause a lack of spiritual depth. Also, there are no deacons, elders, or leadership positions at a military chapel for people to aspire to or be trained for. The military chapel has difficulty duplicating the discipleship process that is present in most healthy churches.

#### Disparate Answers

Unfortunately, the 10% of participants that were discipling active duty soldiers at the time of the interview were the exception, not the rule. The project was designed to expose this slippage if it existed. There is great strength in mobilizing military retirees to volunteer for soldier programs. They love soldiers and actively give to any worthy project that benefits soldiers because they were once in the same boots. However, when it comes to the most important part of a soldier's life, a relationship with Jesus Christ, there is an intimidation that keeps them from jumping in the line of spiritual fire as they would when real bullets are flying.

#### Silences

The majority of participants in this study did not recognize the irony of their participation in a military chapel, whose purpose it is to minister to soldiers and families, but their lack of involvement in the spiritual aspects that transcend donations of materials or time. The lack of

spiritual depth of military chapels is beyond the scope of this project, but one that would be beneficial to the deafening silences exposed in this research question.

#### Processes

The qualitative data from this study found that 70% of military retirees that attend the Hunter chapel were willing to become a spiritual mentor to a young soldier. The 30% that did not want to become a spiritual mentor was not a large enough percentage to cause concern. If a military chapel mobilized 70% of the retirees that attend, the benefits to the community would likely be staggering. Although the research was not designed to recruit, knowing that such a large percentage of retirees would be willing to become spiritual mentors could potentially benefit the chapel ministry.

#### Issues and Anomalies

Several issues came to light from this question. First, there are some retirees that just want to be consumers and do not feel ready to be involved in discipleship ministries. It may be their lack of confidence or their lack of personal, spiritual depth. This group tends to appreciate being ministered to, but are not personally at a place that they feel they can minister to others. Second, there are some retirees that are willing to get involved in the lives of soldiers if the opportunity presents itself. They may need some training or some time to get ready, but they are willing to at least try. Lastly, there are those that are already discipling soldiers and only need encouragement and resources to continue doing ministry.

#### Summary

Although the data gathered for this research does not exactly reflect all military chapels, it is generally true in most. Strong leaders can motivate parishioners to get involved in the lives of the younger generation, but it will never be an easy task. If the brave men who deployed to



hostile lands and exchanged gunfire with enemy combatants find it intimidating to engage friendly, young people on a spiritual level, the task must be a difficult and terrorizing.

### **11. Are you comfortable engaging in dialogue with “Generation Z” soldiers?**

#### Data Gathering

This question required more explanation than any other question and had to be re-phrased in the majority of interviews. Once the age variance from 18-25 years old was given, each participant was able to easily answer. All of the participants reported that they felt comfortable engaging with Generation-Z soldiers.

#### Grouping and Themes

Three groups emerged from this question. First, 70% of those surveyed indicated that they had Generation-Z grandchildren and reported no difficulty in communication. Second, 10% of those surveyed indicated good communication with young soldiers at his workplace. Third, 10% of those surveyed indicated weekly interaction with young soldiers as part of a ministry. Lastly, 10% of those surveyed reported an inability to communicate with or understand the younger generation.

A theme that ran throughout the interviews was a difficulty in communication due to the younger generation’s reliance upon electronics. This presented a massive gap in culture between the two generations. The general consensus among the participants was that they felt comfortable communicating with the younger generation if they could keep them from using their phones long enough for a conversation.

Another theme that ran throughout the interviews was the difference in learning styles that the younger generation has in comparison to past generations. The insight provided by the participants was that the younger generation has to be approached differently for there to be

effective communication. Past teaching models simply presented information and expected results. One participant phrased it well, “you have to talk to them not at them”. This truth has forced the army to create new teaching models in order to reach the Generation-Z soldiers and should be understood by the retiree desiring to communicate with young soldiers.

#### Disparate Answers

Only 10% of participants were not comfortable engaging in conversation with Generation-Z soldiers. The lack of comfortability comes from the difference in age and communication styles.

#### Silences

Although this question asked about the retiree’s personal comfortability, a few areas were not discussed during the interview process. These silences missed some important details and require a few additional questions. First, does the Generation-Z soldier want to receive advice from an old soldier? Second, will the Generation-Z soldier feel comfortable talking to an old soldier that retired at a high rank? And third, will interaction make any difference?

#### Processes

The qualitative data from this study found that an overwhelming majority of military retirees felt comfortable engaging in conversation with the younger generation due to having grandchildren that were generally between the ages of 18-25. However, most of the respondents agreed that interaction is different and difficult.

#### Issues and Anomalies

This question illuminated one key issue that requires further analysis. The average military retiree that attends the Hunter chapel has the skill and experience to dialogue with young

soldiers, but the intersection of the two becomes the problem. Further analysis is required to develop situations that pair the two together.

#### Summary

There is a communication gap between young soldiers and the average retiree. This gap in communication is part of the problem that this research addresses.

**12. What is one spiritual life-lesson that you learned from your time in service that you wish you could tell a “Generation Z” soldier?**

#### Data Gathering

This question was one that gave the participants the ability to give advice to a young soldier in a controlled environment. The answers were all different, providing a vast resource of lessons.

The following is a non-verbatim summary of the responses:

1. If you weren't brought up religious, look at religious people to see if you are missing out on something.
2. Traumatic experiences make you stop and think about life and death and can remind you of God's love for you.
3. There are so many opportunities to join a community of faith. There will be regret for those who do not practice their faith.
4. Visiting places in the Bible, like the holy land or the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, can give you comfort and let you know that everything is going to be alright.
5. During intense combat operations, promises are often made. Do not promise God something that you will not follow through.
6. I can do all things through Christ. He will take care of you.
7. Being involved in funerals makes you stop and think.

8. A few responses to this question were very personal to the respondent's experiences. For instance, one person recounted a time in Vietnam that by a random reflection of light he spotted a flaw in his helicopter's rotor blade. If he had not seen the flaw, the helicopter would have had a major malfunction while in the air. This gave him a different perspective on God's hand of protection.

### Grouping and Themes

Three groupings emerged from this research question. First, there was regret in some who did not practice their faith while in the military. As outlined in chapter 2, many young people do not practice their faith once they enter the military. This grouping advised young soldiers to take every opportunity to make faith an important part of their military career. The second grouping revolved around traumatic experiences and their ability to point to God's provision and protection. The final grouping (10%) could not narrow-down to one particular incident in their career.

One overwhelming theme was that faith is vitally important to life, both while in the military and afterwards. All of the participants of this study belonged to a community of faith at the time of their interview, however, 30% of the participants did not practice their faith while in uniform.

### Disparate Answers

There was only one answer from the study that could be defined as a slippage. One participant answered that there was not one particular spiritual life lesson that he learned and would want to share with a young soldier.

### Silences

There were no particular silences in this research question, as all responses were personal and specific to the individual's experiences and the spiritual meaning of those experiences.

### Processes

The qualitative data from this study found that 90% of the retirees interviewed for this research were able to recall a spiritual life-lesson that could benefit a young soldier. These lessons were not profound or revelatory, however, they were genuine lessons from life experience.

### Issues and Anomalies

This research question illuminated the key issue of the importance of aged and experienced men of faith telling their story to the younger generation. The wisdom of past generations will be lost forever if there is not a concerted effort to hear the stories and understand the lessons already learned. If the retired military chapel attendees share their phenomenological experiences, the subsequent generations will be better equipped to deal with contemporary problems.

### Summary

The Levitical law implored the young to "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God." (Leviticus 19:32, NIV). The respect was not just because of age, but because of experience. Older people have in prior decades successfully navigated many of the same pitfalls that young soldiers have today. The research showed that 90% of the retirees interviewed for this research had an important life-lesson to share with a willing audience.

### **13. How can you as an individual best support soldiers and families?**

#### Data Gathering

This question gave the participants the opportunity to be creative in their responses. Only 10% reported that he did not have enough information to know what soldiers needed. This was in contrast to the 90% that gave specific, tangible answers

#### Grouping and Themes

The answers can be grouped into two areas that were shared by one of the participants: shore-up and show-up. The first grouping focuses on shoring-up soldiers and families with resources and programming. Many retirees generously give to the chapel tithes and offerings as a means of shoring-up soldiers and families. The second grouping is showing up. This grouping moves from generosity with money to generosity with time.

The major theme that runs through this research question is that the military retiree is able to support soldiers and families through both time and resources. Furthermore, the majority of retirees expressed willingness to financially resource and personally volunteer at an event that supports soldiers and families. The majority of retirees are quiet professionals that are numerous, stealthy, and ready to be deployed into hostile territory to confront their fears. The research shows that all the majority of retirees need is a place, a purpose, and a plan.

#### Disparate Answers

There was only one slippage in this research question may have been an accidental misunderstanding. The respondent stated a lack of knowledge as to the needs of young soldiers. His confusion may have been due to thinking of specific material needs, as opposed to general and spiritual needs.

## Silences

The one reality known by the researcher and potentially missed by the participants of the study was the fact that every military retiree that attends Hunter Chapel has something that they can give back to soldiers and families. Financial donations are only a small part of the much larger picture used to shore-up ministries. The retiree community also needs to show-up in the lives of young soldiers.

## Processes

The qualitative data from this study showed that 90% of the participants had a means of supporting Soldiers and families. The most important discovery was that 100% of the participants could shore-up soldiers and families by donations of money and could show-up to chapel events and programs.

## Issues and Anomalies

The analysis is simple, in that, every military retiree that attends Hunter Chapel has both the ability to shore-up young soldiers and families with material support and show-up to events with voluntary support. The participants varied in specific areas of support, but over half responded that their best way to support soldiers was to listen to them and pass on personal, spiritual, and professional advice.

## Summary

The Hunter chapel sponsors several outreach events every year. This is done to reach out to the soldiers and families and let them know that there is a support system available to them. Numerous retirees volunteer to physically help with these events and interact with the attendees. This provides them the face-to-face contact that shows sincerity and vulnerability. These types of opportunities should be advertised, encouraged, and resourced.

#### **14. Do you or did you ever have a spiritual mentor?**

##### Data Gathering

All participants in this research reported that they did at one time in their lives have a spiritual mentor. However, only 30% had a spiritual mentor at the time of this research. Among the 70% of participants that did not currently have a mentor, half had not had a spiritual mentor for at least 3 decades.

##### Grouping and Themes

There were three groupings within the participants. First, 40% of those interviewed named a relative as their primary spiritual mentor. Second, 30% of those interviewed named a fellow service member as a primary spiritual mentor. The researcher did not ask if the family member was still alive. A local church men's groups was listed by 20% of the participants. Only 10% of participants had never had a spiritual mentor.

The majority (90%) of the participants had positive experiences being guided by a spiritual mentor at some point in their lives. However, some reported to not having a spiritual mentor since they were very young and very impressionable. Only a few of the participants were active in being mentored when interviewed.

##### Disparate Answers

The only slippage was given by the oldest participant (80+ years old). He had never had a mentor, but did see the benefit of having one. Interestingly, he was one of the few that also responded negatively to the potential of learning how to become a spiritual mentor.

##### Silences

The author researched the Hunter chapel's programming for the previous two decades and found that there had been no mentor training or discipling classes on record. Upon being



assigned to the Hunter chapel, the researcher also discovered that since the chapel was constructed in the 1960's, there had never been baptismal. This situation is indicative of the lack of depth that pervades many military chapel communities due to the transient nature of the profession.

### Processes

The qualitative data from this research question showed that almost every person (90%) interviewed for this project could look back on their lives and find one person that was a spiritual mentor to them. The hope for this project is that the memories of that one person who influenced them so greatly will motivate them to become mentors to others.

### Issues and Anomalies

This research addressed a few key issues. First, the topic of spiritual mentoring should be talked about and explored more thoroughly. Each person that was positively influenced by another person should take the time to see themselves in that role for someone else. It is not as much about age as it is about how a person with spiritual depth and insight can help the younger generation successfully navigate the many dangers of military life as a Christian.

### Summary

This study was more descriptive than it was prescriptive. The author wanted to identify the problem before offering a remedy. The problem being clearly identified that young soldiers would greatly benefit from having a spiritual mentor and the possible solution is to arm and mobilize an army of retirees for this task.

## **15. Would you be willing to learn how to be a spiritual mentor?**

### Data Gathering

The first 14 questions funneled into this last question which asked if the participant would be willing to learn how to be a spiritual mentor if the opportunity presented itself. The entire thesis being that given the proper tools and encouragement, military retirees will be empowered to become spiritual mentors to young soldiers. Tools and encouragement are nothing without the third and most important piece of the puzzle, which is a willingness and the personal security necessary to invest in discipleship ministry.

### Grouping and Themes

The majority of participants (90%) responded positively when asked if they hypothetically would like to learn how to be a spiritual mentor. Several expressed a few misgivings about their preparedness, but only 10% concluded that they were not willing or ready to undergo training.

The biggest theme that developed from this research question was the genuine willingness of the participants to not only be a part of this study, but also to consider learning how to relate to Generation-X soldiers. Volunteering for such a program would require time, effort, and emotions. Yet, 90% of the participants expressed willingness to learn.

### Disparate Answers

Only 10% of the participants would not be willing to participate in discipleship training. This slippage may be due to time, perceived personal abilities, or fear of relevance. The participant that did not want discipleship training was also the oldest and felt the useful to a younger audience.

## Silences

The greatest silence in this question was the lack of any program on record or training conducted in regard to discipleship and spiritual formation. This has led to a somewhat shallow approach to fellowship among the chapel attendees.

## Processes

The qualitative data obtained in this research showed that 90% of the participants would be willing to attend discipleship training if it was available. The majority of the participants have attended the Hunter Chapel for years with no training in spiritual formation and discipleship.

## Issues and Anomalies

There were no anomalies in this research question. The major issue that emerged was the need for training classes to be offered. This could be the remedy to the problem.

## Summary

The retiree population at the Hunter Chapel has not been adequately trained to spiritually mentor young soldiers. There is a need for mentors and a willing group of retirees. This question, more than any other, shows the retiree population as being a potential benefit to the chapel ministry. The participants of this research showed how crucial faith was to them during their military service and their willingness to learn how to share this with young soldiers.

## Conclusion

The research questions provided all of the data necessary to move toward the next steps required to solve the problem. The data was consistent with trends at other army chapels and in published literature. The resolution to this problem will be fully explored in chapter five.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will answer the question: “Where should the research regarding this problem go from here?” The problem explored in this research was a gap between the military retiree community that attends the Hunter Chapel and the young soldiers that need spiritual mentors who understands the military lifestyle. The research project interviewed 10 military retirees that have attended the Hunter Chapel for years in order to determine if their experience, generosity, and availability could be utilized to fill this crucial gap. Although the results of the participants conclusively determined that the vast majority (90%) would be willing to attend spiritual mentor training, this project does not predict the response of the larger body of military retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel.

This chapter will develop a plan of action that could be used to further explore the possibility of utilizing the participants that indicated an interest in learning how to become spiritual mentors to young soldiers. The concepts developed in this chapter will not just be applicable at Hunter chapel, but designed to be both general and specific. General in the sense that they can be universally applied to any military chapel setting and specific in the sense that they cover core principles that have been designed to move the Hunter Chapel retiree community from where they were at the time of this research to greater utilization for the specific chapel ministry at HAAF. This plan will utilize the 5 standard operating procedures (SOP) and 4 Lines of Effort (LOE) that were proposed in chapter 2’s review of literature, in which the researcher developed the SOP’s and LOE’s as potential building blocks for implementation of training designed around the unique aspects of military ministry, specifically at the Hunter Chapel.

## Lessons Learned

Three important and potentially impactful lessons were learned from this research project. Each lesson learned was integrally woven into the recommendations given for subsequent work on this subject.

### Lesson 1: Retirees Need Leadership Roles

The first lesson learned from this research was that the retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel are amazingly generous with both their time and money, but are not actively engaging with young soldiers on anything more than surface conversation. This problem has been compounded by the military chapel structure, in which there are not normal church leadership roles for long-term attendees. Due to the absence of elders and deacons, the military chapels typically do not provide discipleship or spiritual formation training designed to build leadership teams. The lack of formal, lay leadership encourages a consumer mentality amongst the most faithful retiree attendees. Even if the senior chaplain established a lay leader team, the next chaplain assigned to the garrison would reevaluate and potentially change it. Thus, the problem of consumerism can be pervasive and perpetual among even the most faithful attendees. This problem is not contained to the Hunter Chapel, as the Army Chief of Chaplains' Executive Leadership Council recently published an email stating that one of their priorities for reform across the army is, "enhancements to congregational leadership".<sup>69</sup> This first lesson encouraged the researcher to develop programs that would empower the faithful retiree base amidst the military chapel system to become equipped as spiritual mentors and to develop their ability to

<sup>69</sup> Thomas L. Solhjem, Chaplain (Major General) Chief of Chaplains. "Chief of Chaplains Update—Our Executive Leadership Council's Work on Community Revitalization." [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-occh.mbx.army-chief-of-chaplains@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-occh.mbx.army-chief-of-chaplains@mail.mil), 2020.

communicate with today's newest soldiers. Retirees need to be placed into leadership roles to both empower them and to extend the chapel's ministry capability.

## Lesson 2: Retirees Have Faith Insecurities

The researcher also learned that the majority of military retirees at Hunter Chapel have been Christians for decades, but have an insecurity in their personal qualifications, faith, and usefulness as a spiritual mentor to young soldiers. This insecurity was expressed by some of the participants that have been faithful attenders of Hunter Chapel and supporters of its programming for over a decade. The lack of confidence expressed by the participants in their position as believers in Christ and their ability to influence others in spiritual formation potentially points to a problem in their own spiritual formation. The majority of participants expressed an interest in helping young soldiers, but wanted to have time to get themselves in a spiritually healthy place prior to committing. The definition of "spiritually healthy" is subjective, but in this case refers to Biblical knowledge, prayer life, personal life, and dedication to living a Christian lifestyle. There is nothing wrong with a person that wishes to make personal improvements before they feel qualified to give spiritual advice. However, if the chapel is not providing for this definite gap in discipleship, the growing Christian should consider finding this resource elsewhere. The absence of discipleship or leadership classes in the past years of Hunter Chapel ministry programming is not unique to HAAF, but is an army enterprise-wide problem. This is precisely why the majority of military families with children and teenagers usually gravitate to the civilian churches that offer something more than a Sunday morning worship service. Young soldiers also tend to seek out churches that offer discipleship programs for their age demographic. The retirees are faithful and committed to the chapel, but the researcher concludes that without intervention an insipid shallowness of faith can cause a

lack of commitment or ability to minister to the young soldiers and families that should be a top priority of any army chapel.

### Lesson 3: Retirees Are Ready for Basic Training

Lastly, the researcher learned that the majority of retirees involved in this project were willing to attend a basic training program that would equip them with the tools they would need to become spiritual mentors. The researcher randomly selected the participants, of which 90% indicated an interest in learning how to become a spiritual mentor if the opportunity became available. The research suggests that the dozens of other retirees that attend the Hunter Chapel be queried to ascertain the overall commitment level for training in spiritual formation and mentorship techniques. Even if the commitment level is lower than the research suggests, a great team of mentors could be trained to minister to the thousands of soldiers that live and work at HAAF. Furthermore, training the retirees that have committed to the chapel for perpetuity will bridge the huge gap that occurs every few years when chaplain leadership changes. The retirees at the Hunter Chapel are ready for a basic training far different from the one they soldiered through so many years ago. This basic training will not be one of immediate reward, but one that looks forward to the ultimate reward that is only found in Jesus Christ.

### Application in Other Settings

The problem at the Hunter Chapel is not unique, but is a shared problem across the entire army-wide chapel ministry program. Part of the problem is the nomadic nature of the chaplaincy, wherein the chaplain spends a few years at each location improving his foxhole, only to be moved to a new battlefield. This movement of personnel is an unmovable piece of the intrinsic difficulty that leads to setbacks and restarts on a cyclical basis. A partial remedy for continuity of ministries that have been successful is a detailed notebook of all programs of

record. However, the incoming chaplain has the freedom to discard all records and advice in order to re-frame the chapel programs to his own liking. Often the only continuity in the chapel is the faithful group of retirees that continue to support the chapel through both famine and feast.

Another part of the problem that applies in other chapel settings is the lack of Biblical leadership that is the foundation of the healthy civilian church. Military chapels do not have lay leadership with decision-making roles, but can offer only their advice to the chaplain in charge. This research project ties the lack of the lay leadership training models of the church with the lack of mentorship model training for retirees who would be the elders and deacons in a civilian setting. However, the military regulations (AR 165-1) do not allow for leaders in the chapel aside from the chaplains. The regulations will likely not change to accommodate Biblical church leadership, but that does not mean that leaders cannot be developed from the faithful retiree population. Oftentimes, retirees are appreciated for their financial generosity and overlooked as ministry multipliers that can greatly impact the lives of hurting, young soldiers.

### A Way Ahead for the Hunter Chapel

#### **SOP #1: Support System**

A healthy community becomes proficient in building a social support system. The chapel exists to support soldiers and families both metaphysically through religious services and physically through a social support system. When a married soldier deploys, his family needs a social support system to manage all of unique aspects of military life. The chapel must be a place not just of worship services, but also one that intimately knows the needs of the congregation. Single soldiers need similar support systems whether in garrison or deployed. The majority of single soldiers are away from their parents for the first time and able to make their own decisions. A healthy chapel community has seasoned



military retirees poised and ready to help soldiers and families through the challenging decisions of military life. The Army Chief of Chaplains wrote in an email to the entire Chaplain Corps that said, “we must work together creatively and passionately, in order to build Stronger People, Stronger Connections, Stronger Communities, and ultimately a Stronger Army.”<sup>70</sup>

### **SOP #2: Outside Help**

A healthy community is not afraid to ask for help. There are numerous and redundant resources available to every soldier that needs help. These resources offer talk therapy and counseling services that are similar to what the chaplain offers, but administered in a secular framework. There are also mental health professionals, Military Family Life Counselors, social workers, substance abuse counselors, and more that offer quality counseling services that can be called upon when needed. The healthy chapel community does not try to do everything on its own, but uses the resources available to meet the needs of the chapel congregation. The research project showed that the majority of retirees are more than willing to help when asked, as are the numerous other wellness resources on a military installation.

### **SOP #3: Equip Volunteer Leaders**

A healthy community is built through equipping leaders. The research revealed a gap in the preparedness of the military retirees at the Hunter Chapel to be utilized for spiritual mentors. Since a healthy community is built through equipping leaders, the Hunter Chapel should develop programming and training that will find, fix, and finish all known

<sup>70</sup> Thomas L. Solhjem, Chaplain (Major General) Chief of Chaplains. “Chief of Chaplains Update—Our Executive Leadership Council’s Work on Community Revitalization.” [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-occh.mbx.army-chief-of-chaplains@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-occh.mbx.army-chief-of-chaplains@mail.mil), 2020.

deficiencies. Every military retiree that attends the chapel was a leader of troops at some point in their 20-year plus career. That leadership capability should be harnessed and utilized for the Gospel ministry and outreach to soldiers and families. Military members are familiar with leadership culture and the chain of command infrastructure, hence will be able to follow a competent leader.

#### **SOP # 4: Prevent Preventable Problems**

A healthy community works to prevent problems. There are innumerable problems that could develop in a chapel environment that would detract from worship services or discipleship opportunities. The faithful retirees should be utilized, trained, and empowered to make on-site corrections and provide good counsel to the garrison chaplain. Over the last few decades there have been numerous, preventable problems that could have been avoided if there was a centralized lessons-learned catalog. However, there is nothing in print that would foresee potentially preventable problems. The only source of continuity comes from the retirees that have faithfully attended the chapel for 20-25 years. The knowledge they contain could be greatly useful to the chaplain, should he choose to take the advice. The truth is simple, the average retiree has invested a good portion of their life to the Hunter Chapel. Some have said their marriage vows 50 years ago at the Hunter Chapel altar and others have raised their children to love the children's church ministry and the teacher who has been faithfully teaching the little ones for over 20 years. This dedication and institutional knowledge should be harnessed and capitalized upon to prevent preventable problems.

## **SOP #5: Change What is Broken**

A healthy community reforms the areas that aren't working. The Hunter Chapel is doing good ministry and making a difference in the HAAF community, but it can always do better. The area needing improvement analyzed for this project was the utilization and training of the retiree population to act as ministry multipliers in the area of spiritual mentorship. For years the average retiree has come to the Sunday worship services on time and left for home when the service concluded. The addition of fellowship meals directly after the service did not persuade the majority of retirees to stay after the service and interact with the soldiers and families. Reform needs to happen, and this project shows that there are retirees that are willing to grow in their faith and give back to the soldiers that they love with their time and emotional energy. The retirees are potentially the key to unlock the latent impact that the Hunter Chapel can have throughout the HAAF community by addressing what is broken and fixing it.

### Four Recommended Lines of Effort

#### **LOE #1: Develop Relationships**

Sincerity is everything to a Generation-Z'er and cannot be established without a relationship. When one of the participants was asked how he could support soldiers, he immediately said, "Sure up and show up". His response was simple, yet profound.

The very first element of relationship building between aged warriors and their contemporary counterparts is for institutional systems, programs, opportunities, training. There has to be a sure foundation that is unquestionably welcoming and meets an existential need in the soldier's life. Food is often a good draw for soldiers, as is childcare for the wife

of a deployed soldier. Whatever the element of surety develops into, it must communicate relevancy and have purposeful interaction between the generations.

The second element of developing a relationship between the retirees and soldiers is for the retiree to show up. There are multiple opportunities that the chapel plans each month and even more that the installation hosts which are a draw for soldiers and families. For instance, the Hunter Chapel showed up to the Independence Day celebration and fireworks by setting up a booth and offering free popcorn. The line was long, and it gave the chaplains and the few retirees that showed up an opportunity to interact with the community. It was a successful outreach, but could have been far more effective if more than a few retirees showed up. Programs must not only reach out to the soldiers, they must also reach out to the retiree population and appeal to their supportive, patriotic inner volunteerism.

## **LOE #2: Communicate Credibility**

Generation-Z'ers are not afraid to voice their opinion, nor are they opposed to others voicing an opposing opinion. During the course of the interviews, one participant said that he was "retired active-duty, still serving proudly". This particular retiree has attended the Hunter Chapel for 29 years since his retirement. He raised his kids in the chapel and gave his daughter to be married in its sanctuary. He and his wife make every effort to support soldiers and families, even volunteering as babysitters and marriage counselors. They love the military and have first-hand knowledge about deployments, reunions, marriage trouble, and spiritual growth amidst lethargic spiritual leadership. Their credibility and authenticity cannot be matched or impugned. The healthy chapel community must develop retirees that are committed to the ministry and obviously doing so for the benefit of the HAAF

community. Generation-Z'ers are smart enough to spot a phony and embrace a sincere, credible collaborator.

### **LOE #3: Remove the Fear of Failure**

Most retirees have stories of personal failure that led to new, enlightened responses. However, the majority of the participants in this project did not feel that they have moved beyond personal failure in their spiritual lives. The project revealed the great need for training spiritual formation to the retiree population. Since there are no leadership roles and no membership rosters in the military chapel, there are very few opportunities for the attendees to practice their faith through the chapel. One particular long-time attendee has taken up the responsibility of head usher. He takes his job very seriously and is a model for other retirees to follow. However, the insecurity of a person's spiritual life can create a Christian that doesn't feel comfortable interacting with someone about spiritual matters. Programs must focus on getting retirees involved in ministry opportunities that allow them to tell their story and express God's grace and forgiveness in their personal lives.

### **LOE #4 Equip Soldiers to Think Critically**

A mentor has the ability to speak truth into a life and challenge a soldier to think-out their particular problem. The retiree understands the challenges of being a soldier and can speak truth into the lives of those who now wear the combat boots. Personal stories, often called war stories, have a powerful impact on the younger generation and can teach them how to think critically. Face-to-face interactions and dialogue allow the retiree to share a part of themselves and allows the soldier to think on a level that is not muted by digital distractions. The aged warrior has made it through at least 20 years of soldiering, during which he was trained to think critically about every decision he made. This knowledge

should be harnessed and used to minister to the young men and women in uniform that desperately need guidance.

#### Final Thoughts

The researcher of this project loves the beautiful people that attend the Hunter Chapel. The congregation is diverse in age, race, backgrounds, and spiritual aptitude; but they come together each week to corporately worship God. They have encouraged the author immensely and impacted him for a lifetime. Although many new soldiers and families will pass through the chapel doors every year, the retiree base will continue to be both the legacy of the past and the promise of the future.

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