



Leo Ruiz

AMBUSH

We train our chaplains in hand-to-hand combat for their personal protection, not only for self-defense, but for the protection of the innocent. Pastor Joe McCormick, from Calvary Chapel Mountain View, Utah, brings a team of brothers to work with the chaplain cadets every year. The training-team have impressive resumes. To give you an idea of the caliber of these trainers, Leo Ruiz has achieved the highest level black belt a man can earn, and he is in the Martial Arts Hall of Fame. Chris Cunningham was a Marine Corps hand-to-hand combat instructor for elite units. God sent His best for our men and it has already made a difference. Each chaplain cadet

is strong and well trained. One of our mottos is: "Train, train, train, train, and then train." We never neglect building on what they already know. This training has saved their lives and the lives of others in countless encounters with the enemy.

"JOSEPH INTERVENED, SPEAKING FROM THE DEEP TRUTHS WE TEACH OUR MEN. HE TOLD THE SOLDIERS, 'KILLING IS A PART OF WARFARE, BUT MURDER, RAPE, PILLAGING AND REVENGE ARE NOT, ESPECIALLY WHEN REVENGE MEANS KILLING A WOUNDED ENEMY!' AS A CHAPLAIN, IT'S HIS JOB TO REMIND SOLDIERS THERE IS A PROPER WAY TO FIGHT..."

Chaplain Joseph Otieno served in Nimule, as a training officer, until he was re-deployed to a frontline unit. On May 8th, he and two other soldiers were en route to a mission when they fell into an enemy ambush. The aggressors were rebels of a disgruntled faction

of the former vice president. During the vice president's attempted coup in December 2013,

more than a hundred thousand lives were lost and the toll continues to rise.

The United States and the international community forced a peace agreement that reinstates the vice president of South Sudan to his former position prior to the coup. It is hard for me to personally watch the influence that our government has in brokering a compromise using economic sanctions, when it's the most vulnerable who suffer as a direct result. To ignore the senseless murder of tens of thousands of people and allow it to be swept under the carpet with no accountability nor arrests for genocide has been shameful and hard to watch.

In April, when the vice president was brought back to the capitol, many of his rebels broke away and initiated their own factions. What most of these rebels want is not justice or even a voice in the government, they just want a bigger piece of the pie. They started demanding positions and power with a gun that they did not earn, and that is how they have determined to finish it. This is the price of living in a fallen world.

Joseph told me about that early morning of May 8th, when he and two other men departed on a motorcycle; all three on the same bike. As they rounded a bend in the road, the enemy opened fire with machine guns. Joseph spotted them hiding and immediately took the bike down into a slide to get below the range of the bullets. All three men rolled away from the bike and began returning fire in defense. God was with Joseph and his men as their bullets found their mark, fatally striking one rebel in the head and severely wounding another in the back.

The two soldiers with Joseph wanted revenge and were ready to kill the wounded rebel. Joseph intervened, speaking from the deep truths we teach our men. He told the soldiers, "Killing is a part of warfare, but murder, rape, pillaging, and revenge are not, especially when revenge means killing a wounded enemy!" As a chaplain, it's his job to remind soldiers there is a proper way to fight. The soldiers were so angry they threatened Joseph; but he stood his ground saying, "Not only is your plan a violation of our rules of engagement, but is also wrong in God's eyes." This quieted their tempers and the wounded rebel was escorted back to their headquarters.

When the wounded man was brought to their headquarters, everyone wanted him executed. They were incensed at his attack on their men and Joseph again intervened. This time, Joseph was outranked, but he still stood his ground and the rebel's life was spared a second time. Joseph used this opportunity to share the Gospel with the rebel. He did not openly repent, but he heard the Truth and saw it in action through Joseph, which I am

sure had a profound effect on him. Later, Joseph was sent away, and he heard that this rebel died. Unfortunately, sometimes our best efforts are not enough. The truth is that the man forfeited his life the day he became a rebel. The Bible says that he who lives by the sword, shall die by the sword (Matthew 26:52). Yet, what made this story so remarkable was that this man was given the chance to make things right with God. We do not know if he repented before succumbing to his wounds since he had heard the Truth.

The next day, Joseph was sent out on patrol to locate and disarm the main body of the enemy. Hearing a gunshot,



Chaplain Joseph Otieno



...He trains my hands for war
and my fingers for battle...



Chris Cunningham



...the Lord God helps me,
therefore I have set my face like a flint...

he moved toward the fire and found a party of 100 men burying one of their dead. Not wanting to see anymore loss of life, Joseph signaled the enemy leader so they could speak to one another. Joseph tried to negotiate a peaceful resolution. He said, "Do you not realize that a peace treaty has been signed and that your own leader has returned to the capitol? You are dying for nothing!" The enemy leader, a major, said, "We do not want this peace!" Joseph warned him that if they continued to fight

that they would all die there. The major still refused. Joseph guaranteed safe passage for the major to return to his men. The major walked back to the main body where his men were. When he felt safe, he ordered his men to open fire on Joseph and his men. I am sure he thought it would be an easy kill. He should have read Psalm 91:7,

*A thousand shall fall
at thy side and ten
thousand at thy right
hand; but it shall not
come near to thee.*



Training the Soul

I do not know what happened at that moment in the heavenlies, but the Lord intervened. The enemy was routed when Joseph and his seven men wreaked havoc on them. The major, who was so graciously given the chance

to live, was killed along with many of his men and the rest fled in every direction. Not one man that served with Joseph was wounded. Three remaining rebels were taken as prisoners and a large supply of arms was confiscated. Psalm 91 came to life on that battlefield:

*With your eyes you shall see the reward of the wicked.
Because you have made the Most High your Refuge, no
evil shall befall you.*

Joseph thanked me, saying that the hand-to-hand combat training gave him the instinctive response to lay the bike down under enemy fire, and the Biblical training gave him the boldness to do the right thing, even when he had to stand alone. Joseph knew what his God wanted him to do. He understands that his life is not his own, that he is here for God's purposes only. What struck me most when Joseph was reporting what happened was that he spoke as if he were recounting a day at the office.

I think sometimes when people hear our testimonies, they want every situation to have a perfect ending, but that is not realistic. Evil is evil and we do not have control over the wicked. However, I look at this situation and see the hand of the Mighty God; rebels saw the Gospel in action, mercy triumphed over revenge, and an entire unit witnessed God's supernatural protection over the righteous. Joseph's unit was profoundly touched. Those men know a true follower of Jesus is among them and many are coming to faith. One chaplain's life is changing the face of a nation.

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