



# FAR REACHING MINISTRIES



JARED



ZACH



DAVE

## SEAL TEAMS

This year's chaplain refresher course has been different from any other. It was delayed by several months because COVID-19 hit South Sudan. While it has been somewhat quieter in a couple of regions, the fighting has become far worse in others. From our base in Nimule, South Sudan, to the capital of Juba, the roads have become one continuous killing field. The month has just started, yet there have already been a dozen deadly ambush attacks. At last count, 27 people have been killed.

A few years back, I received a call from Dave Lopez, a former Navy Seal. He had served in the US Military with Seal Team Eight. He had heard about our ministry work into highly volatile warzones and contacted me about getting involved. As it turned out, Dave not only had elite special forces experience, but he was also a strongly committed believer. He had already

**WE ARE A  
GATHERING  
STORM**

been involved in several areas of ministry, including human trafficking. We developed an immediate bond, and to this day we connect several times a year. Over my time of ministry in South Sudan, we have had several former Marines, including those who have served in special forces units, serve with us. Rob Wargi, our global construction manager and pastor to the senior staff chaplains, served with the Army's 101st Airborne, then went on to the 160th Night Stalkers' division. After leaving the military and building a successful construction company, I spoke with Rob. I challenged him that he could stay in the U.S., have a prosperous business and a good life. But if he would count the cost and come with me to Africa, we could change the continent for Christ. Being a warrior at heart, he chose Africa.



**THE MEN PRAYING FOR STRENGTH**

The Lord has been expanding our ministry footprint into more and more dangerous countries. It now looks like we will have several more Navy Seals becoming actively involved in our ministry work into war-ravaged nations.

The first thing that I am looking for in men who have served with special forces or with military experience is that they must have a strong relationship with Christ, and have learned to hear the still, small, and quiet voice of the Lord. Trust me, I can find men who can and want to fight, but if their motivation is not God-honoring, it is worthless. I need spiritually led men who move within their gifts from the Holy Spirit and have a relentless passion for the lost. The Bible tells us that it is the love of God that leads people to repentance. We are here to reflect Christ, not our abundant military skills. Men who serve with Far Reaching Ministries must have a clear calling from Christ to be effective in the countries that we work in.

During our current refresher course (I'm writing this to you from South Sudan), two former Navy Seals traveled to our base to invest in and share spiritual stories with the chaplains. Jared Hudson had served with Seal Team Three and had been the lead sniper in his unit with 17 snipers under his command. He shared about being both a believer and leader in

the military, and how to honor Christ on the frontlines of war. He shared that in one battle with the Taliban, God had protected him. A sniper had fired at him from 600 yards away and missed him by inches. Afterward, the chaplains had a question-and-answer session and discussed dealing with difficult orders that they receive from commanding officers on the battlefield.

Zach Paschall, who was a Chief in Seal Team One, had experienced combat. He was persecuted by the men from his team for being a committed Christian. This went on for almost two years. By standing firm in his faith, the men began to see his strength and eventually realized that everyone returned when they went out to fight the enemy with Zach. They learned that as a Christian, he was fearless in battle and highly effective in his calling. On one occasion, Zach and his team were in a major battle. They had traveled seven hours into enemy territory. What they had not known, until all hell broke loose, was that they had walked into a high-level Taliban and al Qaeda meeting. Taliban and al Qaeda fighters began firing rockets and PKMs (Russian-made heavy machine guns), and sniper fire rained down on them from multiple directions. He said that some of the Taliban were firing on his unit from 800 yards out. They were the best enemy soldiers that they had ever encountered.

For tactical reasons, Zach and his team went inside a nearby building. Three went on the roof, and the others positioned themselves inside a room, directly underneath, fighting from window openings. Then an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) hit the wall. Zach's head was on the other side of the wall, and the force from the blast blew him backward, injuring his head. The three men on the roof were blown off by the sheer force of the explosion. Zach said everything flashed bright white. He could not see or hear anything. When he became barely conscious again, he had to get up and fight. As a seasoned Navy Seal, it was one of the toughest battles that he had ever been in. It was discovered afterward that he had suffered a serious brain injury from the explosion impact and would have to go through years of rehabilitation. Zach talked powerfully with the chaplains about the stark differences between murder and killing in the defense of the vulnerable and oppressed. He discussed the supernatural protection that he had experienced during his time in the special forces and the healing that he had received by the stripes and blood of our Savior.

Jared shared that in one village, the Taliban had hung a 12-year-old boy and had been raping all of the women until his team went in and took the Taliban out. From the way he talked about these and other parallel stories, you could discern that this was not from a love of killing but a heart to protect the innocent from pure evil.

Defending the weak, oppressed and fearful has always been in my heart when I send our men daily into harm's way. I did not bring these men in to train them in military operations but to demonstrate that with Christ, we can reach a hurting and lost world. We do this in South Sudan through our chaplains being embedded in frontline military units.

Jared, Zack, and the others who made the long journey into South Sudan for this year's refresher course, all have dealt with the challenging issues that our men face on the frontlines of battle, in a God-honoring way.

King David said in Psalm 18 that the Lord trains his hands for battle. I sense from the Lord that this is what He has been doing with the men of the Chaplains Corp. They have been fighting and ministering for the past 21 years. Often, believers do not realize that the Lord trained the children of Israel for war. In Judges 3, it says, "These are the nations the Lord left to test all the Israelites who had not experienced any of the

wars in Canaan (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in Lebanon Mountains from mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath." The Lord did not choose to leave his people unprepared. When we rely on the Bible as our guide, it will train us well for the battles of life *if* we are diligent to study and believe Him at His Word. After years of ministering in a warzone, the chaplains are having a profound effect on the army and the country's leaders. Many now believe. They have learned from our men to stand in the gap for the oppressed, fighting for the good of their nation, all under the banner of Jesus Christ.

We are currently preparing for major offensives into new areas of Satan's strongholds. Our mission: reaching into the midst of the fire to save those who are heavily burdened under the tyranny of affliction, persecution, and human suffering. We are a gathering storm that is about to be further released across the continent of Africa, then onto Middle East hotspots—all for the love of Christ.

We will be training and sending more and more men to take Christ to a lost and troubled world. While the last years have been very fruitful, I believe that the Lord is telling us that we are just getting started and to prepare now for the harvest ahead.

We have lost 69 of our chaplains and staff on the mission field. Sixteen in the first 15 years of ministry, and



53 in the last six years. I am confident that we will lose many more before we are finished—but we will not grow weary in serving the Lord.

It seems that the Lord is continuing to raise the skill level of our men. They are being equipped through the exhortation of men like Jared and Zach, who are preparing them to live and die with honor. I suspect it is because there are fiercer battles ahead for us.

*Wes Bentley*

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Far Reaching Ministries



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NORTH AMERICAN HEADQUARTERS

38615 Calistoga Drive, Suite 100

Murrieta, CA 92563

+1 (951)677-4474 [info@frmusa.org](mailto:info@frmusa.org)

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[www.frmusa.org](http://www.frmusa.org)

Wes Bentley  
FAR REACHING  
MINISTRIES



Vicky Bentley  
FAR REACHING  
MINISTRIES AVIATION

