

## **The War at Home**

I remember when I returned from my third deployment in Afghanistan. It was hell on earth. My head was still hurting from all the bombs that were dropped around me. It was my third concussion, I think. I was angry and dealing with a lot of pain. I was also very confused. I didn't know what was happening to me. After so many deployments, I had changed; I wasn't the same. I was obsessed with killing bad guys. My wife and I were struggling. I told her: "I don't want you." (That was the nicest thing I said to her)

I don't know why I said that. Honestly, I just didn't want to be around anyone. I was having a difficult time expressing my personal struggles. I had blurred vision, headaches and felt nauseous. I was also irritable, hypersensitive, and had a short fuse. I was dealing with insomnia, which over a prolonged period takes a huge toll on the body. When I did sleep, I had nightmares; and during the day, I experienced some flashbacks. It was an episodic issue, it came and it went. Inside, I felt like a monster. Some days were okay; some were really bad.

My wife was getting sick and tired of my outbursts. She didn't know what was going on. Neither did I. My emotions would come quickly, overcome me, and then I'd explode. She's a pretty easy-going person. It takes a lot to frustrate her, but with all that was going on, she was getting really upset. After 10 years of marriage, we started talking about divorce. I kept pushing her away, keeping her at arms distance. She tried to hang on and I wouldn't let her.

"What's wrong with you?" she'd scream. I just got done kicking through the bedroom door. I can't remember why. I just remember I was livid. Some people call it blind rage. It's when you black out and destroy things around you. Then you wake up and realize what you did.

Looking back, I was experiencing post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms. I was suffering with traumatic brain injury (TBI), as a result of repeated concussions. I didn't seek help. I didn't realize I needed it. But to be honest, if I knew I needed help, I don't think I would have sought it because of my pride. The TBI exacerbated the PTS symptoms and now my marriage was going south. I was on a self-destructive path and taking the marriage with me. Down deep inside, I knew I loved her and I knew she loved me. Nonetheless, the marriage was on the verge of destruction.



I needed help. We needed help. Unfortunately we didn't know where to turn. Looking back, it would have been a blessing for a chaplain or a seasoned military family to come talk to us as we were starting out and to tell us what to expect. We didn't know about PTSD, TBI or the toll that war takes on a family. It has taken time, but we have learned the best ways to cope and to adjust our lifestyle, unfortunately we learned as we went, and made a lot of trial and error mistakes. If we had resources and people to turn to, we could have been more informed and spared ourselves years of hurt and strife.

Thankfully, we came to understand the resources we have in God. God's plan for marriages and families is awesome. His plan is to keep husband and wife together. God's Word states with conviction, "what God has joined, let no man separate" (Mark 10:9) God has empowered marriages to do His Kingdom bidding. Together, they can be an unstoppable force for good. God has equipped both man and woman with unique gifts; I like to call them "super powers." Together, as a married couple, they are a Spiritual Forces Team (SpF TM). That's right! As a SpF TM, couples are able to maneuver through the battlefield of this world and bring the message of hope to a lost and broken world.

Do you think I thought about this when Satan was assaulting my marriage? He had pulled out "all the stops." No! Absolutely not. Satan wants to divide. He wants to destroy. Satan, God's mortal enemy, will do everything he can to keep God's plan from coming to fruition. Many marriages become victims. Satan figures out a way to infiltrate, divide, and destroy. He will use every weapon possible to accomplish this mission. The divorce rates today are at an all time high. People think this is the best solution when things get rough. That is one of the greatest lies Satan has told and convinced billions of people in the world.

I was blind. I brought the hell from combat into my home. I was ambushed. Satan had me right where he wanted me. Our marriage was in the "kill zone." Satan was using every weapon he had. He almost won. Almost. But God sent His son, Jesus—the Commander of the Universe on the ultimate rescue mission. He extracted my marriage out of the kill zone. How did that happen?



I asked for help. “God, help me!” It was simple. It was genuine. It was heartfelt. And God responded. He gave me this verse: “For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). It’s now my life verse. God has given us power through the Holy Spirit. God does not want us to be afraid—he wants us to be confident in Him and empowered to persevere.

God can mend any broken heart. God can bring peace to any chaotic situation. God has given us power to overcome. There is no obstacle He cannot overcome. All you have to do is reach out and ask the Lord to help heal your marriage. Practical steps that you can take begin with prayer, each and every day. You should do this as a couple. It’s important. Together you got into the mess, together you will find your way out of it. I recommend reading God’s Word everyday. If you haven’t read in a while, start in the book of John. Lastly, get connected with a church or military group where you can talk about your struggles with others who are in the same situation.

The road to healing is long and can sometimes be painful, but with God on your side, all things are possible.

By: F. Damon Friedman, D. IS  
Special Tactics Officer, Lt Col, US Air Force

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*SOF Missions is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Our focus is to help veterans and their families overcome the visible and invisible scars of war. We create awareness of the PTSD and suicide epidemic through film. We develop support groups and offer educational materials. We provide intensive care for vets that are in dire need. Our goal is to do all we can to help our countries veterans find a life full of hope and purpose.*

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