

How to Bless and Honor the Veteran With Hidden Battles

Memorial Day is fast approaching. I believe this would be a good opportunity to address our veterans and the challenges they face related to their service for our country. As a veteran of the Vietnam War and one who served during the Tet Offensive on Jan. 31, 1968, I felt led to discuss something that has impacted the lives of millions of our veterans who serve and have served in combat zones.

The issue of post traumatic stress disorder has caused many of our veterans to suffer with emotional and mental challenges for decades. As a child, I was told that in World Wars I and II and the Korean war, we called these mental issues “combat fatigue” or “shell shock.” My dad served for a short time in the Navy until he was injured, and my two uncles served in the United States Marine Corps in the Pacific. When I attempted to talk to my uncles about the war, they became uptight and obviously shaken. Both refused to talk about it. My grandmother would tell me not to bring it up because they were uncomfortable in discussing their experiences. Later in my life I discovered they struggled with what was referred to as combat fatigue for years after the war. In reality, they were challenged with what we call PTSD today. Both struggled with alcohol addictions. Sadly, they both died in their mid-40s with kidney cancers that spread throughout their bodies.

Back then, I would have never thought that one day I would serve in a combat area and be forced to deal with PTSD. In addition to PTSD, I was diagnosed nearly 30 years later with a malignant tumor in my right kidney. My kidney had to be removed in order to keep the cancer from spreading in my body. My doctor believes the cancer came from being exposed to Agent Orange. In my next article, I will address Agent Orange and the impact it is having on Vietnam veterans.

As I write this article, my biggest concern is for those who have served and are serving as they face the challenges of living with PTSD. We often read about or hear on the news that the Veterans Administration is helping veterans deal with PTSD and other issues related to their military service. That's wonderful to hear, but there's so much more that needs to be done.

According to information released by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, a current analysis reveals that an average of 20 veterans die from suicide every day in the United States of America. How many take their life due to PTSD or an incurable disease has not yet been determined. The Veterans Administration has made significant advances in helping those in the military who suffer with mental and physical illnesses. In the last few years, veterans' hospitals and clinics have been built and/or remodeled in the cities and towns across America. Our politicians have approved funding to help our veterans. Personally, I have noticed an increase in the amount of support and encouragement our veterans are receiving from their communities. Yet, with this good news for veterans, there is still so much we need and must do to help our current and past servicemen and women know how important our veterans are to America.

Following are some of the things we can do to bless those who served our country. Whenever you see a veteran wearing a baseball cap, uniform or show you their veteran ID card, thank them for their service. The Vietnam veteran needs to hear the words "welcome home." Churches in America need to celebrate their veteran members on Veterans Day weekends, July 4th and Flag Day every June 14th.

All of us must start or continue to write our congressmen, senators and governors and encourage them to increase the services we need to provide for our veterans.

Freedom in America was not free. We owe a great debt of

gratitude to all of those who served, sacrificed and gave their lives so we would be free. We must recognize those who paid the ultimate price on this Memorial Day.

If you would like to read more about veterans and what they face with recognition to the Vietnam veteran, please check out my web page at [. Also, be sure to listen to these episodes, *Life's Challenges for Veterans Part 1 and 2*, on *Quality Christian Living with David C. Friend* on the Charisma Podcast Network.](#) {eoa}

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