

Combat Ready

My daughters laughed at me last month when I got a buzz cut and bought a used Army uniform to wear at Charisma's Get on the Front Lines conference. They thought my costume was a publicity stunt. And they worried that if I was seen in public, people would assume I was one of those paramilitary weirdos who hide assault rifles and fertilizer bombs in their garages.

Don't worry. I don't own a gun, and my garage has room for only bicycles, rollerblades and lawn equipment. I'm a peaceful family guy. But I cut my hair and donned these battle fatigues to make a prophetic statement to the church. And I'm not growing my hair back until the church hears me out.

My heart is stirred because I hear the sound of war. Do you hear it?

When I say war, I'm not talking about American military action against Iraq—even though that is a real possibility. I'm talking about a spiritual offensive against the forces of darkness, a battle launched by brave Christians who are serious about advancing the gospel in this generation. When I say war, I'm not talking about grenades, smart bombs or ground troops. I'm talking about humble people who are so full of the Holy Ghost that their prayers, love and faith can send territorial demons screaming in terror in seven directions.

God has called us to be a victorious army. But there's a problem: The American church has become a civilian force. Our uniforms are folded and put away, and our weapons are rusty and in disrepair. The devil is advancing, yet his movements

aren't showing up on our malfunctioning radar screens. It's not too late to launch a counterattack, but we must take these steps to become combat-ready:

1. Develop a warrior mentality. Most American Christians don't want to launch an offensive against the devil. We don't like war. We'd rather enjoy our middle-class comforts while believers in China, Pakistan or Vietnam do all the struggling. We have no idea what it means to spend time in the trenches where the bullets are real and the body bags are filled with family members and friends.

We're like a bunch of weak-kneed draft-dodgers. We think church is a "bless me and make me rich" club, so we let prosperity preachers tickle our ears and lull us to sleep. First Peter 4 says we are called to suffer. Let's memorize it and let God change our warped theology.

2. Allow regular tent inspections. Got some sin hidden under your mattress? Don't wait for the preacher to give an altar call. He may have some contraband under his bed, too. The Holy Spirit is requiring all warriors to embrace radical holiness. We can't advance on the battlefield if we've given the devil a place to hide in our own hearts.

3. Know your mandate. Quit looking up in the sky and hoping for Jesus to rapture us out of here tomorrow. In Acts 1:7-11, Jesus asked the disciples (who were staring into the clouds) to refocus their attention on the job at hand—which was to evangelize the world. His orders haven't changed. We have many fierce battles ahead before that assignment is completed.

4. Receive new power. If you feel weak and ineligible for this war, join the crowd. None of us is qualified to be in this army. But when we trade our strength for His, hell will suffer some major damage.

Let's roll!