

## Small Group/Sermon Notes based on The War: Part 4

Remember, small groups are primarily for growing closer relationships with other believers. We can learn wonderful things in this environment but keep relationships first.

- Make sure everyone knows each other's names. Have everyone share a little about themselves and how life is going right now.
- **The War: Part 4 "Boot Camp vs Active Duty"**
- Today we are going to talk about maturing in our faith and service to Christ.
  - Using last week's terminology this applies to all, citizens and soldiers alike.
- If you have lived very long you have experienced a difference between what you expected something to be like vs what it is actually like.
  - Marriage? Kids? Your vocation? That vacation?
  - How about your walk with God? A difference between expectation and experience?
- Let's read the Parable of the Sower from Luke: **Luke 8:4-15**.
  - So the truth of God is hidden from some people??????
  - Verse 12: another devil's scheme.
  - Verse 13-14: two reasons why people fail to mature: quitting and distractions.
    - I believe that both of these can happen in degrees.
      - Pull back. Lose focus. Still believing but missing something.
- The Rocky Soil.
  - The time of testing. What does that mean?
    - Did you know that there would be times of testing? (Frustration?)
    - Some tests are from God and some aren't. (Devil's Schemes)
    - Most tests are pop quizzes and you don't realize you are being tested!
  - Not all fall away. What is the right way to handle this? **James 1:2-4**
    - Who wants to be mature and complete, not lacking anything!???
- Boot Camp mentality vs Combat Vet mentality.
  - Something happens called being "battled hardened."
  - There is a similar thing in serving God. Unexpected hardships change you.
- Maturity Loop. Read **James 1:2-4** again.
  - Naïve Idealism – unexpected trials – mature idealism.
  - Naïve Idealism. When I started as a pastor I figured we would: pray, worship God, preach the Word, people would get saved, we would work together and reach the community!
    - Shockingly, that isn't how ministry works!! I had to learn about liability insurance, bylaws, conflict resolution, budgets, etc. or we couldn't do the spiritual part!!
    - Unexpected Trials can change us for the better or for the worse.
  - Two options: consider it pure joy...for a reason, or become jaded and dark.
    - Some fall away, their love grows cold. (**Matthew 24:12-13**)
      - I've seen that more than I care to talk about. Disillusioned.
      - John the Baptist was tempted with this. **Matthew 11:2**.
      - The readers of Hebrews also: **Hebrews 10:32-36**.
    - Others persevere to maturity, holding on to faith.
  - Mature Idealism. Our plan is to pray, worship God, preach the Word, people will turn to Christ, and we will work together to reach this world and live in God's abundant love and provision!!!
    - I STILL BELIEVE! But I understand things better.
- My guess is that you have (or will) hit some unexpected trials in your walk with God.
  - You want to do something but it hasn't happened. You've been hurt. Your effort and passion resulted in a ministry failure.
  - Learn the lessons. Stay true to the Lord. And Fall Forward.
  - **Hebrews 10:35-36**.
- Pray for each other before you finish up!