

SAMPLE CHAPTERS FROM *DEBRIEFING*

Preparedness

Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle. Psalm 144:1 (ESV)

For those involved in first responder careers, hypervigilance tends to follow you even on your days off. It's a great skill, but it can cause undue stress when you are always "on," looking for danger.

I've been out of law enforcement for twenty years. Still, when I enter a public place, I must visually locate all the exits and face the front door when I sit. It's important that I see any danger entering the room and know where to direct my family to safety. A moment of hesitation or second-guessing what to do could cost me or my loved ones our lives. This was a learned behavior from my years as a public servant.

Preparedness is vital, both for split-second decision-making and for mundane chores, such as cleaning your patrol car, weapons, and boots. Hand-to-hand combat training, knowing the laws of the land, interpreting a suspect's body language, and firearms practice are important too. Staying sharp and being prepared increases your chances of survival.

It's the same with your spiritual life. There is significance in the phrase "hands for war, fingers for battle" in today's scripture reference. You are not simply locked and loaded for battle each day. According to God's Word, you are also ready to walk away victorious. It's a message of empowerment to overcome, and it comes by following hard after him, harder than you do when preparing for your job.

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The difference is, stress is not part of his plan for you. In Matthew 11:30, Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light. You can confidently be prepared for war today while still resting on his promises.

Dispatch:

- Ephesians 6:11-13
- 1 Peter 5:8
- Luke 21:36

Investigate:

In what ways can you be more diligent in preparing yourself for success vocationally, physically, mentally, and, most importantly, spiritually? What will you do this week to improve?

Debrief:

Heavenly Father, Thank you for providing the promise of light burdens. Help me be prepared and ready for anything, knowing you have already won my battles. Amen.

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Bulletproof?

And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3 (NIV)

Not everyone hates you. But you wear that bulky ballistic vest under your uniform each day because you never know who could pose a threat. You have to assume the worst of people to protect yourself from danger.

It's no secret the public has misunderstandings about you. You can feel them bristle at the sight of your patrol vehicle, your uniform. You're paying the price for the actions of the 3.6 percent¹ who are bad public servants, and it's irritating.

Whether it's personnel who have made honest mistakes or those who are intentionally corrupt, you carry the consequences of their actions with you. You've been lumped in with them.

Everywhere you turn, people are recording you with their phones, waiting for you to mess up. Police officers of color are often called derogatory names by those in their own culture who consider them a traitor. Then there are the accusations of racism, demands to withhold funding, and protests. Attacks on officers are causing commanders to retire early and cadets to drop out of the academy. No one wants to be a cop these days. Perhaps you are not sure if you want to be one either.

Be advised; God has placed you here for a reason. He is in control, and he's watching over you. God's Word never promises a bulletproof life free from harm. In fact, suffering is part of his plan for his children.

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But Christ knows the dangers of your job and how you're misunderstood. Jesus is familiar with the lonely road of rejection. He, too, experienced being wrongly judged. Everything he did, everything he stood for, enraged his accusers. So much so they murdered him.

There's no guarantee we won't ever experience criticism, blame-shifting, condemnation, or even physical harm at the hands of others. But sharing in Christ's suffering is an honor and privilege according to 1 Peter 3:14

Although he sometimes allows physical harm to reach us, the Lord still promises protection for those who love him and follow him. Lean on the powerful and undeniable promises found in Psalm 91:1-16 that say:

- You will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- He'll be your refuge and fortress, the God you can trust.
- He will save you from killers and fatal diseases.
- He will cover you like a mother hen.
- His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- You will not fear the dangers of day or night.
- Thousands may die around you, but no harm will touch you.
- You will only observe the punishment of the wicked.
- If the Lord is your refuge, no harm or disaster will come near you.
- He will command angels to guard you.
- You're protected from dangerous animals.
- "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue and protect him."
- You will call on God, and he will answer.
- He'll be with you in trouble, delivering and honoring you.
- You'll have a long life.
- He'll show you his salvation.

What an incredible list of promises! Thankfully, God is with us and will never abandon us. May this bring great comfort as you face the job set before you today.

Dispatch:

- Isaiah 41:10

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- James 1:1-4
- Luke 6:27

Investigate:

Like Paul's trials in 2 Corinthians 11-12, the Bible is filled with incidents of God's followers experiencing physical harm and even death. When harm threatens us or our family, how do we reconcile it with the promises in Psalm 91?

Debrief:

Dear Lord, you know I'm misjudged. Sometimes I'm discouraged, infuriated, even scared over the assumptions heaped against me. Help me not to take it personally. Teach me to trust your protection and favor, knowing nothing can happen to me unless it's filtered through your fingers. Even if I experience trials and danger at the hands of others, because I have made you my God, you have only good plans for me. I will not fear what mere humans can do to me, for you are my strong tower. Amen.

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Ambassadors of Hope

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

“I’m going to walk into the woods and kill myself, Chaplain.” Jay Decker was unemotional and resolved as he spoke into the phone.

As his chaplain, Kyle’s relationship with Decker brought them to this moment of trust amid crisis.

“I’m in my car out here in the forest, with my gun.”

“I imagine you’re feeling overwhelmed under the weight of everything. I’m sorry.”

Kyle said, “You wanna talk about it?”

A few years earlier, Officer Decker responded to a call for an infant in distress. Sadly, after performing mouth-to-mouth, he was unable to resuscitate the child. By the time EMS arrived, the baby was dead.

The incident caused Decker to spiral into an ever-increasing abyss of post-traumatic stress. First, it was nightmares and cold sweats, then insomnia and drinking. Officer Decker sought counseling.

It helped, but the degree of his illness became painfully obvious to everyone at work one day when he removed his shirt in the locker room, revealing a large tattoo across his chest.

It was a tattoo of the infant’s name.

When Chaplain Kyle saw it, he knew he had to talk with Decker. Over the next few years, their relationship developed into a deep and trusted friendship. Kyle walked

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with Decker through his drinking problem, a divorce, promiscuity, domestic abuse, suicide attempts, and finally, the loss of his job. All the while, as an ambassador of hope, Kyle continued to point his friend to Jesus, the only person who could bring Decker truth and healing.

Now Decker had called him to say goodbye. “Life blows. I’m done, Kyle.”

“Jay, you know this isn’t the answer.”

“I can still taste that baby’s death in my mouth.”

On the other end of the phone, Kyle was silent in the wake of those powerful words.

“How do you do it?” Decker continued. “Where’s the hope? How are you so peaceful and—”

“Jay, do you really wanna know?”

Once Kyle convinced Decker to empty his gun and lock it in the trunk, he proceeded to share with his friend how Jesus changed his own life. Decker was finally ready to admit his desperate need for a Savior. Over the next few years, Kyle disciplined his buddy and watched him grow in his new walk with God.

Decker was able to overcome alcoholism and other vices. Now, he’s remarried with six kids; passionate about his relationship with God.

You don't have to be a chaplain or some other clergy to be a light in someone's hour of need. If you believe in the power of the Almighty, you are an ambassador of hope for everyone around you. You might never see or hear how you affected others—that's OK. Just be a tower of peace, ready to point them to God when they ask about your own source of hope.

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Dispatch:

- Hebrews 10:23
- 2 Corinthians 5:20

Investigate:

For help on navigating suicidal thoughts, scan this QR code:



Debrief:

Heavenly Father, use me to be a witness for you. Give me divine appointments with people so I might be a light to others. Cause me to be ready when asked, to give an answer for the hope in me. Amen.

ⁱ Brian Mudd, "The Facts About Police." *WIOD NewsRadio*, June 11, 2020,

<https://wiod.iheart.com/content/2020-06-11-the-facts-about-police-how-many-cops-are-good-how-many-are-bad/>