

“This is a brutally honest and courageous account of a chaplain’s personal struggle with the wounds of war and his spiritual recovery from that life-changing experience. Written from the perspectives of a combat-weary veteran as well as his persistently supportive spouse, this is one of the only books I’ve ever read that succinctly addresses the impact of post-traumatic stress on veterans as well as their family members. I highly recommend this book for both the academic environment and as a personal read for veterans attempting to find their way back home to a new orientation from the battlefield. Anyone with a heart of compassion for the incalculable sacrifices made by the members of the United States Armed Services will find this book extremely helpful in providing pastoral care and personal support to our wounded warriors.”

***Douglas L. Carver, Chaplain (Major General),***  
U.S. Army, Retired  
Former U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains

“Mike and Kathy Langston share their journey of post traumatic stress recovery uniquely from perspectives of a healer/wounded warrior and his family; highlighting the need to address the intertwined wounds of both spirit and mind to restore health. Those struggling with PTSD, their loved ones, and their caregivers will benefit from this brave and insightful book. Both Mike and Kathy are excellent writers. I love the way that they have woven together input from themselves and the family. I found the reference to Mike’s experience on the cliffs in Iceland where the wind lifted him to be especially powerful.”

***Heidi A. Fowler, M.D.***  
Psychiatrist  
Captain, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy, Retired

“This is a personal and deeply moving account of the effects of PTSD on marriage, family and faith. Candid and haunting, the book recounts the experience of those who return home fighting the war within. For those, like me, engaged in full-time ministry, it is essential reading.”

***Derek W. H. Thomas, Ph.D.***  
Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC  
Robert Strong Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology,  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, and  
Teaching Fellow, Ligonier Ministries

“Drs. Michael W. and Kathy J. Langston offer a courageous and transparent account of how persons and their families experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder experience orientation, disorientation, and reorientation with accompanying intensity, severity, and duration that rocks one’s identity and every relationship including that with the divine. With stereophonic voicing this couple presents their journey together to find how to make meaning when traditional care omits or minimizes the spiritual aspects needed to journey through the dark night of the soul.

Emphasizing the primacy of the returning servicemen and women’s sharing their personal narrative as part of the healing process, this book demonstrates how there are no easy answers or pious platitudes. Instead, common road markers along the journey exist to assist in becoming an authentic seeker. This story is set in the context of a military family and shows how PTSD affects spouses and children as well as service personnel. The Langstons offer a wonderful gift to all warriors and those laity and professionals who seek to stand with them and offer care.”

***James W. Pruett, D.Min., Ph.D., LPC, LMFT, LPCS, LMFTS, CFBPPC***

President, Academy for Wellness, Education  
and Services Training Program  
Founder, Integrative Psychotherapy Training Program,  
Carolinas Healthcare System Chair, Membership Division,  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors

“*A Journey to Hope* is a very thorough case study of a military chaplain who develops PTSD (as a result of multiple deployments to the Middle East, including one in which he spent twenty-four months of the thirty-month assignment in a combat zone) and the effects that it had on him and his family. As the war on terror continues and our military’s deployments to hazardous areas of the world continue, our society needs to be better informed on what PTSD does to our wounded warriors and their families. This is the story of how one senior military chaplain and his family have coped utilizing clinical and theological/faith resources. This is not a light read. But it is a very important one, and it should be considered mandatory reading for all military chaplains as well as for psychotherapists and others who work with military personnel, veterans, and their families.”

***The Reverend David Plummer***

Former U.S. Army chaplain  
Licensed Psychotherapist/Psychotherapy Supervisor  
Ecclesiastical Endorser, The Coalition of Spirit-filled Churches

“American warriors are not immune to compassion fatigue, burnout, moral injury, vicarious traumatization, and post-traumatic stress as they serve in a unique environment that includes frequent exposure to trauma. Whether the trauma was experienced directly or indirectly during wartime or peace, hidden wounds and injuries often result. Mike and Kathy Langston have given all warriors and their family members a valuable gift through sharing their transparent journey to hope and healing in this must-read book. This book strengthened our marriage by giving us faith, hope, and encouragement that we could experience peace and healing from the pain that war and trauma places on warriors and their family members. We highly recommend this book to every military service member and their spouse!”

***Chaplain, Lt Col Brian Bohlman, ANG***

Author, *For God and Country:  
Considering the Call to Military Chaplaincy*

***Shelley Bohlman***, military spouse of over 20 years  
Co-Founder of Operation Thank You.org

“In this candid and revealing account, readers are given a glimpse into the impact of the unseen wounds of war on an individual, a spouse, children, and the relationships of marriage and family. Guidance is provided to assist in the journey that is necessary to see spiritual healing begin for those wounded and to cope with the continued intrusion of these wounds into the lives of the individuals affected.

Through the Langston’s stories we come to understand that traumatized warriors and their loved ones can lose perspective of their hope and question their faith. But we also learn from their insights and counsel that there is a Comforter who has been sent to lead us to a deepening and vital relationship with God, our Father, who loves us with an all-encompassing, long-suffering, never-ending love, and who provides us hope in Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.”

***The Reverend James E. Watson, Ph.D.***

Professor, Columbia International University  
Columbia, South Carolina



A JOURNEY TO  
**HOPE**

Healing the Traumatized Spirit



Michael W. Langston, DMin  
CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.)

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Kathy J. Langston, PhD

A JOURNEY TO HOPE: Healing the Traumatized Spirit  
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This book is dedicated to:

**Rear Admiral Robert F. Burt, CHC, USN**  
24th Chief of Navy Chaplains  
(1948 – 2014)

Whose inspirational leadership and courage  
provided our Navy's Chaplain Corps  
with guidance and mentorship  
during America's wars  
in Afghanistan and Iraq.  
His life as a man of faith  
who continually relied on his Lord  
serves as an example to all chaplains.

This book also stands as a remembrance of  
the 112 Marines, sailors, and soldiers  
who gave their lives for our country  
in Al Anbar Province, Iraq,  
January 2007 through  
February 2008.



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# Introduction



**W**e are a family living with the after-effects of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. After spending twenty-four of thirty months in the combat zone, Mike returned home with a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Even though Mike had been deployed (sent on assignments) for nine of our twenty-five years of married life in the military, we were ill equipped for his return from the combat zone. We share our story in this book in order that others who live with the after-effects of these wars may be able to find their way to healing and hope.

As a Christian family, we offer a journey to healing that relies on guidance from the Holy Spirit. We know no other way to share our lives and our struggles except through the relationship we have with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. We offer an arduous journey that requires warriors to move bit-by-bit out of the protective shells that kept them alive in the combat zone. In order to accomplish this task, warriors need the help of a trusted friend or family member. Thus, our story is for both warriors and those who love them.

If, like us, you have tried to find your way back to “what was before the war” or tried to establish a “new normal” with few differences, then we encourage you to journey with us as we explore Charles Hoge’s explanations of how warriors react in the combat zone. In *Once a Warrior Always a Warrior*, Hoge explains how this “locked and loaded” survival behavior in the combat zone

produces more than a few awkward situations at home. We offer an interpretative table contrasting the combat skill and combat behavior with the action at home and the warriors' thoughts. This table is the beginning of understanding what warriors are experiencing as they return home. Those warriors who find their dreams and thoughts remain in the combat zone can (though not always) receive a PTSD diagnosis. This table is a beginning point for those who love warriors to understand their behaviors and motivations.

Understanding can bring change. Change can bring hope. Hope can bring healing. The chaos in the minds of warriors and the painful memories they bring home can overwhelm the warrior's abilities to cope in the more mundane world of "home." We offer our story of how we learned to understand the after-effects of war and the changes in our home that provided Mike with a safe environment with the hope that other families struggling with these after-effects can find their way to a healing journey as well.

We base our story in our Christian faith; yet, we do not confine this story to just Christians. Providing a safe place for warriors to live is a key element in relaxing survival instincts when warriors return home. Many books on the market at this time offer the advice of spouses or warriors putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6) in order to fight this spiritual battle of PTSD. Warriors already have on armor, but this armor is for self-protection—a needed skill in the combat zone. Spouses, suited up ready for battle, will find a war with the warrior, but it will not be a productive spiritual war. Both of these battles are counterproductive to spiritual healing.

The spiritual journey to which God calls us is one that demands surrendering our armor in order to stand defenseless before Him. In this way, we learn dependence on Him. God is in control and He brings healing to the spiritual wounds that war inflicts. We, as people dealing with the effects of PTSD, must learn to surrender to His leadership and guidance. We use Walter

Brueggemann’s concepts of “orientation—disorientation—reorientation” (2002, p. x) to explain the process of leaving the world of orientation, moving to a state of disorientation within the combat zone, and finding hope through a new orientation that the Holy Spirit provides for us.

Our story is a positive one. Our story is one of hope and healing. We share this story with the hope that those who have been diagnosed with PTSD, those who know someone with PTSD, or those who live with someone with PTSD can find a way to ease their pain and calm the storm within their homes. There is hope. Healing is possible. As we share our journey, it is our sincere prayer that our journey will help you on yours.



“Eternal Father, Strong to Save,  
Whose Arm Dost Bind the  
Restless Wave”



**T**his is a story of hurting, healing, and hope. This story is our declaration that our eternal Father IS strong to save and that He continually binds the restless waves that pound the minds, hearts, and spirits of our warriors returning from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other areas of conflict throughout the world. He also binds the waves for any traumatized person who turns to Him. We are Christians and relate this journey through our Christian perspective, but the truths of this journey are timeless. Through our family’s story, we present how Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) disrupts the households of warriors throughout our nation. As we explain PTSD and the disruptions that occur, we weave our family’s story into the information.

Our primary purpose is to share the journey to physical, mental, and spiritual healing on which our family embarked. That long journey led us to hope and peace. We share this story now with the prayer that those traumatized by war and other horrors can begin their own journeys to healing their traumatic wounds. We share our story so that families can understand the motivations of warriors and through that understanding provide

a needed safe place for warriors to heal. No easy answers or quick fixes are within this book. We do not present a path back to an old life that existed before deployments. We also do not seek a “new normal.” We offer an approach that echoes the journeys of so many throughout the decades. This journey brings warriors, traumatized individuals, and families face-to-face with their wounds which results in encountering our eternal Father. The journey is one that requires faith and trust. The rewards are immeasurable.

We are a family who has, for more than a decade, dealt directly with the effects of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq either through deployments or through the after effects of those deployments. My husband, Mike, retired as a Navy Captain in 2011 after thirty years of active service in both the Navy and the Marine Corps. From August 2005 until May 2008, Mike spent twenty-four of thirty months in the combat zone. His ministry included first working as Theater Chaplain for Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (CFC–A). During that year he also worked with and mentored the Afghan Minister of Hajj and Islamic Affairs in Kabul, Afghanistan. Upon coming home from Afghanistan, Mike was assigned to be the Force Chaplain for II Marine Expeditionary Forces, Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

When Mike came home, he had difficulty slowing down from the up-tempo pace that had kept him alive in the combat zones. He retired three years after returning to the U.S. and was, at the time of his retirement, diagnosed with severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This book is about our experiences living with and moving through PTSD to posttraumatic growth (PTG) with an added spiritual element. Through understanding how the war affected Mike and then our family, we have learned many skills to help us find a path to hope and healing, primarily through spiritual resources. This book is our journey through Mike’s wartime wound and into the spiritual growth and understanding that comes with posttraumatic growth and spiritual health.

We bring our story to the overflow of PTSD books and articles because we have a more unique perspective than many

people who write. Many of the books, articles, and studies are by those on the “outside looking in.” These are the psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, therapists, and others who are non-military and have gained knowledge only by observing and not by experience. While their contributions are important, they only know by observing the effects and by interpreting what they hear, see, or read. Other PTSD book authors are on the “inside” such as wives and a few men or women suffering from PTSD, but very few offer the experiences of a trained counselor who was diagnosed with severe PTSD. Mike, because of his counseling training, has been able to give voice to the ideas that we have read and has interpreted what the ideas mean inside the mind of the wounded service member. He has counseled military members with PTSD and he has lived with PTSD. His story and interpretations are the essence of this book as we give voice to the wounded in spirit who search for meaning and hope.

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) “is a mental health condition that’s triggered by a terrifying event—either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event” (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, 2015). Any person can experience PTSD if traumatization results from an event and the effects of that traumatization remain for a period of time. PTSD is the name professionals in the medical and psychological field use to define warriors who are finding more difficulty in their transitions from combat zones to home.

In this book, we use the term, “warrior,” to signify those military personnel who have served in the combat zones. The term, “post,” is a rather obvious reference that signifies a time period after a traumatic event(s) has occurred. “Trauma” is a key word within this name as it refers to one or more events that profoundly affect those people who experience the event. War is regarded as

traumatic, but other events such as sexual assault, physical abuse, and many others are also considered traumatic.

For the purposes of this book, we are focusing only on war and its after-effects as traumatic. Researchers pursuing war related stress find that “traumatic events frequently call into question the existential and spiritual issues related to the meaning of life, self-worth, and the safety of life” (Drescher, Smith, & Foy, 2007, p. 295). The final word, “disorder,” is one with which many scholars and researchers disagree. For example, Edward Tick, in *War and the Soul*, argues that PTSD is not a stress disorder, but is, instead, an identity disorder. Tick explains (2005):

The diagnosis of anxiety disorder wrongly assumes a pathological distortion that we can treat or medicate back into normalcy. This misunderstanding denies the ultimate nature of the transformation, causing survivors and their families to feel frustrated and alienated and demonstrating our culture’s denial of war’s impact. “Who am I now?” may be the most difficult and important question the survivor must finally answer. This is why, from the psychological perspective, it is so important to recognize PTSD as an identity disorder. (p. 106)

The trauma that warriors experience in the combat zone is not easily contained in the “psychological disorder” category. Trauma’s effects are much more extensive, affecting how warriors define themselves and how they relate to others. Families struggle to understand the changes that have occurred in warriors when they return home.

The struggle that warriors face when they return is, in a philosophical sense, an identity disorder which is an existential problem. The ultimate meaning of suffering and of life, the continual search for meanings to war experiences, and the attempts to understand God’s position within war are complex issues that warriors face upon returning home. The current methods of approaching these

issues are through mind and body. The third part of our humanity, the spiritual side, is often overlooked in our Western approaches. This absence of addressing the spiritual wound is leading many warriors to continue searching for hope and healing. With most approaches such as posttraumatic growth, warriors have two-thirds of their wound addressed. PTSD is “the result of the way war invades, wounds and transforms our spirit...Conventional models of medical and psychological functioning and therapeutics are not adequate to explain or treat such wounds” (Tick, 2005, pp. 1-2). Tick continues by explaining that while wars have been fought for many different reasons, “war is indeed universally traumatizing” (Tick, 2005, p. 3). Thus, any experience with war has the potential to traumatize the people involved.

Even though Tick accurately identifies the problem of avoiding spiritual issues, Tick misses the mark when he recommends to adopt and adapt Native American rituals for healing. As Christians, we believe that no need exists to go outside the boundaries of the Christian faith. Our response is to approach our God through whom life is given. The ultimate question is “Who am I *now* in relation to God?” Walter Brueggemann addresses this situation in his study of the Psalms. He presents the concepts of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation. Thus, people have an understanding of an orientation for their lives which trauma disrupts. This disruption produces a time of disorientation that causes people to question the beliefs they held during the orientation period. Responses to disorientation can produce a new orientation (distinct from “new normal”) to God, the world, and our families (Brueggemann, 2002, p. x). Through Brueggemann’s ideas, we will present a journey to healing that is grounded in the Christian faith.

**Trauma:** Trauma and long term exposure to traumatic events that warriors experience in the combat zones can lead to diagnoses of PTSD, but this diagnosis is not automatic for returning warriors. The reasons why some people develop PTSD and others do not

are not, at this time, fully understood. The fact that war changes our men and women who fight, however, is a fact. Charles Hoge (2010) explains the gap that exists between our culture in the U.S. and the returning warriors: “Society hasn’t yet grasped that ‘transitioning’ home from combat does not mean giving up being a warrior, but rather learning to dial up or down the warrior responses depending on the situation” (p. x). Experiencing trauma causes people to face unspeakable atrocities and then attempt to make meaning from those traumatic experiences.

Judith Herman (1997) in her seminal book, *Trauma and Recovery*, explains how humans tend to respond to unspeakable atrocities. She argues that even though people try to bury the trauma, “The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word *unspeakable*” (p. 1). The smells, sounds, sights, and terrors visit warriors in their sleep and also in their waking hours. The experiences of warriors in the combat zone are not easily dismissed because of the horrors associated with them.

Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial does not work...Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma. (Herman, 1997, p. 1)

Struggling to forget their experiences in the combat zone is a pointless activity for warriors. These horrors continue to plague them in nightmares and flashbacks until they find a way to express their traumatic experiences.

In describing his experiences in Vietnam, Karl Marlantes discusses the concept of sacred spaces in combat. While most people think of sacred space as a “light-filled wondrous place where we can feel good and find a way to shore up our psyches against death,” warriors and those exposed to such horrors know that “something as ugly and brutal as combat” can also represent spiritual sacred spaces (Marlantes, 2011, p. 8). Knowledge of the differences between the “light” and the “dark” spiritual spaces can set warriors on the outside of the society to which they return after their combat tours. This gap can have “serious psychological and behavioral consequences” for the returning warriors. In order to avoid or lessen these consequences, “warriors have to be able to bring meaning to this chaotic experience, i.e., an understanding of their situation at a deeper level than proficiency in killing” (Marlantes, 2011, p. 8). Finding meaning within the horrific experiences of war is a spiritual search.

Marlantes continues with his analysis of the returning warrior: “There is also a deeper side to coming home. The returning warrior needs to heal more than his mind and body. He needs to heal his soul” (2011, p. 196). Healing of the spirit (soul) requires warriors to be able to find meaning in their experiences. Finding meaning in life is a spiritual quest. Warriors returning home seeking relief from PTSD must deal with the psychological and mental after-effects, but they must also face their spiritual trauma resulting from their exposure to war.

## Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) and Spiritual Health

A major battle for traumatized warriors is the lack of understanding of their trauma by our Western culture. People often assume that “their lives are safe, predictable, and controllable” (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2013, p. 128). Trauma changes all of these assumptions and warriors back from the combat zone with new understandings make people uncomfortable. Lawrence Calhoun and Richard Tedeschi conducted research with people who

had experienced traumatic events. They, like other researchers, began to find that some people experienced growth because of their responses to the traumatic incident. “The emotional power of trauma can be a catalyst for deep processing that can yield beneficial new perspectives,” (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2013, p. 69). For most people, deep processing requires assistance from another person(s).

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) continue with their analysis of reactions to trauma:

[T]he frightening and confusing aftermath of trauma, where fundamental assumptions are severely challenged, can be fertile ground for unexpected outcomes that can be observed in survivors: posttraumatic growth. The term *posttraumatic growth* refers to positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. (p. 1)

PTG refers to positive psychological changes in the traumatized individual which can lead these individuals to feeling that they have grown because of their traumatic experience.

In this book, we will expand the concept of “posttraumatic growth” that seeks positive psychological changes by developing the spiritual side of the wound that warriors receive in the combat zone. We live in a society whose members seek to be psychologically stable and physically fit with little to no concern about spiritual health. While God is concerned with every aspect of our life, God’s concern lies more with our spiritual health than with our psychological stability or physical fitness. While not attempting to negate the need for psychoanalytic approaches, we are advocating the need for a strong Christian spirituality in the current approaches to PTSD treatments. In this book, we will use the terms, “Christian spirituality” and “spirituality,” to be synonymous. Christian spirituality focuses on the spirit within us that responds to the call of the Holy Spirit to seek God through

His Son, Jesus Christ. It includes our seeking to understand the meaning of events in our lives, particularly traumatic events, in relationship to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. The seeking of that which can't be fully known, but must be accepted in faith is a part of Christian spirituality.

In the late 1990s, Mike brought a book home (to Iceland) from a conference in the U.S. This book, Robert Grant's *The Way of the Wound*, was instrumental in my spiritual journey at the time. Grant, a trauma specialist who has worked throughout the world, writes a book about healing the spiritual wounds that are the result of trauma. (His spelling choices are standard British English.) He explores how trauma is one of the last areas where the Holy Spirit can reach us. Through trauma, we can learn to live our lives as authentically as Jesus led His. This journey requires a difficult path that includes total submission to God.

One day as I stood in our library scanning the books, Grant's book jumped out at me. Now, I know that the Holy Spirit directed me to the book. At the time, I tried to remember what was in the book and decided to read it again to try to find some kind of help. As a result, we use *The Way of the Wound* to develop the narrative of how our family moved from Mike's return from three years of war through his PTSD diagnosis to the changes we instigated in our home and lives that then led to a spiritual journey that brought our family again to a place of peace and healing. Grant comments:

Today's men and women are in desperate need of a spirituality that addresses the most dangerous aspects of life. Every victim of trauma knows these parts of life first hand. Those affected by war, murder, terrorism, spousal and child abuse, rape, violent crime, workplace violence and ecological devastation need a spirituality grounded in the hard realities of everyday living. Ultimately, spiritual meaning must emerge from the life-world and not from concepts or fear. (1996, p. x)

We have found healing through finding spiritual meaning in the wounds with which Mike returned from war. The journey has been a long road, but we have found our way to peace, hope, and spiritual healing. Our book is our journey to understanding PTSD and then to deepening our relationship with God. The journey we share is a sacred one. We share our story so that others may find the path to peace, hope, and spiritual healing.

What we bring to the PTSD/PTG discussion is our story—one that begins in the mire of a household where PTSD symptoms are in control but slowly journeys to being a household filled with hope and peace. We have found a way to bring peace and hope to Mike which, in turn, has restored peace and hope in our family. We laugh and tease as a family again. There is no magical cure. There is no pill that will cure this hidden wound. There is no quick fix. There is, however, a journey of the spirit that can bring peace and hope to the wounded. We have found that our Eternal Father *is* strong to save. His arm has bound the restless waves that pounded our household for several years.

Mike's war experiences ministering to warriors in combat zones have allowed him first-hand insights into the challenges of PTSD and the shame that accompanies diagnosis. However, his commitment to military members and his search for an authentic faith that produces an authentic ministry have led us to write this book. Henri Nouwen (1972) expresses our commitment to sharing our journey into a deeper authentic faith in *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in a Contemporary Society*:

When the imitation of Christ does not mean to live a life like Christ, but to live your life as authentically as Christ lived his, then there are many ways and forms in which a man can be a Christian. The minister is the one who can make this search for authenticity possible, not by standing on the side as a neutral screen or an impartial observer, but as an articulate witness of Christ, who puts his own search at the disposal of others. (p. 99)

With these words, we put our own search at the disposal of others who are seeking an authentic faith that can encompass the traumas of war and its aftermath.

## The Navy Hymn as a Framework

We are a Navy family that has at our core a deep faith in God. In chapels at Camp Lejeune; Marine Corps Air Stations (Cherry Point and New River); Naval Station Pearl Harbor; Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland; Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island; and many other places, we have sung the Navy hymn, *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*. As we subdivided our journey into and through this hidden wound, it seemed natural that we would use a nautical framework. The Navy hymn also reminds us that it is through the storms and rough seas that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit guide us. Thus, our chapters reflect the spiritual journey that the entirety of the Navy hymn, with its many verses, lays out for those in earlier days as well as today. Faith is a core part of the journey through this wound. Each of the chapter titles and the names of the chapters below come from the William Whiting’s (1860) song, “Eternal Father, Strong to Save.” We used one additional verse by Hugh Taylor (n. d.).

I begin our story in Chapter 2 with the “before time” of the first twenty years of our marriage so we can share how our family changed when Mike returned with an invisible wound. “Protect the Ones We Love at Home” reflects thirty-six years of Mike’s military service and twenty-five years of our family’s Navy experiences. Our purpose is not to share anger or to obtain pity, but we want to establish who we were, so that we can express how our family changed when Mike returned from the war. In explaining our relationship, we then can explain our journey through PTSD to spiritual health. “O Hear Us When We Cry to Thee” is the title of Chapter 3. I continue in this chapter by explaining how PTSD made itself known in our home. Our family’s cries and Mike’s

cries to God were many and frequent as our communication and family broke down.

“For Those in Peril on the Sea,” Chapter 4, tells Mike’s side of the story as he expresses his thoughts over the same period of time as Chapter 3. Comparing Chapters 3 and 4 conveys the distance between us when Mike came home. This chapter explains how Mike first admitted he might have some issues and then began counseling in Newport, RI. Chapter 5, “Our Brethren Shield in Danger’s Hour,” defines “trauma” from multiple aspects with the underlying concept of shielding those in the combat zone when they are in dangerous situations. Interwoven through this chapter are some of Mike’s experiences and stories from Afghanistan and Iraq that will bring the definitions of trauma to life.

“Most Holy Spirit Who Didst Brood Upon the Chaos Dark and Rude,” Chapter 6, is the beginning of my discovery of ways to assist Mike as he attempted to find relief from the chaos in his brain. This chapter contains discussions of what the warrior’s behavior means to the family and what the warrior’s behavior means in the combat zone. The next chapter, Chapter 7 “And Bid Its Angry Tumult Cease,” presents the methods that I employed in our home to accommodate Mike’s needs. Understanding PTSD and changing my views on PTSD allowed me to employ several changes in our home to create a safe environment for Mike to journey toward spiritual healing.

The last chapters are Mike’s story. Chapter 8 “And Hushed Their Raging at Thy Word” focuses on Mike’s shame, guilt, and hopelessness. As he sought help through another year of counseling, Mike found his mind and body improving. His spirit, however, was still deeply wounded. The chaos began to settle, but it was still controlling Mike’s spirit. The spiritual journey Mike began as a response to the changes I made in the home is the story of Chapter 9 “Protect Them Wheresoe’er They Go.” The rigorous journey requires total submission to the Holy Spirit. This submission is difficult for warriors who have used control and self-protection to survive in the combat zone. Mike eventually took

the journey through his wound and found, on the other side, that he had a deeper knowledge of and faith in God. Through this experience, Mike found spiritual healing. Our last chapter, Chapter 10 “And Give, for Wild Confusion, Peace,” summarizes the concepts that we have presented in the book. We also offer some challenges to our readers and to those who want to help relieve the agony and pain of traumatized warriors. Most of all, we offer a way to discover hope and peace for the traumatized spirit.

Our story is one of hope. Mike has traveled this path. We do not live in a fairy tale land where life has no difficulties, but we do live with the reality that Mike has experienced a wound that will be with him for life. He, however, has found a way to calm the wild confusion in his mind. He is able to hope again and he has come to a place where he can experience peace again. This story of spiritual healing from traumatic events is the story that we share. May God show you the way to Him through this writing.

## An Added Note

I will close this chapter with a story that compares the extreme difference that has occurred in our family over the last ten years as Mike has attempted to find his way through his wound. We moved to Newport, Rhode Island, soon after Mike’s return from the war. He had accepted the Commanding Officer billet at the Naval Chaplains School that was located at Naval Station, Newport, RI. The school was in the process of moving to Fort Jackson in Columbia, SC. This new responsibility required Mike to make multiple trips to Fort Jackson every month. When he would leave, our normally chaotic household would become a place of relative calm, even though we had three kids from ages twelve to twenty-two living with us. Several times when Mike was gone, our children would ask me, “Is it bad to say that I’m glad that Daddy isn’t home right now?” I would tell them that they could feel that way but to remember that their dad had experienced a wound from

the war. I bore the guilt of also being glad for a bit of calmness in between storms.

Recently, Mike went to Germany for seven weeks. Even though two of our children are in college twenty miles away, they both called me and said, “I really miss Dad. When will he be home?” They told me they miss going to lunch and interacting with him once a week—a habit they started this year. They have even come home, only to say that it seems empty and lonely without their father home.

That is the reason that we are sharing our story. Mike has walked through the way of the wound and has found his way to a spiritual health that allows him not to be controlled by his PTSD symptoms. The results are that we miss him and want him home again when he leaves. Those families with a member who has this PTSD wound understand the tremendous growth that Mike has done. When the kids miss their father and want him home—and I want my husband home—that says enough for the story we have to tell. Our life is not perfect but PTSD is a wound Mike has accepted as part of who he is, but not as the controller of his life. In this journey, Mike has found that God is once again the Lord of his life.