



Rise
Up

VISION

WARRIOR

Dust was flying in my face as we drove down the familiar wash-board road towards the villages we had ministered in years ago as missionaries in Sonora. El Diamante, Caborca, San Felipe, El Ultimo Esfuerzo... and the list of towns we had worked in went on and on. I was so excited to greet the people again and see their familiar faces. What will have changed?

The roads looked the same and so did all of the cacti. Of course the children I had ministered to in my Sunday school class will have grown up some, but I hoped to find at least a few of them and catch up on their lives.

We rounded the corner into El Coyote, and my gut felt like spaghetti. It was heavy with excitement, but all jumbled up with nervousness. I had poured years of my life into the people of this little village. The first home we visited was full of screams of excitement and hugs all around. I asked about a few of my students. My "auntie" Sofia had a solemn face as she tried to not give me all the bad news at once.

At one house we visited, they were quiet as the girl who was in my class bounced the baby on her lap and looked ashamed. She had run off with a boy who wasn't a Christian, and they were not married, but living together. She wasn't going to church anywhere.

From what I could piece together from all the stories, and the other homes we visited, the spaghetti in my stomach turned into cement. The children I had worked with had not stayed with the Lord. Not one.
What had gone wrong?

**NOT ONE.
WHAT HAD GONE
WRONG?**



I'm sure you already know this, but we are currently at war against the powers of darkness. Jesus Christ is our commander, and has a full army of people; one that crosses the globe, speaking every language on the planet. God has an air force, marines, navy and infantry army. He has everything any earthy military would, and is in the middle of a full-on war with the enemy. Only He is fighting for each life on this planet. And God wants you and I to participate in the area of service we are given, and fight like our lives depend on it. Because many lives DO depend on it.

The largest battle I believe we are fighting is for the next generation; our children. And sadly, the enemy is winning. How could I say such a thing? Because, I'm tired of all the pretending. Just look around. The TV is screaming the enemies' values at our children, as well as the video games, and the messages they receive in school. They receive hours and hours of brainwashing every day, compared to the couple of hours we get at church on Sunday. I see many churches where the children are not choosing to follow Christ. They hang around in youth group because it is fun, but then they quit attending church when it becomes their own decision.

Barna Group is a large company that researches many things for the body of Christ, and their studies show that a child has made up his mind on what he believes by the time he is 12! I appreciate that Barna has done this study, but I can confirm it with real life. It is easy to see that if you don't train your child before they reach 12, it becomes very difficult to change their mind.

**WE ARE ON THE
FRONT LINE OF A
MAJOR BATTLE.**

You and I as the Body of Christ, and especially those of us working in children's ministry, from every denomination and from every country of the world, MUST step up and fight for our children. We are on the front line of a major battle. It's time we admitted it, and did something about it.

It's time we made some generals for God's army. Not to mention first Sergeants, Sergeant majors, corporals, majors, and specialists. There are way too many privates running around following orders from other privates.

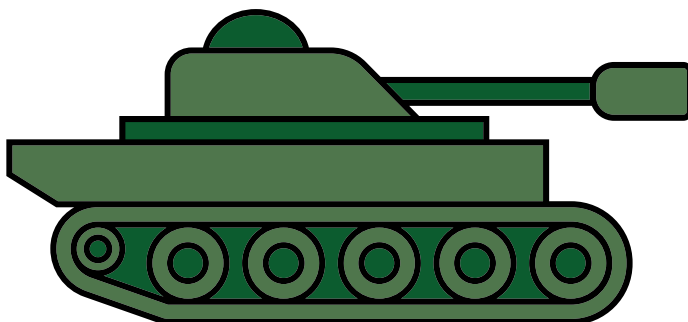
I believe that God is looking for more 5-star generals in His army right now, and I would like to be one. I know it's crazy and arrogant to go for it, but really, why not? Didn't God ask us to strive for the things in heaven?

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free."

Ephesians 6:7-8

"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done."

Mathew 16:27



To be honest, I have no idea how far I have yet to go to become a General. But I do know there is more beyond where I am, and I will continue to press into God and I will continue to learn and grow. Obviously, I cannot share with you details on what I do not know, but God has asked me to write down the experiences and lessons I have learned.

Children's ministry isn't an easy one and definitely isn't for the weak. Children's ministry needs some serious GENERALS out there, and you could be one of them. Let me better explain the problem.

I held a huge fish in my hand, and thanked the cute little girl for her gift. I had no idea what to do with the fish, so I tried climbing into the back of the suburban to lay it down back there, but as I was on the way up, I lost my balance and fell back down. All the way to the sand, landing on my back, with one arm stretched as high into the air as I could, with this huge fish dangling on it!

We were having an outreach in a small beach town, and my older sister and I were doing the children's ministry while my dad ran the outreach for the adults. We sang songs with a group of 25 kids, passed out a craft and tried in our broken Spanish to tell them a Bible story. At the end, one of the girls gave me a fish as a gift.

Years later, I was sharing this story with Pastor Gary Duckworth, the children's pastor at our church, and he shocked me with his comment! He said, "You think you were actually making a difference with that outreach?" I said, "Of course we were!" He continued to argue with me, saying that really all I had done was given those kids something to do for an evening. He said, "You were really ministering to those parents, taking away their children for an hour or two so that they could hear the gospel."

I got angry, and couldn't accept his words to me. After all, I had now been doing children's ministry for 10 years! I knew that I was making a difference in children's lives! On that day, I couldn't hear what Gary was saying to me. It took more time, but one day much, much later, his words finally sunk in.

I was visiting with a children's ministry director over a large section, in a specific denomination in Mexico. She shared with me about an event their denomination had, where she was responsible for the entire children's ministry for the weekend. With glee she described how she organized the whole event in detail, and how it went off without any problems. She had planned a fabulous concert for the closing event with the adults, and had spent the whole weekend practicing with the kids the different parts of the concert.

When the event was finished, she shared how the highest ranking leader there had approached her and congratulated her on a job well done. He had even said that he would keep her in mind for future projects higher up in the denomination!

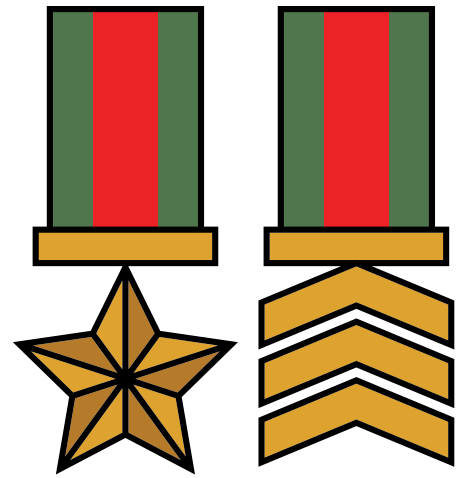
But all of a sudden, talking with her, I remembered Pastor Gary's words to me from years earlier. I finally understood. This friend of mine had used an entire weekend with those children to entertain the adults! The students didn't learn anything new, except how to stand in a straight line and sing better. These things they are already learning in public school!

**I JUST FELT TEARS
STINGING MY EYES.
HE WAS RIGHT.**

I didn't have the heart to tell her what Gary had told me. I just felt tears stinging my eyes. He was right. Real children's ministry is not entertaining the kids, so that the adults can go to church without interruption. Neither is it putting on a nice concert so that the adults are more entertained. That's adult ministry, using the children as puppets.

If we really are at war, a concert isn't going to cut it. Those kids could have spent the weekend learning how to pray! Or they could have been told the truth about church and Christianity. They could have been ministered to.

If we really are at war, coloring pages and memorizing the right "church" answers are not going to cut it. We are at war, and we must not forget it.

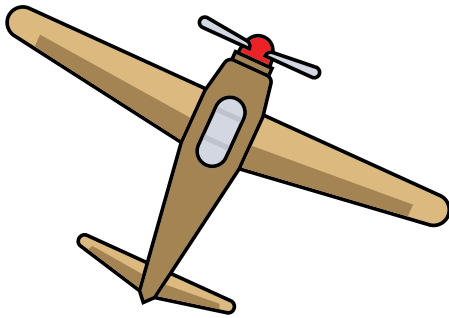




There is a ladder that we all climb as we grow in our faith and do more for God's kingdom. Only, this is not the same ladder that everyone climbs in the normal way of Christian living. God has a different ladder!



The ladder of starting in children's ministry, then growing to become the youth pastor, then assistant pastor, then finally becoming the main pastor of a church is a very different ladder that we climb. That is like a fame ladder in the Christian world. I went from making some coloring pages to writing a VBS, to writing a full Sunday school curriculum. I went from providing material for 30 churches to thousands of churches. That is the Christian fame ladder.



God told us repeatedly in Scripture that He is looking at the inside of a man, not the outside. It does not matter how many books I have gotten to the world, if I do not have what God wants on the INSIDE, He cannot use me in battle the way He needs to. If I am going to strive to become a general in God's army, I cannot bribe Him with all my fame. God knows exactly who I am, for REAL, on the inside. THAT is the ladder to climb if you want a great post in God's army. And it is the ladder to climb if you want to make a difference for eternity!

This ladder has tons and tons of steps going up it, as far as the eye can see. The steps on this ladder are ALL regarding our inner selves and our relationship with God. They have nothing to do with our outward accomplishments, whether those are in the church or not. It has nothing to do with my job, my finances, where I live, or even my awesome ministry.

"The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

There are many Christians today climbing up the wrong ladder, just as there was in the time of Jesus. God's instructions are to... "Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." Matthew 15:14

The people had their religious rules, including no eating without first washing your hands, but they were still sinning in their hearts. Jesus said to them:

"But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them." Mathew 15:18-20

This applies to all our rules today, just as it did to their rules from Jesus's time. Today in church, we don't have the religious rule of eating without washing our hands. We know it to be a good rule for health, but it is no longer a church rule. But we do have a LOT of rules in all of our churches. NONE of those rules compare with what comes OUT of our hearts.

**THAT IS THE
LADDER TO CLIMB
IF YOU WANT A
GREAT POST IN
GOD'S ARMY.**

God cares A LOT about this inner ladder that I'm talking about, and there are more verses ALL over the Bible to prove it.

"If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames." 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

ALMOST EVERYONE IS CLIMBING THE WRONG LADDER.

used insider trading to climb the world's ladder faster. If you try to skip ahead in the spiritual world, you will always get caught in the end and find yourself with mud on your face. It's a slow process and one that will take years. This is one reason why it's so very important to get started with children while they are young! It's very important to get the ball rolling early. And on the right ladder!

OK, here is some plain truth for you:

Almost everyone is climbing the wrong ladder.

They are either climbing the world's ladder to money, fame and fortune; or the Christian ladder to money, fame and fortune. I would like to open your eyes to GOD's ladder to money, fame, and fortune! (In eternity of course; the delayed payment plan.) God's ladder is all about Godly character, obedience, faith, honesty, and learning to serve Him fully. It's about living with the fruit of the Spirit in your life. God's ladder is where you give Him the reins to your life, and don't take them back. This means that GOD actually gets to make ALL the decisions in your life.

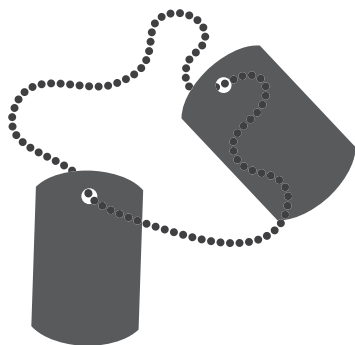
To be honest with you, I don't think the Christian life was meant to be lived any other way.

But, Christians all around us do.

I see thousands of Christians all around the globe living for the world's fame, or to climb the denominational ladder, all the while allowing their inner selves to remain as childish as babies. I don't get it. Do they actually think they can fake-out God Himself?

The reality is that we need people in all levels, including all the steps on the ladder. The best way to do that is if we ALL start climbing.

1. You and I need to BE climbing at all times. Be an example to the children in your ministry. Your actions speak louder than your words.



2. Get honest with your students. Show them the two ladders, and help them understand which one is the right one to climb.

3. Train the children in our ministries how to climb. In most cases, they are not going to figure it out on their own. YOU are the teacher, make sure you are not having them memorize things and LIVE nothing.

Let's you and I work together to get children on the RIGHT ladder, starting when they are young, so that we have a bunch of trained soldiers for God when He needs them!





It's very important to climb the ladder, only we need to make sure we are on the right ladder first! Then we can grow from cadets to soldiers or from sergeants to majors. We can be used by God to make a real difference in the lives of children around the world.

If we really are at war, coloring pages and memorizing the right "church" answers are not going to cut it.

We are at war, and we must not forget it.

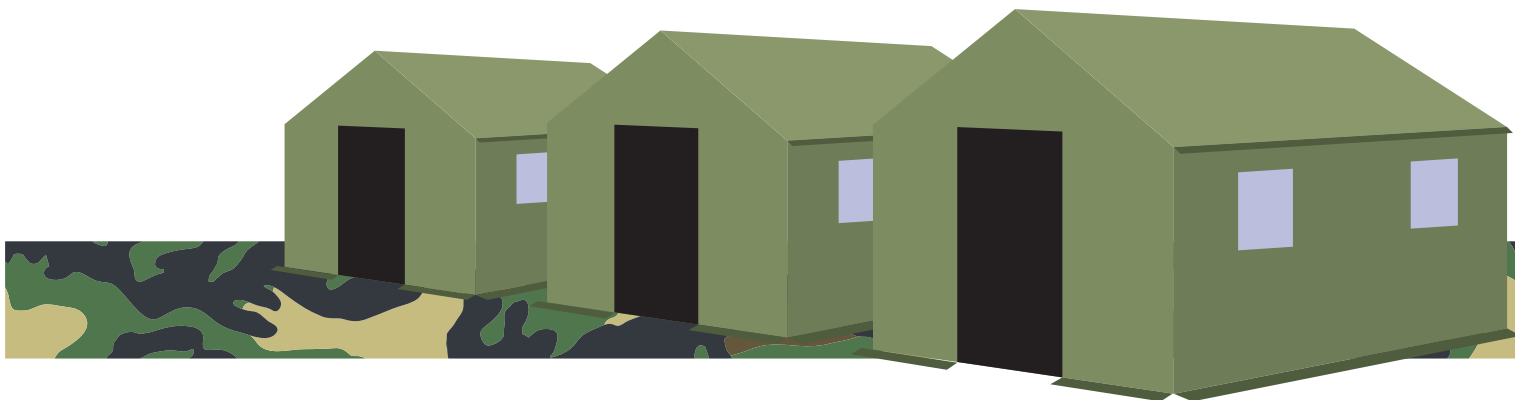
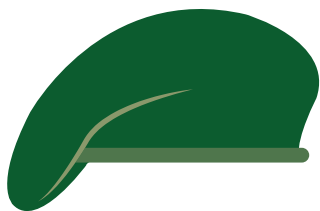
If we really are at war, it will not work to pretend to obey God, all the while caring more about the Christian politics inside our church.



We need real generals in this army.

We need men and women of God who are willing to work hard at raising up the next generation of believers.

I'm striving to become a General in God's army. Do you want to join me?



Vision Rise up
Warrior English



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