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THOSE WHO SERVE

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TouchPoints for Those Who Serve

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7	6	5	4	3	2	1

CONTENTS

ix	Foreword by Rear Admiral Curtis Kemp	50	Courage
xi	With Thanks to All Service Members	52	Crisis
xiii	Introduction	54	Criticism
		56	Decisions
		57	Delegation
		58	Desires
		60	Differences
		61	Discouragement
1	Abilities	64	Duty
4	Accomplishments	66	Encouragement
5	Accountability	68	Endurance
7	Adversity	70	Enemies
9	Advice/Advisers	72	Example
12	Ambition	73	Excellence
13	Anger	75	Failure
16	Authority	76	Fairness
18	Balance	78	Farewells
19	Bible	79	Fear
21	Blessings	80	Focus
23	Broken Heart	81	Forgiveness
24	Burnout	84	Friendship
26	Change	85	Frustration
27	Character	86	Goals
28	Choices	87	Grief
29	Comfort	91	Habits
32	Commitment	94	Help
34	Communication	96	Honesty
36	Compassion	98	Honor
37	Competition	102	Hope
39	Complaining	104	Humility
40	Conflict	106	Integrity
44	Confrontation	110	Judging Others
46	Conscience	111	Justice
48	Contentment		

113	Leadership	171	Strengths/Weaknesses
114	Listening	173	Stress
116	Loneliness	176	Success
119	Love	177	Teamwork
120	Loyalty	179	Thoughts
121	Motives	182	Tiredness
123	Opportunities	184	Troubled Times
125	Patience	187	Trust
128	Peace	188	Truth
129	Personal Discipline	189	Unity
130	Planning	192	Valor
131	Prayer	194	Values
135	Prejudice	197	Vision
138	Preparation	198	War
139	Pressure	200	Wisdom
146	Pride	202	Words
147	Problems	205	Work
152	Protection	207	Worry
154	Regrets	209	Worth
158	Reputation		
161	Respect		
162	Responsibility	211	Epilogue by Brigadier General David B. Warner
164	Sacrifice		
165	Self-Control		
167	Self-Esteem	213	A Service Member's Prayer
169	Service	215	The Star-Spangled Banner

FOREWORD

Those of us who have worn the “cloth of our country” and served in the military know it is a unique experience. We belong to a group of amazing men and women who epitomize the word *service*—making sacrifices for purposes beyond promoting self-interest. While these experiences can be rewarding, they also can be intensely demanding—physically, mentally, and spiritually. Lengthy deployments add to the challenges.

Whether your rank is senior or junior, whether you serve as a chaplain or are a family member on the home front, there will always be uncertainties involved in this unique lifestyle. And where there are uncertainties, there are questions. The Bible provides answers to these questions, but how do you know where to look? *TouchPoints for Those Who Serve* helps fill this need. With topics arranged alphabetically from “Abilities” to “Worth,” it’s easy to get right to the pressing issue. Additionally, each topic ends with a “Promise from God,” a welcome encouragement because God never breaks his promises.

Military men and women never seem to have much time, so this is an ideal resource for finding quick answers on tough issues. Proverbs 3:6 says, “Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” My prayer is that this small book may help you draw closer to God and show you how deeply he cares for you, no matter what your circumstances.

Rear Admiral Curtis Kemp, US Navy (Ret)
Board Chairman, Cadence International

INTRODUCTION

PSALM 119:105 | *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.*

The topics you'll find in *TouchPoints for Those Who Serve* have been specifically selected to address and give biblical advice on some of the most pressing issues that affect service members today. Each section begins with introductory questions. Answers are drawn from the Bible, followed by concise commentary that further explains the biblical insight, and ending with a "Promise from God." These elements combine to show how relevant the Bible is to today's concerns, giving solid guidance for daily living whether you are at home or far from loved ones. The topics are presented in alphabetical order, with a complete listing of the topics in the table of contents for quick reference. In many cases, topics are cross-referenced to related topics.

Whether you read through this book page by page or use it as a reference for topics of particular interest to you, may you find answers in God's Word as you make it your daily guide.

ABILITIES

Where do my abilities come from?

EXODUS 31:1-3 | *The LORD said to Moses, “Look, I have specifically chosen Bezalel. . . . I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts.”*

DEUTERONOMY 8:18 | *Remember the LORD your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath.*

JOHN 15:5 | *[Jesus said,] “Apart from me you can do nothing.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 4:7 | *What gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?*

There are no self-made people. God gives each one of us the ability to accomplish our duties and to provide for our needs. You are a steward of those talents.

What does God expect me to do with my abilities?

MATTHEW 25:29 | *To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.*

God has entrusted resources to you according to your ability. He expects you to maximize the effectiveness of those abilities in proportion to his gifting. While the most talented people may seem the most blessed, they must also bear the most responsibility.

JOHN 17:4 | *[Jesus said,] “I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”*

Jesus’ mission in life was pleasing the Father. This is the ultimate purpose of every person—to bring glory to God through all you say and do, in all times, places, and circumstances.

How can my abilities and even my successes be a danger?

DEUTERONOMY 8:11-14 | *Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today. For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful! Do not become proud at that time and forget the LORD your God.*

When your ability brings you good success and blessing, you are in danger of falling into complacency, forgetting that God gave you your abilities and that you are to consistently use them to serve him and others. Another danger of having great ability is to think you no longer need help or advice from others.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-29 | *Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.*

Your abilities can be liabilities. Within each ability lie the seeds of problems that will sprout if you neglect that ability, use it for your own selfish designs, or presume to rely on it apart from God.

Do my limited abilities limit my ability to serve?

2 CHRONICLES 20:12 | *O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help.*

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was overwhelmed by the attack coming against the nation because he knew his abilities and resources were no match for those of the enemies. But God opened the way to success. Leaders understand that availability and dependence on the Lord are as important as ability.

PSALM 147:10-11 | *He takes no pleasure in the strength of a horse or in human might. No, the LORD's delight is in those who fear him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love.*

God is not impressed by your abilities or your resources, but by your faith in him.

ZECARIAH 4:6 | *It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.*

When facing the most threatening obstacles, the Lord assures you that his ability, not your own, is the ultimate assurance of success.

Promise from God LUKE 12:48 | *When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

See also **AMBITION, GOALS**

How can I do a better job of accomplishing things?

ISAIAH 25:1 | *LORD, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God. You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and now you have accomplished them.*

Accomplishments come with good planning. God planned before he accomplished, providing a good model for you to follow.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9 | *Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed.*

Accomplishments can be multiplied through teamwork. Two people can do even more than twice as much as one, as long as they are pulling in the same direction.

Is it wrong to be proud of my accomplishments?

2 THESSALONIANS 1:11 | *May [God] give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.*

Accomplishments bring a sense of personal satisfaction, which is healthy. Always be aware of God's part in enabling you to reach your goals and thank him for what he has done through you. It is arrogant to think you accomplished something all by yourself.

Promise from God PSALM 60:12 | *With God's help we will do mighty things.*

ACCOUNTABILITY

See also **SELF-CONTROL**

How do I become more accountable?

PSALM 1:1 | *Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked.*

PROVERBS 5:13 | *Oh, why didn't I listen to my teachers? Why didn't I pay attention to my instructors?*

PROVERBS 12:15 | *Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.*

PROVERBS 27:6 | *Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.*

Part of being accountable is being a good listener and observer. You can learn much about your own behavior

by observing others and listening to wise friends whom you respect. And choose wise friends to whom you can freely give an account of yourself.

What happens when there is no accountability?

GENESIS 16:6 | *Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.*

JUDGES 17:6 | *The people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*

Left unaccountable, people will always gravitate toward sin, the consequences of which eventually hurt them and others and pull them away from God. A wise person is grateful for being held accountable.

How can I choose the right people to hold me accountable?

1 KINGS 12:8, 10-11 | *Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him. . . . The young men replied, “This is what you should tell those complainers: . . . ‘Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!’”*

Friends are not always the best advisers, especially if their counsel is not consistent with God’s Word.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:8 | *To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.*

Choose people who are especially wise and godly, who will not hesitate to help you see when you need to realign yourself with God.

PROVERBS 13:17 | *An unreliable messenger stumbles into trouble, but a reliable messenger brings healing.*

Reliability in telling the truth is critical in those holding you accountable.

How can I effectively hold someone else accountable?

EXODUS 18:21-23 | *Select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. . . . They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. If you follow this advice, . . . then you will be able to endure the pressures.*

Before you can help others be accountable, you must develop good judgment yourself. You must be wise, honest, and trustworthy.

Promise from God PSALM 119:9 | *How can a . . . person stay pure? By obeying your word.*

ADVERSITY

See also **PROBLEMS, WORRY**

Is God listening when I cry out because of my troubles? Does he really hear, and does he care?

PSALM 18:6 | *In my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.*

MATTHEW 11:28 | *Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”*

God’s hotline is always open. There is never a busy signal, and he is never too preoccupied with anything—even managing the universe—to listen to your every need. God has both a listening ear and a caring heart.

NAHUM 1:7 | *The LORD is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him.*

In most cases, the Bible doesn’t say *if* trouble comes, but *when* trouble comes. No one has lived a life without some adversity.

PSALM 27:5, 7-8 | *He will conceal me . . . when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. . . . Hear me as I pray, O LORD. Be merciful and answer me! My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me.” And my heart responds, “LORD, I am coming.”*

Sometimes God does rescue you from adversity because of your faithfulness.

Is there any way I can avoid trouble and adversity?

JAMES 1:2-3 | *When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.*

Avoiding adversity may not be best for you. Though hard times may bruise you, they also can build you up and strengthen your faith.

PROVERBS 14:16 | *The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence.*

ROMANS 13:14 | *Clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.*

The consequences of sin often bring unneeded adversity into your life. By obeying God's Word, you can avoid many kinds of adversity you might otherwise inflict on yourself.

PROVERBS 17:20 | *The crooked heart will not prosper; the lying tongue tumbles into trouble.*

PROVERBS 21:23 | *Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.*

Controlling your tongue can help you avoid adversity. Many times trouble can be avoided by choosing your words wisely.

PROVERBS 11:14 | *There is safety in having many advisers.*

Following advice from wise people will help you avoid trouble.

Promise from God PSALM 46:1 | *God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.*

ADVICE/ADVISERS

See also **DECISIONS, WISDOM**

Why is it important for me to get good advice?

PROVERBS 11:14 | *Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers.*

PROVERBS 12:15 | *Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.*

PROVERBS 13:14 | *The instruction of the wise is like a life-giving fountain; those who accept it avoid the snares of death.*

PROVERBS 15:22 | *Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.*

PROVERBS 19:20 | *Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life.*

PROVERBS 20:18 | *Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without wise advice.*

Both leaders and service members need good advisers who will bring expertise, perspective, and experience to the challenges and problems they face. No one is wise enough or perceptive enough to grasp the full meaning and possibilities of a situation. The right counsel can make the difference between success or failure, prosperity or poverty, victory or defeat.

How do I evaluate the advice of others?

MATTHEW 7:16, 20 | *You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. . . . Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.*

One way to test advice is to evaluate the advisers. Do their actions match their words?

How can good advice benefit everyone?

EXODUS 18:14, 17-19 | *When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, "What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening? . . . This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed. "You're*

going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you.”

Good advice can help everybody involved in a situation. The advice that Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, gave him benefited Moses and the entire nation. Moses was able to live with a more manageable load of responsibility, others were trained to participate in leadership, and the people were served in a more timely and equitable manner.

How do I give good advice to others?

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 | *Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

In giving advice, make sure your motives are right—to offer the best possible advice for the situation, not to offer advice that might improve your own situation. Don’t use advice as an excuse to lecture. Always have the other person’s best interests in mind.

How valuable is wise advice?

PROVERBS 25:11 | *Timely advice is lovely, like golden apples in a silver basket.*

Timely advice is not merely helpful; it is essential because it comes just when you need it.

Promise from God PSALM 32:8 | *The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.”*