

Eternity Past

Eternity Future

The LandBetween

M I N I S T R I E S

The mission of the LandBetween Ministries is to equip leaders to fulfill Christ's Great Commission of heart-focused discipleship in a broken world.

Newsletter

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"Staring at him, and being greatly afraid, Cornelius replied, 'What is it Lord?' He said to him, 'Your prayers and your charity have gone up as a memorial before God.'" - Acts 10:4 (NET)

**"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering their conduct, imitate their faith."
— Hebrews 13:7 (NASB)**

REMEMBERING THE FAITHFUL

"True faith goes into operation when there are no answers." — Elisabeth Eliot

Thousands of miles away from his wife and two children, in June 1967, Captain James Graham paid the ultimate price.

While leading the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, Foxtrot Company, Captain Graham's men came under heavy enemy fire.

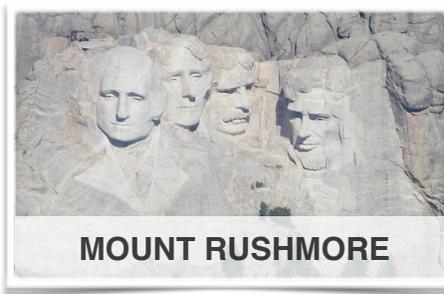
After his men suffered many casualties, Captain Graham, 26, led from the front a headquarters force that took out one of the enemy's key machine-gun units, but he was wounded in the attack.

One of Graham's men, Cpl. Marion Dirickson, was too injured to move. Dirickson kept saying to those trying to drag him out of the battle, "Leave me, just leave me." (Otto Lehrack, *Road of 10,000 Pains*, p. 126). But Captain Graham refused to leave him.

Captain Graham ordered the rest of his men back from the enemy fire. The last radio communication from Graham was

that twenty-five enemy soldiers were overtaking him. Pfc. Tom Labarbera was in the fight, and said Captain Graham ordering his men back when he did most likely saved over thirty lives.

Captain Graham's courage to stay by Dirickson lived up to the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps: "*Semper Fidelis*" (Always Faithful).



MOUNT RUSHMORE

As we commemorate Memorial Day, we need to remember those from all branches of the military who were faithful to their duty, to the very end of this life's journey.

MEMORIAL STONES

After receiving permission from the Air Force, we flew by Mt. Rushmore. As I took the above photo, I was struck how— This sculpture, carved into South Dakota

granite, is one of the world's most impressive monuments. The history of stone memorials goes back thousands of years.

God commanded Joshua to have twelve memorial stones placed in the Jordan River soon after God's people crossed into the land of Promise (Joshua 4). Why? The memorial stones had various purposes, but a key purpose was for when their children would ask, "What do these stones mean?" they would be told God provided a miraculous, dry, crossing into the land of Promise, just like He provided an escape from the oppressive, slave-bondage in Egypt (Joshua 4:21-23). Another key reason for the memorial was, "...so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever." (Joshua 4:24).

While these memorial stones served as a reminder to the Israelites, they continue to serve as a reminder today. Remembering how God worked mightily in the past can lead us to reverentially follow God's will to share the love of Jesus with others. Receiving His forgiveness and personally knowing Jesus Christ is the only path to freedom for hearts and nations.

UNDER ORDERS

I recently overheard the conversation of an 86-year old disabled veteran with a middle-aged woman. He shared how he was a born-again believer and listed off Jesus' blessings in his life. She told the veteran how much she appreciated his great sacrifice and service to America. The veteran was appreciative, but said, "Well, I didn't see it that way. When the accident happened, I was just doing what I was required to do."

When honoring our fallen heroes, we need to remember this basic truth: They paid the ultimate price doing what was required, and they died under orders.

Certain American historians and mouthpieces in the media criticize some American wars as unpopular or a waste. These unqualified criticisms can be dishonoring to our men and women who paid the ultimate price. At the same, *power brokers and their politicians who have exploited our military for ulterior motives will, one day, answer to God...and God will remember.*

Those in the military who paid the ultimate price should be honored, regardless of the war in which they died. These heroes did not choose the generation in which they were born, and they did not choose the war in which they fought. They did not even choose the orders given to them. What they did choose was how they responded to those orders. They should be remembered in honor, as they followed orders to their death.

THE DANGER OF FORGETTING

After Joshua led God's people to the land of Promise, there were lapses of obedience. It was as if success and prosperity led to forgetting and ignoring the God that led them to freedom. Some teachers have put a positive spin on how Joshua fell prey to the lying Gibeonites, but there is nothing good about forgetting God. The Gibeonites came from one of the last remaining Canaanite cities. They pretended as if they were needy, poor, and had a fear of God and His people (Joshua 9:3-7). When the Gibeonites played the fake victim card, God's leaders failed to pray and ask how to respond to them (Joshua 9:14). Joshua ignored God and struck a deal. He went from asking what

God wanted him to do (Joshua 5:14), to forgetting God by failing to ask for His wisdom. As time went on, the Israelites may have given intellectual assent to God at the temple, but in their hearts they forgot God by serving idols such as Baal and Ashtoreth (Judges 3:7). Forgetting and disobeying God led to the captivity of the Israelites. Their freedom eroded from within. Today, our freedoms are being challenged from within. For example, public schools boast of the separation of church and state, yet promote anti-Christian religions to students. University professors pride themselves as tolerant, but then bring hardship on anyone with a Christian worldview. Judges take oaths to uphold the law and Constitution, but then abuse their power in anti-Christian activism. Certain one tout the threats



from without, but threats to religious freedom for believers in Christ are already here. History proves that it only takes a small percentage, 1% to 3%, of well-funded, organized, anti-Christian revolutionaries to take a nation with a vast majority of Christians and kill them by the millions (Armenia, Russia, etc.). As Americans, we must never forget to pray, asking God for wisdom how to keep our freedoms. We are to never forget to honor our fallen heroes who paid the ultimate sacrifice for these freedoms.

THE LIGHT SHATTERS DARKNESS

Years before going to Vietnam, Captain Graham was invited to church by his friend, Janice. At church, Graham heard about salvation through Jesus Christ and he became a born-again Christian. Janice, who married Jim, said, "He found a peace and love that he was missing in his life" (*Homegrown Hero*, by Ty DeMartino). Graham had the genuine, true Light in his heart, Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

Cpl. John Paul Francis was a tall, strong, brave, 20-year-old Marine, who had received Jesus Christ as his Savior before Vietnam. In Operation Union II, my uncle volunteered to go on a search and destroy mission and was killed in action on the front line. I recently spoke with Marine, Pfc. Tom LaBarbera, who was within a few yards of my uncle John when he paid the ultimate price. Tom told me, John (who my brother was named after), died the type of person he always was: Looking out for others. Tom shared that unlike some others who became withdrawn in war, uncle John did the opposite; he took good care of his squad. Tom recounted how John's death is just as real in his mind today as it was 50 years ago. The Date of Casualty for Cpl. Francis is 3 June, 1967. In reality, he and many others were killed on 2 June, but the scale of fighting and death was so great, their bodies could not be recovered for many hours. This is one of numerous dark details of war not usually discussed.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in Washington, D.C. is made of polished black granite. *By design, the wall is to be reflective, both figuratively and literally.* As a granite mirror, the wall reflects visitors and their surroundings.

In Vietnam, Captain Graham *reflected* the Light, Jesus Christ, by staying with his soldier to death, as Jesus will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). By resurrecting after death on a brutal Roman cross, *Jesus shattered the darkness* of sin's curse. Jesus lived on earth *reflecting* the will of His Father in Heaven (Luke 22:42).

This side of Heaven, some things will be left in the dark (1 Corinthians 13:12), but as Philip Yancey says, "Faith means trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse."

Everyone is born into a spiritual war (Eph. 6:24), and in this battle we are ordered to reflect Jesus' Light (Matt. 5:24).

War is dark: Uncle John never came home to his fiancé or his family. However, he had the *eternal Light*, Jesus Christ, in his heart and spirit, instantly going to Heaven, forever free. — On this Memorial Day, let us remember the fallen...and faithful.

— *By, Joel A. Francis, Th.M.*